

ANGER ET CETERA:
UNDERSTANDING THE EMOTIONS IN ETHICS

By

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Philosophy in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New
York

2009

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the
Graduate Faculty in Philosophy in satisfaction of the
dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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"His scrupulous wrestle with the impalpable can be quite comic, but his basic point is serious: out of the books of others we sift a book of our own, wherein we read the lessons we need to hear"

– John Updike

This dissertation argues in part that because the ethical theory of sentimentalism is based on the mistaken belief that emotions are non-cognitive, sentimentalism cannot account for the fact of the influence of cognition in morality and moral action. Therefore sentimentalism is of little use in ethics.

This work is done by going back to examine Western thinking on the emotions from its dawn in Homer's writing through to contemporary philosophy and neurophysiology on the emotions. Following the development of the way emotions were thought of and how they related to ethics allows the identification of an intellectual forked path brought about by Stoic thinking on emotions and morality and calcified by the work of René Descartes on the emotions. I identify three 'Cartesian errors' that have made their way through to David Hume's thought and from there to contemporary thinking on the emotions. The first Cartesian error is the belief that 'mind' or 'mental activity' is pure cognition and that 'body' is an unthinking machine responsive only to pleasure and pain and having nothing to do with cognition. The second Cartesian error is the irreparable separation of emotion from cognition which forces a theory into an untenable, ad hoc distinction between calm and violent passions in order to imbue some emotions with intelligence. The third Cartesian error is being unable to coherently

explain how the mind and the body could have duplex communication between 'mind' and 'body'.

I then explain how the two contemporary camps, both 'cognitivists' and 'physicalists' about emotions are compromised by the Cartesian errors.

Finally, I show how experience, common sense and contemporary empirical findings in neurophysiology recommend to us a pluralist view of the emotions that avoids the Cartesian errors and fully embraces both their physiological basis and their accompanying 'cognitivity', as well as a fruitful cognitive ethical theory that is something of a middle ground between the sentimentalism of Shaftesbury and Hume and the rationalist positions of thinkers such as Socrates and Berkeley. This theory, which will be worked out in more detail in the future, is a synthesis of the findings of Plato, Aristotle, Lucretius, psychologist Richard Lazarus and contemporary psychophysiology.

PREFACE

My work is based on three assumptions. First, anyone who thinks recollected emotions cannot be as painful as the first time they were experienced has never been deeply hurt. Second, perception provokes emotions and vice versa. Third, emotions can motivate action, so if either perception or emotions are ever brought about by higher mental activity, then action is at least sometimes brought about by higher mental activity. I conclude that because all these things are true, at least sometimes morality and action in moral situations is brought about by higher mental activity.

Experience and common sense tell me that my observation of my thoughts and the world around me is impossible without some degree of my judgment or consideration and that my thoughts about myself and the world around me constantly provoke emotional responses of various degrees. Some of these trigger what might be called canned responses but others require a considerable number of feedback loops between my judgment, memory and perception to decide on the appropriate response. But even the *least considered, most mechanical* emotional act is already deeply implicated in this loop. This is only hard to see because of how deeply engrained the “split” between mind and body really is.

That should better explain what I mean by ‘perception’ and ‘brought about by’. Explaining ‘higher mental activity’ will be of necessity quite inexact. Of necessity both because I am not a philosopher of mind or cognitive scientist and because even those well versed in those important subjects have a great deal of difficulty in explaining it. So I will be very basic in my terms and try my best to be brief in my treatment. For now let me say that ‘higher mental activity’ means *at least* the attentive cognitive functioning of a

conscious social being, that which allows it to successfully navigate its physical and social environment to its benefit; whatever mental activity allows for well adapted, goal-oriented behavior in social animals. To my mind these include memory, empathy, emotion, abstraction and judgment.

The point of all this is to make three points in ethics. Any form of ethical theory such as sentimentalism that is underpinned by the thought that emotions are non-cognitive cannot rightly claim to be internalists about ethical motivation. Perhaps more interestingly, no such form of sentimentalism can account for the fact of the cognitive influence in morality and moral action and therefore has little to recommend it. And finally, experience, common sense and contemporary empirical findings in neurophysiology recommend to us a 'cognitive' ethical theory that is something of a *middle ground* between the sentimentalism of Shaftesbury and Hume and the rationalist positions of thinkers such as Socrates and Berkeley.

A note on the title of this dissertation: I believe that the emotion of anger cannot be fruitfully explained either by non-cognitive moral theories or so called 'cognitivist' or 'physiological' theories of emotion and I repeatedly turn to it to reveal the underlying causes of why these theories cannot accommodate it.

As I return repeatedly to the emotion *anger* it is right that I offer a brief description of how I understand it. Anger is an evolutionarily adaptive response to various stresses in one's environment. For this to be true means both that 1) anger *elicits* a variety of physiological changes that generally ready the body for action and 2) It appeals to – what appears to be – an innate sense of the importance of 'keeping up appearances' shared with us by various pack animals. *Anger*, as I understand it, does its work by taking in a lot of data, quickly, and suggesting *and* strongly motivating useful –

though often risky – actions. It is able to do this by *both* being able to ‘bypass’ the prefrontal cortex but *also* by being attached to it and to one’s memories, which would include the proprieties inculcated by one’s socialization and educational level.

The work of this dissertation is to show that the components necessary for a fruitful ethical theory that accepts all of the above are largely available in a synthesis of the findings of Plato, Aristotle, Lucretius, psychologist Richard Lazarus and contemporary psychophysiology. To do this requires a lot of contextualization for the older sources, which accounts for much of the length of this dissertation. I’ve endeavored to push off much of this into Appendices, but in several cases I found it impossible to move off as much as I would have liked. I’ve tried to summarize at the beginnings of sections so that the reader may skip through what she needs to while still gathering the overall scope of the project.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work is dedicated to the memory of my father, René Dupont and to my mother Mary and my sisters Catherine and Christine. My father was a good man with a gentle and kind heart whose life was unfortunately also defined by his struggle with his very poor temper. Its effect on our family is the main reason I took up the topic of the role of emotions in moral judgment. Still, I would not have had the background or skills with which to design and implement this project if not for my esteemed advisor, Professor Stefan Baumrin.

Mom, I have some idea of both how good and bad life with dad was for you. I wrote this book to help myself better understand his motivations and I hope we can have many long conversations on the topic. I think it will help us both to understand him, and more importantly, each other.

Catherine and Christine, we three went through a good bit in our childhood responding to anger. As a result we each created our own unique emotional world and we each benefit and suffer from these worlds. Perhaps there's something in here for each of you too. Let's talk.

The lessons I learned from Professor Baumrin over four graduate courses and in numerous personal conversations could easily fill a book. Professor Baumrin, as I told you in person, you were the perfect advisor for me because my personal, intellectual and professional respect for you drove me to make this happen.

I also want to take a moment to thank Professor Nickolas Pappas. Professor Pappas was the first Professor to befriend me at the Graduate Center. He also gave me my my first job as an adjunct at City College and my first published acknowledgement

in his excellent book The Nietzsche Disappointment. Nick, I thank you for your kindness, for the countless hours of discussion and for all the sound advice.

I also want to express my sincere gratitude to two sets of excellent philosophers. First, I want to thank the rest of my dissertation committee. You provided me with excellent questions at my dissertation defense. In the case of Professor Rosenthal, you were there since the prospectus and I sincerely appreciate your insight. Second, I'd like to thank the professors and adjuncts I worked with at City College, particularly Bana Bashour, Ellen Fridland, Kris Kemtrup, Prof. Michael Levin and Prof. David Weissman, for the countless hours of stimulating philosophical conversation.

And to my Myriam: I met you just after I started this project and I couldn't have done it without you. Thank you for being you. And thank you for everything you do for me.

If this work is judged to be good, so much of the credit belongs to you all. Its failings are my own.

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Part I: From Mind to Matter in the Classical Theory of the Emotions

Anger is never without a reason, but seldom with a good one
– Benjamin Franklin

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In the Beginning

As is true of most subjects, the history of Western thought on emotion can be profitably studied in various ways. But because of fundamental disagreements between the two main contemporary approaches to understanding what emotions are, and a dissatisfaction with respect to the prospects for success of either type of account from the purview of moral psychology, I think it is important for us to see if we can explain how we got here and if we can identify any problems – or successes – that are not being paid sufficient attention.

I think the emotions play an essential role in moral action, as they are indispensable in the formation of a moral outlook yet it is not evident how either contemporary camp of thought on emotions can properly explain this role for the emotions. I assume that intentional actions stem from judgments and I think that emotions lead, at least indirectly, to many if not most of our actions. So I will argue that emotions are necessarily in part judgments and the physiological changes that are concomitant with them. Explaining the relationship between the two and what kind of judgment emotions are will explain how they are constitutive of one's moral outlook, lead to moral action and will provide insight into moral failure.

Looking at the history of philosophy I believe we can discern just how to do this. My research shows that when we properly understand how Plato, Aristotle and

Lucretius developed their emotional theories out of a shared Homeric background, the framework for a workable, enlightening theory of the emotions and their role in moral action emerges.

The thesis I maintain explains that emotions are properly understood by a “pluralistic” theory that acknowledges them as both physiological phenomenon and intimately involved in our decision-making in moral situations. In addition, recent advances in neurophysiology and evolutionary biology lead me to conclude that any theory of emotions that will fit the current research and provide insight into the emotions’ role in ethics must accept that there are two levels of emotion, that ‘cognition’ and ‘emotion’ are intricately intertwined and that there is constant duplex feedback between the body and the ‘mind’. Such a theory can be derived out of the psychological and ethical theories of Plato, Aristotle, Lucretius and research from psychology, neurophysiology and evolutionary biology.

1.2 Methodology and Outline

In Chapter 1 I trace the development of what I call the “pluralistic” account of emotion from its Homeric origins. I explain that in Homer we find an account of cognition that has reasoning thoroughly embedded in emotion and of mind that is completely physical. I call this account the visceral theory.¹ Plato conceptually split emotion from reasoning and the visceral from the cognitive while, for the purposes of psychology remaining faithful to Homeric physicalism. Aristotle maintained the basic platonic psychological moves and developed a matching ethical theory. Lucretius, though an Epicurean, developed what was for its time a state of the art physiological theory of mind and emotion easily compatible with Platonic psychological and Aristotelian ethical insights.

I end Chapter 1 and prepare the ground for Chapter 2 by looking at the Stoics’ work on the emotions. The Stoics took the conceptual tracks developed by Plato and utterly separated emotion from cognition and mind from body, two splits that have had enormous impact and remain to the present day.

Chapter 2 explains how Descartes mistakenly attempted to synthesize this Stoic account with a thorough materialism about the body, damaging the credibility of the very concepts of “mind” and “reason”. Further, particular methodological errors made by Descartes in this attempt motivated “visceral” theories of emotion that both severely and increasingly discounted the role of “cognition” in emotional action and passed along the “Cartesian Errors” to the present day by way of their influence on the James-

¹ The visceral theory is effectively that reasoning and emotion are physiological, largely undifferentiated responses to intense fleeting desires. More specifically, the emotions are nothing but certain physiological changes and the behavior they engender.

Lange theory of emotion. I also outline how concurrent to this was the rise of sentimentalism in ethics. I further argue that if I am correct in my diagnosis of the ubiquity of the Cartesian Errors, then the motivation for sentimentalism is ruined.

Chapter 3 covers the rise and evolution of both cognitive and visceral contemporary theories of emotion out of the James-Lange theory and offers critiques of these approaches. Chapter 4 outlines how the Plato-Aristotle-Lucretius (“pluralistic”) approach can be modernized by comparison to what I view as the best current theory of the emotions, that of Richard Lazarus. I rehearse how the basics of the pluralistic psychological and ethical theory can be understood in a contemporary light and show how, because of its easy compatibility with the theory of Lazarus, it is in line with, or at the very least not contradicted by contemporary empirical research.

1.3 Cognitive Theories and Pluralistic Theories in the Ancient World

Cognitive theories have as their core idea that emotions are some sort of judgment. I hasten to add that many cognitive theories do attempt to give a role to the physiological changes that go along with emotional states as delineated by the Homeric account. But these attempts to do so ultimately fail either by going too far along a reductive track or because of what the commitment to the centrality and superiority of “rational judgment” to the baser aspects of emotion (especially the physiological changes) entail. In short, ‘pure’ cognitive accounts cannot explain what I will describe as a feedback loop (duplex communication) between the very real visceral feelings and higher-order mental activity such as judgment.² And the upshot of them all for ethics is effectively the Stoic position that emotions are irrational, bad and eliminable.

Though perhaps the pluralists Plato and Aristotle are more ‘dualist’ than Homer or Lucretius, it is important to be clear that grounded as they are in Homer, they cannot eliminate the basic physical conceptual grasp of the mind, (psyche and/or thymos), and indeed work diligently to explain how physically the mind and body intertwine and interact. Nor do they leave the “totality of response” or “hotness” of emotional mental activity found in Homer; what Plato does is create the conceptual space, the theoretical framework for excluding *some* mental activity, *sometimes*³, as being pure and free from our ‘intrusive’ (yet forming and so invaluable) physicality. In his theology and

² It may be pointed out that ‘physiological’ and ‘feeling’ could be construed as importantly different because one might take ‘feelings’ to be mental objects. But this distinction is metaphorical, based on the Cartesian Errors I will outline in Chapter 2. Once we really learn to see the mind and body, cognition and emotion as not really separate things, the potential worry falls away.

³ And only the most rare individuals would be able to ‘completely’ be free of such encumbrances.

metaphysics Plato does often hope for a sort of dissolution of the bonds between mind and body but how much of this is metaphorical is anyone's guess and it is irrelevant for his psychological theory. And more importantly, it is irrelevant for our purposes here.

And for Lucretius, the soul and its smaller bits are all bits, though characteristically different than most bits. In any case, none of these theorists (and certainly not their theories) are weighed down by insisting on mind being a metaphysical substance categorically different than physical bodies.

Only the Stoics really are committed to such a stance. And as a result, they have no room for 'multiple levels of emotions' or 'feedback from the body (duplex communication)', two facts I find damning for any theory. They indeed think of emotions as purely mental phenomena that are unnecessarily joined with pains and pleasures of the body. And they famously want to eliminate all three. Again, this is a far cry from Plato and Aristotle and quite a ways indeed from Lucretius.

1.4 The Homeric Origins of Western Thought on Emotion

Scholars including F.M. Cornford⁴, R.B. Onians⁵ and J.W. Reeves⁶ have been fascinated with the mental life of the men and women of the *Iliad*⁷. They all share the idea that Iladic mental life was *significantly* different than our own and that it is of the utmost importance to the understanding of our own (almost) immeasurably fuller mental lives that we understand its starting point. The basic point is that, to paraphrase Cornford, our ancestors were unencumbered, unconstrained by any conceptual apparatus, they had no dogma or (to use a common metaphor) set of glasses in the way we do now after thousands of years of discussion, theorization, and experimentation. Instead these people “could take in the nature of things with untroubled eyes and with senses open to accept its revelations”.⁸

Onians’ work in The Origins of European Thought on the inception and change of Greek conceptions of the nature and organs of consciousness, though controversial, is very thorough and convincing regarding three points: 1) the Homeric concept of mind – such as it was – was one of a *unified* mind; there were no real distinctions between “cold” or detached thought and “hot” or emotion-laden mental activity; 2) The work we take to be done by the conscious mind *qua brain* was

⁴ Cornford, F.M. From Religion to Philosophy. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1912/1991.

⁵ Onians, R.B. The Origins of European Thought. 2nd Ed. New York: Arno Press, 1954/1973.

⁶ Reeves, J.W. Body and Mind in Western Thought. Baltimore: Pelican, 1958.

⁷ Homer. Iliad. Translated by Robert Fagles. New York; Penguin Books, 1990. References to original Greek taken from Homer, Homeri Opera in five volumes, (Oxford,UK: Oxford University Press, 1920, <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?lookup=Hom.+Il.+toc>> (10 January 2008).

⁸ Cornford, 2.

understood by the Iladics⁹ as handled by the lungs and a sort of combination of breath and blood called *thymos* that was found in the lungs¹⁰; 3) This conception evolved through various poets and thinkers and was in some sense present through late antiquity.¹¹

I'll argue later in this chapter that Plato took a quite new conception of the self-aware mind and applied it to the Homeric (and Pythagorean) frameworks for understanding it. In doing so he ended up with what is a terrific, even contemporary model of what actually does go on in the mind qua emotions – a pluralistic theory of emotions.

Onian's argues that whereas for us "to know" means something akin to the acquiring of e.g., more or less abstract justification for a perception or proposition, for the Homeric man, in addition to having a perception, knowing implied also the attainment "of stable feeling, sentiment, of such an attitude active and emotional" (Onians 16). The reason for this lies in what he terms a "primal unity of mind" wherein any perception or cognition is automatically associated with an emotion and is unfailingly followed by a "*tendency to action*" that "varies in degree and kind" depending on the object (Onians 16-17).¹² In defense of this he cites seemingly countless

⁹ And most Greeks and Romans, including Aristotle.

¹⁰ Thereby establishing that the basic Greek conception of mind was physical at its core.

¹¹ Another excellent compendium on the language of emotion and mind in Homer is Mumford, D.B. "Somatic Symptoms and Psychological Distress in the Iliad of Homer", *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, Vol. 41, No. 2 pp. 139-148, 1996.

¹² Compare "Agamemnon – furious, his dark heart filled to the brim, blazing with anger now, his eyes like searing fire. With a sudden, killing look he wheeled on Calchas first..."(I.101-104) and "He broke off and anguish gripped Achilles. The heart in his rugged chest was pounding, torn...Should he draw the long sharp sword slung at his hip, thrust through the ranks and kill Agamemnon now? – or check his rage and beat his fury down? As his racing spirit veered back and forth, just as he drew his huge blade...down from the vaulting heavens swept Athena..."(*Iliad* I.187-193).

examples of just “how *prone* to physical expression of their emotions Homer’s heroes were” (18).¹³ By contrast, he says, Greeks of Aristotle’s age, like we today, had attained a “greater ‘detachment’”; unlike the Iladics, we have the ability to think in “cold blood without bodily movement” and we have attained both more discrimination and have better defined various “aspects and phases” of mental activity (18).

Of course, as Onians points out, what follows from this tight connection between cognition, feeling, and action-tendency is that the relation of the moral character of a person to what they know is significantly closer than for an agent whose cognition is “more pure”.¹⁴

The difference between the Iladic ‘view’ and psychological views such as Plato’s seems to have come about, he indicates, with the rise of widespread improvement in people’s ability to be aware of what happens to themselves from the outside and what is going on on the inside, which allows for ‘cold’ thinking and better distinctions of mental activities, and a more enlightened view of morality than a merely practical one.

Onians give a plethora of examples of the strangeness of Iladic mind, so I’ll only briefly illustrate; 1) When Iladics forgot something, it wasn’t just that they stopped being immediately aware of something qua object of thought but that *just as quickly and fully*

¹³ For example, “The man is raving – with all the murderous fury in his heart. He lacks the sense to see a day behind, a day ahead...” (I.341-344); “Achilles – he’s made his own proud spirit so wild in his chest, so savage, not a thought for his comrades’ love...” (IX.629-631); and [Still mad at Agamemnon for the original slight]: “If only strife could die from the lives of gods and mend and anger that drives the sanest man to flare in outrage – bitter gall, sweeter than dripping streams of honey, that swarms in people’s chest and blinds like smoke – just like the anger Agamemnon king of men has roused within me now...” (XVIII.107-110).

¹⁴ Onians, 18

emotion and the tendency to act cease.¹⁵ 2) The verb ‘to learn’, *daenai*, literally means ‘to take into the mind’ and in a related manner, ‘to forget’, *lanthanesthai*, is literally ‘to let escape’, as in “breath which can be breathed in or out” and examples abound of these usages (56).

What Onians really illustrates is that there is no such thing as a ‘pure intellectual or cognitive phenomenon’ for us any more than for the Iladics. What there *is* different is the “degree of impurity” allowed by the above-mentioned improvement in self-awareness. While we are definitely “outwardly more restrained” and in many respects “inwardly calmer” than the Iladics are represented to have been, and while we are able to analyze the complexity of our mental lives by differentiating and naming quite often useful abstract elements of mental life, it is likely that this differentiation and naming are – more often than not, at least – not really separate. And more negatively, most contemporary theories of cognition and emotion lack what the Iladics had, concepts and terms like *phronein* to describe “the complex unity which is the reality” of our mental lives (20).¹⁶ As we’ll see below, this way of looking at things was not lost until the rise of Stoicism, but something quite like it is in play in Plato, Aristotle and Lucretius’ theory of the relation between emotions and cognition.

¹⁵ For example, “and again he was bent on outrage, on shaming noble Hector (XXIII.24)...swift Achilles was led away by Achaea’s kings (35)...still raging for his friend, to feast with Agamemnon (XXIII.37-38)...a second grief this harsh will never touch my heart while I am still among the living...But now let us consent to the feasting that I loathe” (XXIII.47-48) and “Achilles placed the lock in his dear comrade’s hands and stirred in the men again a deep desire to grieve. And now the sunlight would have set upon their tears if Achilles had not turned to Agamemnon so quickly: ‘Atrides – you are the first the armies will obey. Even of sorrow men can have their fill’” (XXIII.152-157)

¹⁶ To illustrate; “I took it into my head to lay him low with sharp bronze! But a god checked my anger, he warned me of what the whole realm would say, the loose talk of the people, rough slurs of men – they must not call me a father-killer...” (IX.458-460)

Furthering the point that the traditional Greek conception of the mind is physical, in his second chapter Onians tackles the organs of consciousness in the Homeric conception of human mental life focusing on explaining the nature and functions of *phrenes* and *thymos*. The former are the lungs¹⁷ and the latter is an admixture of breath and blood in the lung area into a sort of vapor. The *phrenes* were the location of the *thymos* and the *thymos* was the consciousness of a person. The evolution and expansion of the third of the three central concepts of Greek mentality, *psyche* develops later.

Regarding emotions Onians says Homer most often uses *thymos* (as opposed to heart, lungs, psyche, etc.) when describing emotion. Breathing and breath, the “very stuff of consciousness”, is quite clearly affected during violent emotion, as is the flow of blood (e.g. pulsation with flushing or pallor) and so the *thymos* is described as active, throbbing, beating, and panting, descriptions present in English even today.¹⁸ Take for example when Aphrodite visits Helen

“the goddess reached and tugged at her fragrant robe, whispering low, for all the world like an old crone...enticing so that the heart in Helen’s breast (*thumon eni stêthessin*) began to race. She knew the goddess at once, the long lithe neck, the smooth full breasts and the fire in those eyes – and she was amazed, she burst out with her name...” (III.385-399)

Further, a man’s breath in relation to blood, what Onians calls ‘breath-soul’, determines his fierceness, energy, and courage.¹⁹ And anger is “spoken of as entering into or being in...the *phrenes* or in the *thymos*”.²⁰ For instance, Agamemnon’s refusal to accept a ransom from a priest eventually leads to the following: “...that’s when the fury gripped

¹⁷ He gives copious examples defending this interpretation. Cf. esp. pp. 25-35.

¹⁸ Onians, 49.

¹⁹ Onians, 50.

²⁰ Onians, 52.

the son of Atreus. Agamemnon leapt to his feat and hurled his threat".²¹ A literal translation from the original Greek would have it that it is bile (*cholos*) that grips him. And when, in Book 21 he runs into a man he had previously captured, enraged he "addresses his own great heart" a literal translation would render it his "megalêtora thumon", his courageous thymos (soul), that he addresses. As we'll see this seems to become Plato's "spirited part" of the psyche.

Onians argues that while it may seem strange to us to associate the emotions with breathing as we generally are more 'cognitive' about our emotions and abstract the emotion from bodily expressions of it the above considerations make it quite sensible. And he even points out the similarities between the Homeric view of emotions with the James-Lange theory I will discuss later, saying that the theory holds "that the bodily changes follow directly the perception of the existing fact and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur is the emotion".²²

It has been pointed out that Patroclus appears to Achilles in Book 23 as a ghost²³, which leads one to wonder about both 1) the "physicality" of soul in Homer and just what "breath" there is in "breath-soul". These are fair questions and it may be that we

²¹ Homer, I.386-388.

²² Onians, 53. "But as soon as magnificent Paris marked Atrides shining among the champions, Paris' spirit shook...he cringed from death as one who trips on a snake in a hilltop hollow recoils, suddenly, trembling grips his knees and pallor takes his cheeks and back he shrinks. So he dissolved again in the proud Trojan lines, dreading Atrides - magnificent, brave Paris. (III.30-37)

²³ Pappas, Nicholas. Personal communication. The passage in question: "No sooner had sleep caught him...than the ghost of stricken Patroclus drifted up...He was like the man to the life, every feature, the same tall build and the fine eyes and voice and the very robes that used to clothe his body. Hovering at his head the phantom spoke (XXIII.64-68)...In the same breath he stretched his loving arms but could not seize him, no the ghost slipped underground like a wisp of smoke...with a high thin cry. And Achilles sprang up with a start and staring wide...cried in desolation, 'Ah god! So even in death's strong house there is something left, a ghost, a phantom - true, but on real breath of life.'" (XXIII.99-104)

don't have a final answer to this. But it need not tell against what we've said so far for at least two reasons: 1. There are many cases of gods and ghosts described as physically real, even having physical effects on real objects²⁴; 2. There is some consensus in the secondary literature that the physicality of ghosts in Homer is to be expected. In the first place I'd submit that examples of gods appearing physically real and having physical effects on physical bodies is evidence of a serious confusion on the part of the poet, or a useful metaphorical way of dealing with amazing or improbable events. In the second place, scholars such as Thomas Van Norwick²⁵ and D. Felton²⁶ have argued that physical ghosts are "common"²⁷ and may serve to symbolize the process of grieving, giving description of the pain and adjustment of loss and allowing an individual to "make room" for the way the relationship with the dearly departed will evolve, much as a wake and funeral might do today).²⁸

²⁴ E.g. "Rearing behind him Pallas seized his fiery hair - only Achilles saw her...struck with wonder he spun around, he knew her at once, Pallas Athena! The terrible blazing of those eyes..." (I.196-199); "what fools we were to marvel at wondrous Hector...a god goes with him always, beating off disaster - look, that's Ares beside him now, just like a mortal!" (V. 601-604); "back at his man he sprang, enraged with brazen spear, mad for the kill but Aphrodite snatched Paris away, easy work for a god, wrapped him in swirls of mist and set him down in his bedroom filled with scent" (III.381-383); Aeneas would have died on the spot if Zeus's daughter had not marked him quickly, his mother Aphrodite...Round her beloved son her glistening arms went streaming, flinging her shining robe before him, only a fold but it blocked the weapons hurtling towards his body (V.312-317); "With that challenge Athena levered Sthenelus out the back of the car. A twist of her wrist and the man hit the ground, springing aside as the goddess climbed aboard...the big oaken axle groaned beneath the weight, bearing a great man and a terrifying goddess" (V.835-839).

²⁵ Van Norwick, Thomas. Somewhere I have Never Traveled: The Hero's Journey. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1996.

²⁶ Felton, D. Haunted Greece and Rome: Ghost Stories from Classical Antiquity. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1999.

²⁷ Felton, 18.

²⁸ Van Norwick, 75,

Onians traces out how the *psyche* went from in Homer being merely the life-soul to an entity “concerned in perception, thought and feeling”.²⁹ So while Pindar says that the *thymos* is “concerned in feeling and thought,” the *psyche* (also often referred to as *eidolon*) is “divine” and “sleeps when the limbs are active”, and “the *psyche* is concerned in the feelings of ordinary waking life, which is perhaps why he does not use [‘psyche’] in referring as above to the older conception of a soul explicitly not so concerned” and opts to call that *eidolon* “.³⁰

Finally he makes explicit that these conceptions end up in Plato, pointing to the *Timaeus*³¹ where it is said that the head is the “divinest and dominant part” of a human, and is “inhabited by *psyche* that is a daimon and survives death” while the “moral part of the *psyche*, that which partakes of courage and *thymos* resides in the chest above the diaphragm”.³² I take it that this is an improvement on Homer and will explain how below.

²⁹ Onians, 115-116.

³⁰ Onians, 116.

³¹ 44d, 73, 77d, 86b, 90a, 91a-b. This is a reason to focus on the *Timaeus* when we discuss Plato, but we’ll need to study other more “canonical” works too.

³² Onians, 119.

1.5 Early Greek Mind as “Totality of Response”

Working on themes developed in Onians’ work, in Body and Mind in Western Thought, J.W. Reeves argues that it is hard to overestimate the importance of “emotional expressiveness” in understanding what the Homeric Greeks were like: examples of “copious and public” weeping on the part of “even the most aggressive and manly abound”.³³ And Reeves concurs with Onians’ characterization of *thymos* as a breath-consciousness that changes as feelings and thought change. And this *thymos* also “determines the fierceness or energy and courage” of a person.

The point of this is that they seemed to consider “mind” as a “totality of response” whereas in modern psychology we make “sharp distinctions between thought and feeling”.³⁴ That is, they, unlike we, did not make a sharp distinction between the two and often seem to have made no distinction at all.³⁵

Reeves finishes her discussion of the Iliadics wistfully wondering what the world would be like if they “had started with the thymos, not as a thing but as a function of head and heart, and had not tried to lodge the immortal soul anywhere”.³⁶ I’m going to argue that the line of thinking pressed by Plato, Aristotle and Lucretius purposefully accounted for something quite like this.

I take it that it is this development that both requires abandonment of strict adherence to the visceral theory and inspires Plato to insist upon the importance of the

³³ Reeves, 25. “All as one the armies cried out in sorrow, and Achilles led the chant...and among them Thetis stirred a deep desire to grieve. And the sands grew wet, the armor of the fighting men grew wet with tears, such bitter longing he roused” (XXIII.12-16)

³⁴ Reeves, 25.

³⁵ Reeves, 27.

³⁶ Reeves, 28.

mind understood as judgment or discernment in emotions. Doing so has the benefit of creating morality above and beyond the mere practical morality of the Iladic people, but with the drawback of inspiring cognitivist theories like that of the Stoics to devalue and eschew the emotions for their inherent physicality. To the extent cognitivist theories develop that line of thought rather than more directly what Plato (and Aristotle and Lucretius) had in mind they are mistaken. I argue we will all be better served by understanding Plato on the Homeric terms he was working with and applying them, with similar worries in mind, to our own thoughts and feelings. He was right to take seriously the concepts and claims of the Iladics, as far as they go.

1.6 Summary

Before going forward there are two very important things to note. The Homeric theory, crude as it is, is the most consistent visceral presentation of the emotions and like all subsequent attempts at a visceral theory it uses much more cognition than is obvious at first blush. Finally, I will point out that in some very important ways the basic idea behind the Homeric theory is right - as far as it goes. But it would be up to Plato to bring in a psychology that would properly explain the relation of judgment to emotional response.

2. PLURALIST EMOTIONS IN CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY

2.1 The Platonic Philosophy of the Emotions

A. Introduction

Plato's account of the emotions says that we are born with certain mental capacities that inform our baseline responses to internal needs and external impositions. These are honed and changed as our bodies gain experience and fluidity. The body is the conduit of information about internal physical states and external events that caused changes in internal states. We come to perceive the world by being "shaken"; our mental lives are started by and develop through the violence visited upon our bodies and so our minds. In early development, when the world attacks, we are all Iladics in that everything else takes a back seat to the immediate. We lack even basic intelligence though, and work up to a modicum of it with experience. Eventually we get more 'abstract'; better and better at identifying and distinguishing between same and same and different and different. Beings who don't use concepts such as 'same' and 'different' have only apparently willful actions, they have no judgment.

B. The Physiology of Perception

Plato's psychology is able to distinguish the perception of simply animal conscious 'agents', noting that it is a human's basic perception mechanism, which underlies self-conscious being and thought. For every property, perceived or unperceived, it is possible to distinguish and discuss its concomitant pleasures and pains. Plato explains that we do this by distinguishing what is "easy to move" (sensory organs such as eyes) from what is "hard to move" (bones, hair) in an animal-conscious

being. (We can immediately see that though he doesn't use the term, the distinction the theory is using has a lot to do with 'nerve endings').

The distinction is crucial because disturbances all pass their force in a chain reaction until the impulse reaches the center of consciousness. Thus the property that started the disturbance is reported through the impulse. If the impulse is not strong enough to move *something hard*, it doesn't disturb the living thing as a whole, and so is not perceived.

Clearly, "something hard" needs to be explained better, but the concept is sound. For example, it may be that the theory allows that perception itself is "hard" in as much as it constantly filters out noise from our awareness, much as any other "hard" barrier such as bone might be expected to. If this seems question-begging, think of the amount of energy it would take any organism to perceive - even animal consciously - every property that could cause an impulse. Let's be clear that it doesn't mean that such properties as are not perceived "don't register" with the organism to some extent, it's just that the body has a built in way to block things out. That is the core of what Plato's theory is trying to explain.

More to the point, Plato is saying that when you distinguish between properties and the perceptions of them, and accept that nearly all properties are unperceived, you come to see that there is a 'discovery' to be made, at least conceptually or explanatorily: the living body with a psyche is the true center of consciousness, not the psyche alone.

To really see the power of Plato's psychology we must see that he uses a very insightful and simple framing question to get at the nature of perception and thought: "What are we conscious of?" or "What do you sense perceive qua living thing as a

whole?"³⁷ He thinks that if you know how this mechanism works, it will help discern how the "more intelligent" one works because there is at least some causal efficacy from one to the other.

There are two kinds of "mental" system (psyche) at play; one is localized at the brain and the other within the rest of the body; divine (brain) psyche and body (mortal) psyche. The latter is clearly the basis of what today we'd call the central nervous system, and consists in "necessary disturbances" including pleasure, pain, boldness, fear, anger and expectation. Note that all of these 'psychological tools' are necessary for practical or survival responses for a conscious agent, and they will be at the core of so much of socialization. These body-based mental activities are closely aligned with simple ('unreasoning') perception, e.g. lust, and are 'separated' from the psyche capable of reasoning by some sort of wall or barrier. After all we are able to sometimes overcome the perception-lust system whereas other animals cannot.

It stands to reason that something in or about the brain allows for this and in fact the brain is physically (geographically) separated from the rest of the system that provides for our awareness of properties.

Perhaps this two-part distinction is more or less obvious, but it is too simple. To move forward Plato's theory has to write a check and promise to cash it, asking: do we in fact distinguish anything beyond pure reasoning and bodily perceptions? Yes. Can we, physiologically? Yes. Should we? It seems fruitful and we expect it to have some explanatory power.

³⁷Later on we will see how damaging it is that Descartes fails to follow Plato's lead on this. Cf. Plato's Phaedrus 270c-d for a short explanation of the method.

We are in the business of looking at sameness and difference; we're trying to pinpoint how perception works and linking it to higher cognitive functions; we're committed to a physiological relationship that goes: sense perception → consciousness → higher cognition.

At the time the best and accepted physiology, as well as one's perception of where feelings are felt, said that the midriff-thorax-lungs was fundamentally important. While this has been obsolete and was replaced (by what we'll see later on), the midriff and diaphragm is in fact a sort of sheath or shield such that it is not implausible to think of this part of the viscera along the soft/hard to move continuum. It's a convenient physical account of the metaphorical 'protection' discussed above that keeps all forces from being impulses and overloading us.

Noting that (at the time, at least) people distinguished between type of bodily psyche, let's try to understand how we can and ought to formalize this. To do so let's have a few stipulations that will need to be re-checked; the *superior* part of the bodily psyche has the following properties: it exhibits spirit and ambition, it is physically closer to the brain, it can and does listen to and work with reason, it forces compliance from the part of the psyche that consists of appetites (at least in myriad cases where appetites don't listen to reason).

To pay this check we should note a few related facts: the heart is well-positioned as a mechanism to exact what the spirit 'wants' through blood, veins etc. That is, it has the physical capacity to 'exhort' the body to perform in certain ways; we know that we sometimes 'boil over' when reason shows us that we have performed wrongfully or poorly *or* when another agent performs wrongfully or poorly towards us. So this systems seems to 'allow' reason to be in charge; No animals could exist if its appetites

for the things the body needs were not 1) sustained, and 2) strongly felt. In fact, these collected necessities we call appetites constantly need satisfaction; when they are not satisfied the intellect cannot work in peace. And finally, let us stipulate that *by and large* the appetites don't 'understand' the deliverances of reason, and to the extent that they do, they have no innate regard for reason, whereas the 'higher-body-psyche', the 'emotion-action center' clearly does. That is, the appetites appear to common sense to be enticed - and so controlled - by 'images and phantoms' (explained below).

C. Cashing the Check

Given that the emotions do reign in the appetites, there is a physical, causal mechanism at work. Plato gives us a liver-focused system. It is clearly wrong but it is important to note both his effort to meet accepted 'scientific' theory and at the same time to answer a difficult puzzle as honestly as possible, with as much explanatory power as possible. Before getting deep into how he does so, let's take a more 'abstract' look at his moves.

1. Sometimes the emotion center (superior-body-psyche) communicates what reason wants done to the appetites, which would typically run on their own.
2. Whatever communication is done *with*, it must be in a way that is 'understandable' by the appetites.
3. There appears to be a bodily/physical messaging system that uses bile and who knows what else to affect vital organs such that the body is put into e.g., pain and nausea.
4. These pains and nausea are strong enough to undermine the strong urge to satisfy a currently active desire and replace it with another one supplied by reason.
5. The 'mind' is able to manipulate the proper physical changes such that chemicals physically move organs/viscera/etc, *thus* sending a physiological instantiation/message of pleasure or pain in an attempt to *silence* the basic pangs that are messages of appetite. These images aren't literally pictures, phantoms aren't 'non-physical spectres'. We are talking about chemical signals being sent back and forth that are registered physiologically and affect physical changes. The process works the other

way too – the mind can bring “sweet respite” that restores things to their normal state. And of course sometimes it may happen that the viscera reject such messages (this is duplex communication). This must be so because knowing what we know about the basic appetites and how most animals are influenced by them, we’d never be able to do, e.g., philosophy, art, carpentry unless sated. The stimulus-appetite-response mechanism would be unchecked.

We now have the basics for how an animal conscious being feels pleasure and pain, etc.

If there is anything to add to the account for a self-conscious agent, it must be explained.

In filling this out Plato also further illuminates duplex communication, showing more clearly how the body impacts the psyche. Plato identifies a class of diseases of the psyche that result from a bodily condition: 1) mindlessness, which can be either ignorance or madness, and 2) excessive pleasure or pain; too much of either leads to inappropriate exertion, which undermines the ability to see or hear anything correctly.³⁸

Finally, we have a summary of Plato’s explanation of the psyche as fundamentally and intimately a physical part of the body.³⁹ Fundamentally there is the “psyche of the universe”, which is physical. Leftovers from this process are used to

³⁸ For example, sexual overindulgence leads to a disease of the psyche caused by the condition of (seminal) fluid in the body; any pain or pleasure is from some type of chemical or fluid “wandering up and down the body”

³⁹ The Phaedrus (246a-249c) also discusses the structure and function of the soul, offering a summary of what it acknowledges would be a very long and difficult undertaking. Plato uses the famous metaphor of the team of winged horses and their charioteer to do so. All souls have horses of mixed stock, one beautiful and good and the other the opposite, which makes the charioteer’s job very difficult. The soul, being a part of the universal soul is locomotive and so grants living beings locomotion. When the charioteer – intelligence – tries to pilot, the “heaviness” of the bad horse weighs him down if he has not trained it well, and would cause the “extreme toil and struggle” the soul will face. For intelligence to have the time and place to study (and thus learn how to live well) it will have to guide the distracted horses as well as it can, knowing that even the best souls cannot do a uniformly good job in keeping them in line. Weaker souls do a worse job and have less time to think clearly, and many are “crippled” by incompetent drivers. This is close enough to the discussion in the Timaeus that we don’t have to consider that account the “odd one out”.

make human psyche. *Any* mortal body that is the result of a pregnancy is ‘invested’ with ‘immortal’ psyche, which *orbits* the body invested by it. These orbits are bound within the body’s own “mighty river of motion” and all psyches are affected by the movement of the body and sensory experience.

D. Tripartite Mind

Though Plato discusses the mind and emotions throughout his corpus, his most extended discussion of the interplay between the two is in the Timaeus.⁴⁰ It is there that he fully develops the tripartite distinction of the individual’s psyche originally put forth in the *Republic*. I eschew using the English word ‘soul’ and instead continue my convention of using the terms⁴¹ ‘*psyche*’, ‘*thymos*’ and ‘*phrenes*’ to refer to the rational, spirited and appetitive ‘parts’ of the soul⁴² to help the reader see the similarities and differences between Plato and his forerunners and successors.

Between 42e-43a Plato explains that the psyche is necessarily *nailed* in bodies, themselves *welded together*; the human body was made into an individual unit and in this process it was “invested” with the “immortal psyche”. To make the human body, the creator gods

...bonded together [fire, and earth, water and air]...but not with those indissoluble bonds...instead...copious rivets so small as to be invisible, thereby making each body a unit made up of all the components. And they went on to invest this body - into and out of which things were to flow - with the orbits of the immortal soul.

⁴⁰ Plato, Timaeus. In Plato: Complete Works, edited by John M. Cooper, 1224-1291. (Donald J. Zeyl, trans.) Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1997.

⁴¹ I am taking the liberty of not providing literally accurate conjugations or declensions of these terms but the basic root terms for the sake of clarity and simplicity.

⁴² When Plato talks generally of the soul, I will use the term psyche. As such, I will try to be clear when Plato means the ‘mind’ specifically.

The most basic property of bodies qua units, however, is that they “have things coming to them and leaving them” (42a), they are fundamentally things “into and out of which (43a)” things flow. As such, of necessity the first innate capacity an infant would have is that of sense perception, which first *flowers out of* “forceful disturbances” from the outside world (42a). The second innate capacity human infants have is “love, mingled with pleasure and pain” (42a). And they would come to have fear and spiritedness, “plus whatever goes with having these emotions” and their opposites (42a).

Plato means that we have the capacity to experience these emotions built into us to a degree but that they don't fully come out until forceful disturbances call for them. That is to say that on Plato's account we have as absolutely basic tools in infancy both sense perception and the capacity to love, mixed with pleasure and pain. With those ingredients in tow, as the outside world makes itself felt, we develop fear and spiritedness plus the changes that go along with them, and their natural opposites, presumably bravery and calmness. Plato then says that to the extent infants develop psyches that *master* their emotional states their lives are just and gain the reward of “a life of happiness that agreed with their character” (42b). But if a person's psyche is mastered by his emotions their lives are unjust (42b).⁴³

Upon this core Plato adds a physiological account of appetite and the clash of internal appetites with the recognition of the power of the outside world. This is basically the original form of what will be the main moral concern for the rest of a person's life, the tension between your desires to have what you want along with the realization that other people want the same for themselves and that the outside world is

⁴³ Cf. Richard Sorabji, Emotion and Peace of Mind. 2000 (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000), 194-196.

indifferent to your desires. In effect, the machinations of the psyche are bound up – but not wholly mastering or mastered – by a “mighty river”, a “nourishment-bearing billow” (43a-43b). The psyche struggles with the mighty river and tosses and is tossed by it such that the individual literally flails about in a quite disorderly way.⁴⁴

But even stronger than the billow is the turbulence produced by the outside things, the “disturbances that occurred when the body encountered and collided with objects and forces outside it” (43b). The motions produced by all these encounters are “conducted through the body to the psyche and strike against it” (43c). Three important points need to be made here. One is to point out clearly that this account has said that we are born with certain mental capacities that inform our baseline ‘responses’ to internal needs and external impositions, and that these responses are honed and changed as our bodies become more coordinated and have more experiences. And it says the body is the *conduit of information* about internal physical states and external events that cause changed internal states. Finally, as Zeyl points out (fn 22, p. 1246) Plato apparently (mistakenly) thinks that the etymology of the Greek word for sensations, *aisthēseis*, is etymologically related to ‘to shake’, *aissein*. This is interesting because though he may be in error, we get very clearly that in his mind we have a very physical state “being shaken” as the core of how we come to perceive the world. That is, at the core of what we are as bodies imbued with minds, what effectively starts our mental lives and has a large part to do with the development of our mental lives is the physical violence visited upon our bodies *and so* our nascent minds.

⁴⁴ Again Sorabji can offer much to someone interested in more discussion of this point. Cf. esp. p.116-120.

At this stage in early development when the outside world ‘attacks’, everything else takes a back seat, even hunger, etc – just as was the case with the Iladics. Though it may look like infants have considered purposive action this is a mistake; the psyche is not yet in a position to “take the lead” and can’t help being caught up when its “entire vessel” is attacked from outside (44a). Our psyche’s ‘revolutions’ are under the control of the outside-originating sensations; “even today whenever a psyche is bound within a mortal body, it first lacks intelligence”(44a-b). But eventually the appetites’ initially overwhelming force gets mitigated and, as time progresses, the rational or cognitive mind establishes itself more and more, to a degree such that like a successfully adapted animal the agent can control its body and get what it wants out of its surroundings. The psyche becomes more and more able to “correctly identify” same with same and different from different, which “renders intelligent” the person who can correctly distinguish between such things (44b-c). Without proper understanding of such concepts as ‘same’ and ‘different’ there is only apparent willful action and there is no judgment.⁴⁵

Next, between 61c-65 Plato gives a theory of how (animal) conscious agents perceive, which is of course also the basic perception-mechanism for self-conscious people but not the end of the story. Effectively Plato says that, with respect to any and every property, whether it is *perceived* or not, we can discuss the perception of pleasures and pains by distinguishing what is “easy to move” (e.g. sensory organs) and “hard to move” (e.g. hair, bones) (64b-c). Disturbances pass their force on in a “chain reaction with some parts affecting others as they were affected” until the impulse reaches the

⁴⁵ Which we can tentatively understand in Plato’s terms as the method of “collection and division”, aided by the “principle of contraries”.

“center of consciousness” and reports the property that produced the reaction (64b). When an impulse is not strong enough to move something hard to move, no neighboring parts are disturbed and so the initial disturbance fails to move on to “the living thing as a whole” and it falls unperceived (64b-c). So here we have it that the “center of consciousness” is not necessarily the psyche per se but the living thing – body and psyche together – as a whole.

Within 69-76 Plato gives what we can consider as the physiology of perception in a further way, understanding what you are conscious of, what you ‘sense-perceive’ qua living thing as a whole. He thinks we need to know about how the latter mechanism works in order to discern how the more ‘intelligent’ one works; “the divine (psyche) cause cannot be comprehended unless we understand the necessary (physical-causal) cause” (68e-69a).

The immortal psyche was “encased” (confined, localized) in the head and the body as a whole was given as a vehicle to allow it to move about (69c). But within the body there is *another kind*⁴⁶ of *psyche*, the mortal kind (69c).⁴⁷ The kind of psyche that is mortal has in it the “dreadful but necessary disturbances” pleasure and pain, boldness and fear (“foolish counselors both”), the spirit of anger (“hard to assuage”), and expectation (“easily led astray”)(69d). These *mental* activities were fused with “unreasoning sense perception” and “all venturing lust” (69d). In order to preserve the divine psyche as much as possible from inevitable “stain” (considering the necessity of being embodied), the mortal psyche was put in the chest, with the neck separating it from the divine/reasoning psyche (69d-e).

⁴⁶ Eidōs, often translated as ‘form’.

⁴⁷ You’ll see when we discuss Lucretius that this is just one of the ways Plato influenced him, and presumably Epicurus.

But the mortal psyche also admits of a distinction within it; one part is “naturally superior” to the other and it is partitioned from the rest of it by the midriff.⁴⁸ The superior part is the part of mortal psyche that exhibits spirit and ambition and is “closer to the head” to listen to and work with reason to force compliance from the part consisting of appetites in the cases where appetites refuse to obey reason (70a). Relatedly, we find the heart well positioned to ‘enforce’ or ‘enact’ what the spirit wants. The heart, being something of a knot that ties all the veins together and is the spring of blood can “keenly sensitize” every bodily part that is sensitive so that they will “listen and follow completely” the “exhortations and threats” of the spirit when it is “boiled over at a report from reason that some wrongful act involving its members is taking place”, whether the wrongdoer is internal or external (70b). This system allows the “best part among them all” to be in charge (70b).⁴⁹⁵⁰

Finally we come to the part of the mortal psyche that has appetites for “food, drink, and whatever else, given the body’s nature, it feels a need for” (70d-70e). It is a beast whose sustainment could not be avoided “if a mortal race were ever to be”. It “ever feeds at its trough”, kept as quiet as possible so that the intellect can work in peace and figure out what is “beneficial for one and all” (70e-71a). This part of the psyche by and large does not “understand the deliverances of reason”. But even if “one way or another” it does have “some awareness of them”, it has no “innate regard” for them the

⁴⁸We should keep this distinction in mind both looking back to Homer and when we get to discussion of the smart and dumb vagus in contemporary physiology.)

⁴⁹ I take it that this means the *thymos* but it might be the *ker* (heart), which is also often referred to in Homer as a ‘mental’ organ. And the lungs work as a cooling device for the heart as the heart might be better able to obey reason if it is less “on fire” and “laboring less”. Of course, in charge over all would be the *psyche*.

⁵⁰ Sorabji also argues that Plato “allows that judgments can be made by the appetitive and irrational parts of the soul, as well as by the rational part”. (Sorabji 126).

way the emotion/action center does (71a). Instead, “it is enticed by images and phantoms”, much more than the emotion/action center is, and can be controlled through these (71a). The emotion/action center can use the liver to communicate what reason wants done to the appetites in “imagery⁵¹” it can understand: the liver’s bitterness and sweetness (71b-c). That is, the psyche’s thoughts can send a strong enough message to the liver that they make a “stamp” on it and use the threat of releasing its bitter bile, frightening it and so make it obey severe commands. This bitterness can “shrink” the liver, closing up its fissures, resulting in “pains and bouts of nausea” (71c). To be clear, once again, what we have is the mind communicating messages to its emotional system so as to use bodily organs and systems to force another aspect of it self into disregarding “its” (those) natural inclinations towards satisfaction for other purposes. But this means that the body sends messages back and forth with the mind, and that the viscera have the ability to both be influenced by and to influence the psyche and thymos – to obey or to disobey it or them. This is duplex communication.

So Plato puts it that sometimes thought’s “gentle inspiration” paints opposite pictures on the liver and bring respite from the bitterness and instead using the liver’s natural sweetness to restore its straight, smooth, and free state. This sort of influence makes the “portion of the *psyche* that inhabits the region around the liver”, the appetites,

⁵¹ It is interesting to note that Plato describes ‘imagery’ by comparing it with phantoms (71a) and yet this was to be ‘shown’ in a ‘sweet and bitter’ organ that would work *as a mirror does* for literally visible images. He says that “thoughts stamped upon it *as upon a mirror* that received the stamps of visible things. (Plato’s theory of visual perception was that light/images entered the eye from the object as ‘sight’ went forth from the eye, creating the perception proper)(*Ti* 45c, *Tht* 156c-e) and returns visible images” (71b). But this is purely metaphorical talk – as Plato explains in 71b-d the mind uses the liver’s sweetness and bitterness to straighten or wrinkle it, sending a physiological ‘image’ of pleasure or pain. The point is that ‘images’ here don’t literally mean pictures, or even ‘spirits qua non physical spectres’ but effectively, chemical signals.

“gracious and well-behaved”. If this didn’t happen, we’d be totally undisciplined in matters of food and drink, etc, and we’d be “incapable of philosophy, the arts, and of heeding” the dictates of reason (72e-73a). We would truly only seek pleasure and avoid pain because the part of us that (almost) only responds to those stimuli would have no internal control to make it feel pleasure and pain for disobedience.

Having at this point explained the basic mechanism for feeling pleasure and pain for a purely animal consciousness Plato moves at 86b-87b to describe pleasure and pain with respect to a self-conscious agent. This passage also begins to detail the duplex communication between the psyche and the body by explaining how the body can make the psyche “diseased and witless”, inflicting upon a person “severe pleasures and pains” (86c-d).

Plato explains there is a class of “diseases of the psyche that result from a bodily condition” (86b). One such disease is “mindlessness” and in turn it admits of two types; madness and ignorance (86b). Relatedly, excessive pleasures and pains are the diseases that pose the greatest dangers for the psyche. Too much enjoyment or suffering leads one to exert him self in inopportune ways, undermining “the ability to see or hear anything right” (86b-c).

As a particular example, sexual overindulgence is a “disease of the psyche” that is primarily caused by “the condition of a single stuff which flows within the body” (86d). Similarly with pain, it is “the body that causes the psyche so much trouble, in the same ways as pleasure: when a person’s acid or briny phlegm or bitter, bilious humors “wander up and down the body” they “mix the vapor they give off with the motion of the soul and so are confounded with it” (87a). As these diseases move to each “region of

the psyche”, each produces “a multitude of varieties of bad temper and melancholy, recklessness, cowardice, forgetfulness, and stupidity” (87a).

E. The Physicality of Mind in Plato

I want to expand on what’s already been said to make clear the extent to which Plato thinks of psyche as physical and naturally, fundamentally, necessarily and intimately a part of the human body, as is evidenced by unpacking the statements “Humans have a twofold nature” (42a) and “psyches were of necessity implanted in bodies “ (42a).

A caveat: yes, Plato is hopeful that the psyche can be extricated from the body and survives death. It is obvious in the *Phaedo* and implicit here and in the myths of the *Republic* and *Phaedrus*. But that fact is at best a problem for his theological positions, *not* for his psychology and physiology. And so it is of no concern here. These considerations have for too long outweighed Plato’s ingenious efforts to show the psyche as a physical thing intimately connected to the larger, whole body.

First, lets note that the “psyche of the universe” is physical, as Plato makes clear when he refers to “the same bowl in which [God] had mixed the psyche of the universe” and that the gods used the remainder of the same ingredients to make the psyches of humans, “mounting” them onto the stars as holding pens (*Timaeus* 41c-d).

But how does Plato envision the psyche with respect to the mind-body problem? Well let’s note that by the creation of mortal bodies (41e-43a) Plato does not literally mean that the children of the gods were making all full-grown bodies in a stockpile as they did with psyches. He is giving a metaphorical account of how any mortal body would be made when a pregnancy occurs, in the spirit of how we talk about DNA being

the blueprint for a human. Taking the bonded together parts of the mortal body, held together into one thing by many tiny rivets, they “invested” it with the “orbits of the immortal *psyche*” (43a). The orbits are “bound within” the “mighty river” of the motions of the body (43a).⁵² Plato constantly refers to the psyche’s *orbits* and how the orbits are affected by the movements of the body and by sensory experience. And he explicitly states that the orbits of the *psyche* are circular motions in the same spot, which if taken seriously for a moment is quite helpful in answering what *kind of* physical object the psyche is. One useful analogy is to electrons flying around an atom, but another may be even better.

Plato also explains the constitution of the *psyche* as a sort of compound of three components, a fabric

...having thus made a single whole of these three, he went on to make appropriate subdivisions...he first marked off a section of the whole and then another...next a third...a fourth...a fifth...a sixth...a seventh...at that stage the mixture from which these sections were being cut was all used up...he then took the whole fabric and cut it down the middle into two strips, which he placed crosswise at their middle points to form a shape like the letter ‘X’; he then bent the ends round in a circle and fastened them to each other opposite the point at which the strips crossed, to make two circles, one inner and one outer..[one circle moving clockwise, one counter-clockwise]...(34e-36d)

Thinking in contemporary terms, we can faithfully understand this to mean that psyche is a type of electric current running around in a circuit inside the body, localized at the head. Being only slightly charitable we can see how this would comfortably fit with our

⁵² Body has six motions, up, down, left, right, backwards, forward (Timaeus 43b-c). Mind has one motion, “uniform circular motion on the same spot” (Timaeus 34a).

own notions of brain activity being electrochemical or as describing a sort of electromagnetic field.⁵³

I do not have to advocate in favor of completely adopting Plato's view – though there is much to recommend much of it – to point out that he, here, is *not* a “substance dualist” in the way we think of philosophers such as the Stoics or Descartes or of the typical religious follower of, e.g. Christianity being. Plato is a thoroughgoing physicalist or materialist about the mind, even if he wishes to complicate what happens to the psyche after a person dies.

⁵³ A more fanciful analogy would be to think of the *psyche's* attachment to the rest of the human body as a ‘tachyon shield’. Tachyons are proposed particles in physics that can travel faster than (and no slower than) the speed of light. In effect, such a particle or set of particles would be impenetrable because it would be everywhere at once and since in that sense it couldn't be ‘decomposed’ it would be ‘immortal’. For a short discussion of tachyons cf. Motta, Leonardo & Waldyr Rodrigues, Jr. "Tachyon." Eric Weisstein's World of Physics.. <<http://scienceworld.wolfram.com/physics/Tachyon.html>> (1 Feb 2008). Using tachyons to make powerful weapons and shields is a popular device in science fiction and in futuristic video games.

2.2 The Aristotelian Philosophy of Emotion and its Relation to Ethics

A. Introduction

We've detailed the evolution of properly *philosophical* talk about the emotions from Homer to Plato and so set the stage for two scientifically minded philosophers, Aristotle and Lucretius to give us a better understanding of the workings that underlie the ancient view of the emotions and a very involved account of the "cognitivist" ethical system that goes with it.

A caveat: It is very difficult to say with great certainty that one has understood either the theory *as stated* or Aristotle's *intention*. Since this is not primarily a work of translation or even of Aristotelian scholarship it cannot be my main concern to achieve any level of certainty as to the latter.

While Aristotle is widely embraced as a patriarch of the cognitivist philosophers of emotion, to pronounce his account cognitivist (or visceralist, or feeling-theory⁵⁴) is to engage in overzealousness akin to insisting that Plato simply must be a mind-body dualist. Aristotle, like Plato, thinks that there is a special, interactive and reciprocal communication between the body, cognition considered generally, and the emotions; what I call 'duplex' communication.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Scarantino, Andrea. Explicating Emotions. (PhD. diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2005), 17.

⁵⁵ In Cooper (417) appears to agree, saying that if Aristotle is using *phantasia* to indicate "non-epistemic appearance...according to which something may appear to, or strike one, in some way (say, as being insulting or belittling) even if one knows there is no good reason for one to take it so" then he is "alert to the crucial fact about emotions, that one can experience them simply on the basis of how, despite what one knows or believes to be the case, things strike one – how things look to one when, for one reason or another, one is disposed to feel that emotion". John M. Cooper, Reason and Emotion

Examining Aristotle's work on the emotions shows that an empirically friendly approach to understanding the mind and emotions and how they relate to ethics was available before the version that began to be put forward in the 17th century. And his efforts to provide a thorough-going ethical theory keenly sensitive to the emotions allows us to see first hand just how formative a theory of emotions is to ethical theory. When we understand how he negotiates competing arguments for the nature of emotions from an ethical point of view, we get a solid platform on which to eventually build out a powerful and practicable ethical theory that is friendly to empirical research yet not wedded to bad science. Aristotle's is a thorough, practical account of the emotions and how they affect moral actions and choices. It also has the feature of allowing for a sober analysis of the causes of moral failure and how to avoid it.

B. The Basic Psychological Apparatus

It is true that in his work there is much unfortunate ambiguity as to whether he believes there is merely one type of emotion, what you might call mere feeling, or if there are at least two types of emotions as I argue Plato has (correctly) posited. But in the end I find that Aristotle can only remain coherent if he is positing more than one type of emotion. Because the arguments are difficult to follow, I've moved the bulk of the evidence for my case to the Appendix on Aristotle.

The difficulty in understanding Aristotle lies in his general method of giving a lot of attention to competing accounts. In the *Nichomachean Ethics*⁵⁶ (NE) he puts forth

(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1999), 417. For more cf. Ch. 19, esp. pp. 414-419.

⁵⁶ Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*. Ed. Sarah Broadie & trans. Christopher Rowe. (Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 2002).

two competing theories about what the emotions are and how they fit into ethical theory, one says emotional acts are always voluntary and one that allows that they sometimes are not. In the end, whatever Aristotle personally thought, the best of the arguments in his work show us a theory that accounts for the feeling aspect of emotions, the cognitive capacity emotions (and/or feelings) stem from, and the interplay between emotions, feelings, and cognition. This theory accepts that sometimes emotionally driven acts are involuntary. Below I give a brief overview of the problems in discerning this account and in so doing put it in its best Aristotelian light.

When you combine all that Aristotle says about the emotions in the *NE* and the *Rhetoric*⁵⁷ and pay attention to his discussion of anger and its role in morality, Aristotle can be seen to conclude that there are two types of emotion-based (affected) actions to go along with the two basic emotion types. This conclusion, though not ideally stated, is well grounded in his psychological work and fits well within the Platonic framework just explained.

The core position is that some emotionally charged actions are much more cognitive than others and therefore these actions are voluntary. In addition, some emotionally charged actions are so fast and intense that stopping them is virtually impossible and therefore these actions are counter-voluntary. The relation to the Platonic framework is clear; voluntary emotional acts are instantiated by interplay between the psyche and thymos, involuntary emotional acts are of the animalistic appetitive instinct. In short, if the appetite could have been stopped but wasn't, you have acted wrongly.

⁵⁷ Aristotle, *Rhetoric*. In *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Ed. by Richard McKeon, 1318-1451. trans. W. Rhys Roberts (New York: The Modern Library, 2001)

Similarly, if the emotion could have been reconsidered and would have been 'redirected' or dissipated but wasn't and led to bad results, you have acted wrongly.

To understand the theory, we will discuss the concepts of Deliberation, Impulsiveness vs. Weakness, and Voluntary Action vs. Counter-Voluntary Action. Each helps to answer ethical problems and builds around or explains some basic ethical premises. Because they build up and employ the concept of 'duplex communication' between reasoning and bodily consciousness.

C. Deliberation

Aristotle notes that while other animals seem merely to respond to natural desires such as for food or sex, humans are capable of deliberating about our actions. This ability to deliberate is what allows a being to originate their actions. Even if we often don't deliberate before acting, we can do so and doing so makes us true agents. This immediately brings to mind the questions of why it is that we sometimes do not, if we ever cannot, and why.

When we do, we deliberate in order to achieve our goals. We do not deliberate about goals themselves or about particular objects (e.g. that I must finish my dissertation), nor do we deliberate about "particular" things that our senses show us, (e.g. that this is an Apple MacBook© I'm typing on). Deliberating is investigating, inquiring, calculating in relation to a specific end, some outcome that is not impossible to obtain. It is unimportant whether a thing tends to end up a certain way, if it could be different then we can deliberate about it. We get motivated to deliberate from our desire

to accomplish our goal. When deliberation is done, a decision is made and the agent exercises their desire.⁵⁸

D. Voluntary and Counter-Voluntary Action

On the surface the distinction between voluntary and involuntary action is straightforward, but as we will see, real-life experiences show us that various problem cases arise. Most interesting for us is how to decide, without begging the question, if an emotional action is voluntary. The distinctions Aristotle makes in response to practical necessity and theoretical coherence lead to the ultimate conclusion that some emotion based actions are voluntary and some are involuntary, because some emotions are controllable and should be controlled, while others cannot be controlled.

Most simply, a voluntary action is an action that depends on you that you do knowingly and not under coercion. So, if you *can* deliberate on a particular outcome, understand the relevant contextual factors⁵⁹, and are not forced to act in any way, then what you do is a voluntary act. In a related manner, what is done without it depending on you, in ignorance, or under force is counter-voluntary (1135a20-24).

In speaking of voluntary actions, Aristotle says that some things we do *having decided* to do them, others not.⁶⁰ Because, as we said, humans are true agents because they *can* deliberate, this first definition of what is voluntary is broad enough to admit of

⁵⁸ Jonathan Lear, Aristotle: The Desire to Understand. (New York: Cambridge UP, 1999), 144.

⁵⁹ The relevant factors are: 1) Who is acting, in relation to what or affecting what; 2) With what they are acting (e.g. a tool); 3) What the action is for (e.g. to save someone's life); 4) How it is done (gently, vigorously, etc.).

⁶⁰ Decision is (13a10-a14) deliberation and desire for things that depend on us. It is an action that is performed based on your considered judgment telling you it is good conduct (1105a31-32, fn. P. 300).

two sub-classes of voluntary action: those we deliberate on before we do them and those we do without having deliberated on.⁶¹

That is, a voluntary act must at least be *deliberate-able*, even if it is not deliberated on in a particular case. (Remember that *deliberation* is a sort of calculating backwards from a stated goal all the way back to your conscious agency that leads to a decision on what action to take in order to set the sequence leading to your goal in motion.)⁶²

So we come to our first perhaps contentious finding; to fit with the definition of voluntary, it must be that some actions exist that are done knowingly but without prior deliberation.⁶³ While according to Aristotle a good person always discriminates correctly, most of us fail in discrimination, implementation, or at both. A major way we do this is to act in possession of our faculties yet hurriedly such that we don't think through the consequences – and regretting them when they are obtained.

Ethics cannot exist if we can't be held accountable for our actions, and so much of ethics is involved in understanding why it happens that though we are capable of voluntary action that has been deliberated on, we do what we know we should not and fail to do what we know we should. This finding will aid us in this endeavor.

Aristotle follows Plato in pointing out that it is the pursuit of pleasure – the satisfaction of our desires – that causes such bad behavior. Of course we do not always *choose* to pursue pleasure rather than a known to be good act, but in reality we often succumb to pleasure even after deliberation. That is because pleasure often appears to be

⁶¹ So there are two types of voluntary action (1125b20-36): A) those we performed having decided to do them ("deliberated beforehand"), B) Those we perform w/o having decided to do them, these are not deliberated.

⁶² For an illustration of what it means to act "knowingly", not in ignorance of the relevant factors, see Appendix II: A. Aristotle on acting knowingly.

⁶³ See the appendix on Aristotle for an extended discussion of this.

good, even when it is not, and it is due to that that we *choose* to go for what is pleasant as if it is good and avoid pain as if it is bad.

E. Impulsiveness and Weakness

To understand is why we are 'fooled' requires considering self-control. Understanding what it is and why it sometimes disappears involves having a good grasp of what the emotions are and how they work to strengthen or undermine our deliberations and resolve. So much so that I believe an improper account of the emotions leads to a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of ethics.

Aristotle identifies two ways a person can lack self-control – impulsiveness and weakness. Impulsive people, quick tempered⁶⁴, hasty, irritable and intense people, act without prior deliberation. They are inclined strongly to follow perceptual appearances (as we do when simply bodily conscious) rather than wait for reason.⁶⁵ As such they may not know what to do.⁶⁶ Weak people act after deliberation, so they know what they ought to do, but fail to stick to their conclusions.⁶⁷ Aristotle says such people are held in greater disdain because they are overcome by a lesser state of affection (1151a1-a3). They lose self-control and choose to do what they know is bad.

⁶⁴ Thought of in terms of 'temperament', not the more recent 'temper'.

⁶⁵ Compare Plato on the thymos.

⁶⁶ There is keen debate whether or not such people always act voluntarily, and on understanding III 1-5 in general. A good discussion that I've found quite useful can be found in Nancy Schaubert, "Aristotle on Animals, Agency and Voluntariness", <http://law.richmond.edu/rjolpi/Issues_Archived/2003_Winter_Issue/Schauber.html#ref3> (1 June March 2007).

⁶⁷ Compare Plato on those whose soul is mastered by the billow, or the beast.

F. Voluntary Action and Knowing What You are Doing

For Aristotle, whatever is done knowingly is done voluntarily. But this implies several other things that are quite important. One that's easy to see is that something is counter-voluntary if it is done unknowingly. But if, as Aristotle states, all emotional actions are done knowingly, it would seem that emotional action is always voluntary.⁶⁸

This might not seem problematic until you notice that if all emotional action is voluntary, it certainly can't be done *out of ignorance*. But we do often talk of people being blinded by rage, or made dumb by fear. And we do punish people for acts committed under the influence of intense emotion, even if they are considered mitigating.⁶⁹ So Aristotle wants to capture this tension and explain whether and how it is that emotional actions can sometimes be voluntary yet in some sense lacking in reasoning, at other times completely calculated, and still other times completely uncontrollable.

It is clear he thinks of emotions at least sometimes as uncontrollable in as much as he says that "we are angry or afraid without decision" (1106a1-3) and that we are *moved* by our affections rather than being disposed a certain way⁷⁰. And he explains that "things done through temper and other affections" are examples of actions done "knowingly but without prior deliberation" (1135b20-23)

So he does capture it, and leaves himself theoretical room to work, in part by distinguishing ways of being ignorant. You can act by reason of ignorance or in

⁶⁸ Aristotle states at least once that emotional action is done knowingly (1135b20-21).

⁶⁹ Some things done counter voluntarily call for sympathy: situations where in those circumstances you'd do the same thing; things done both in and of ignorance (1135a6-9).

⁷⁰ "As for dispositions, it is in terms of these that we are well or badly disposed in relation to the affections, as for example in relation to becoming angry, if we are violently or sluggishly disposed, we are badly disposed, and if in an intermediate way, we are well disposed –and similarly too in relation to the other things in question" (NE 1105b25-29).

ignorance of something. In the former you choose to act based on the wrong reasons and in the latter you are literally not in a position to use knowledge you may or ought to have (1145b31). That he is making use of this distinction will become obvious when we see how his deeper analysis handles the emotions.

This distinction is a very good piece of evidence that Aristotle means to conclude that there is more than one type of emotion. Not only does it resolve the potentially destructive position he might have been left in, it has a formative role in his ethical theory, as it must for any ethical theory that accepts it as true.⁷¹ Together the weakness / impulsiveness distinction and the two types of ignorance allow Aristotle to formulate a complicated but insightful distinction between emotions of greater and lesser strength and cognitive content, which we'll discuss shortly.

Following to its conclusion the distinction between Impulsive and Weak people based on the level of affection they are succumbing to provides an Aristotelian way of noting and outlining the distinction between emotion types. We find that there are

1. Emotions that are rapid, strong and nearly impossible to overcome, those that get the best of us, especially those of us who are quick tempered.
2. Emotions that burn slowly and are informed by reflection. A person should be able to either decline to follow them or bring their force in line with the conclusions of deliberation.

Aristotle knows that this is already considered to be true since it is a general ethical assumption that when issuing blame or praise we ought have more sympathy or

⁷¹ Later we will see that empirical research allows for and suggests the veracity of the view.

understanding for those who – due to emotional influence – act *unintentionally but voluntarily* and harm others than for those who harm others out of, e.g., debauchery.⁷²

G. Premises Uncovered and Problems Answered

Aristotle's account is highly complicated but we can be confident we've reached the proper conclusions thus far. To expand on this and solidify the case for the reading I wish to defend I'll summarize some arguments and conclusions that are discussed at length in the Appendix on Aristotle.

First, let's note that the problem of *akrasia* – acting against your better judgment – is vexing for any ethical theory so it is certainly problematic for a more 'cognitive' approach. For our purposes here it will suffice to note how Aristotle's handling of the issue is helped by the two-level emotion theory.

Let's ask whether or not Aristotle's theory is that those acting under a strong emotion – especially those people who do bad things – are always acting voluntarily, involuntarily, or some mix of the two. That is, is emotionally charged behavior, specifically bad behavior, a case of *akrasia*? Aristotle notes two important realizations:

1. Common sense and experience tell us that some people really do deliberate and fail to stick to the results of their deliberation *because of their affective condition* (1150b19-28). (It's not important yet how this is so and we can't tackle it here.)
2. Some people see this possibility coming and "wake themselves" and their calculative faculty before it is too late and so are not *overcome*.⁷³

⁷² Aristotle makes it plain that lack of self-control with regard to temper is less shameful than that resulting from the appetites. As he puts it, there is more sympathy for those who follow the natural desires, and "temper or irascibility is more natural than appetites for excess and unnecessary things (NE 1149b5-8)"

⁷³ Again, consider how the *thymos* is able to listen to the psyche.

These claims imply a further claim: some things done through the emotions may not be *done knowingly*, making them counter voluntary. As I discuss in more detail in the Appendix, I think it also implies that some things done through emotion are done knowingly, but without having been deliberated. Consider whether the following 4 claims can be coherently held together

There exists some action(s) that is done

1. not in ignorance of the relevant factors.
2. unforced
3. not from calculating backwards from goal-achievement to consciously initiating the successful sequence
4. is voluntarily done

Note that for #4 to be true, #1-#2 must be true. At times Aristotle appears to commit himself to the belief that any action that involves acting on weakness, emotionally influenced or not, is done voluntarily. That is, weakness of will is always a voluntary act. After all, says Aristotle, isn't it counter-intuitive to say that doing or getting something we want is a counter-voluntary action? While it's true that when we do something counter-voluntarily we get no pleasure from it (and often feel remorse), we often get pleasure out of acting on emotion. Certainly this analysis fits with cases such as vigilantism. But it seems just as clear that some emotionally based actions are from *impulse* - they do not appear (or feel) planned and are lamented.

It may be plausibly thought that the actions of an enraged soldier and a slighted aristocrat are both in some sense voluntary, but Aristotle acknowledges that they have important differences. In fact, he has separate arguments that some cases of emotional actions violate claim 1 above and others violate claim 2 (and 3) so that in these cases, it cannot be held that the action meets all four standards, and so are counter-voluntary.

The distinction between “pre-deliberated” and “un-deliberated” action helps explain these cases. Un-deliberated actions are things done through affections that are inevitably and strongly going to be felt given a certain context.

It is clear to Aristotle and to us that sometimes things done from heated emotion are not pre-deliberated or pre-meditated. But premeditation is one type of deliberation, and there may be more.⁷⁴ So things done from emotion may be deliberated, but whatever that is, it is not premeditating. Whatever sort of deliberation it is that is going on, it seems to be less than the conscious deliberation of a reasoning agent. But then, if emotional actions sometimes do not involve planning ahead and accepting the consequences of your possible action, the spirit of voluntariness is surely violated. And all the more when the actions involve distorted perceptions.

Aristotle says, like Plato, that behaving uncontrolledly with respect to the emotions is in a way giving in to reason; our temper is rational in that it is open to reason’s dictates in a way that the appetites are not. Two analogies further the point that Aristotle means that while in these cases cognition goes on, reflection does not (1149a25-32):

1. Temper relative to reason is like a hasty servant to its master. The hasty servant runs out of the room before hearing everything said and then fails to carry out the instruction.
2. Temper is like a dog, barking at every sound, before discovering if it is a friend who is there; temper’s quick nature means that it hears but doesn’t hear the mind’s order, before rushing to vengeance.⁷⁵ And further reinforcing this understanding, he also delineates two causes for temper, reason and sensory appearance.

⁷⁴ This may be what Aristotle has in mind when he says “the person behaving uncontrolledly with regard to temper is in a way giving in to reason” (1149b2-4).

⁷⁵NE 1149a24-32. Temper, on these analogies, is both an expression-act and the basis or source of that, a feeling and a cognitive event. The boundary line between temper and affection is indeed quite fluid.

One or the other (or both) will indicate ‘unprovoked aggression’ or ‘insult’ and temper, as if having reasoned out this sort of thing is cause for going to war, moves into angry mode at once.⁷⁶ While in this way temper follows reason, appetite needs only for perception to say ‘pleasant’ before it rushes off to enjoy it. Temper is “open” to reason but it “does not plot”, and neither does a person who tends to lose his temper.⁷⁷ But appetite “is a plotter” and so is the appetitive person.⁷⁸ This means that while in a fully voluntary act there is “separation”, in acts where there is not the separation, where cognition happens but reflection does not, the action is in a sense involuntary. Note how this is different from weakly giving in to appetite.

H. Conclusion

According to Aristotle, what is done knowingly is done not ignorant (aware) of the relevant factors. And what is done voluntarily is done knowingly. As such, voluntary acts are done not in ignorance of the relevant factors. Therefore, what is done in ignorance – lacking the relevant knowledge – is not voluntarily done.

But if something is done *of* ignorance (by reason of ignorance), it *is* voluntary; you should have known and done better. For good measure, add to this that if you act in ignorance and regret the outcome, you act counter voluntarily (1110b18-19). Then in a

⁷⁶ This suggests ‘incomplete thinking’ rather than ‘distorted perspective’ (confusion, inaccuracy)

⁷⁷ And Aristotle believes that because of its naturalness and reasonableness loss of temper qua impulsiveness is more forgivable than weakness. Having sympathy for weakness would indeed seem to go against common sense; you were well aware of the particulars of the situation, decided what you wanted, and got it. Why should we feel sympathy towards you if you harmed someone in a case like this?

⁷⁸ NE 1149b8-15. Aristotle must mean that once the pleasant has been sighted the plotting begins. Again, experience bears him out. But we must also note that ‘cold’ anger and ‘revenge’ both share this ‘plotting’.

case of emotional action where you act in ignorance and regret the outcome, you certainly act counter-voluntarily.⁷⁹ Further, it is perhaps easy to miss but Aristotle accepted that acting from temper at least sometimes involves not knowing the particulars. In short he seems to be saying

1. An agent acting from anger acts not knowing what he is doing. (1110b25-26)
 2. If you are incapable of knowing what you are doing and later regret what you relevantly effected, you have acted counter-voluntarily (1110b18-19).
- ∴ (C) acting from the emotions that leads to a regretted outcome is counter-voluntary.

The conclusion (C) follows from what's been said and makes sense in light of the claim that "the person ignorant of any of [the particulars, especially] the things that most determine the nature of the action; and these are what things are affected and what the action is for...has acted counter-voluntarily" (1111a15-20). And a person acting in a spontaneous fit of anger seems definitely to qualify. Given that, it is impossible to think that Aristotle believes, or that his ethical theory depends, on thinking that all action from temper is voluntary.

Though in the NE the 'succinct' definition of affections is that they are simply "feelings attended by pleasure or pain"⁸⁰, we've found that by analyzing all Aristotle says about them and we now have a much deeper understanding of the emotions and their relationship to action. And we find that for Aristotle some emotions are counter-voluntarily. Knowing this provides a solid ground for claiming that for Aristotle's ethics – and others like it – there is good reason to assume that some emotional acts are counter-voluntary. Happily, the Rhetoric reinforces our findings.

⁷⁹ NE 1110b14-11a19 has the complete picture.

⁸⁰ He lists affections (NE c. 1144-46) appetite, anger, fear, boldness, grudging ill will, joy, friendly feeling, hatred, longing, envy, pity – and defines them as "generally feelings attended by pleasure or pain".

The Rhetoric⁸¹ is quite helpful for its treatment of the interplay between the visceral feeling and felt experience of emotions and their inherent cognitivity.⁸² Here he defines the emotions much more fittingly as “all those feelings that so change men as to affect their judgments and that are *also* attended by pain or pleasure”. This both contains and moves beyond the original definition and allows working definitions of specific emotions. Make no mistake that it is based on what we learned above. He uses this definition to specify a three-step process by which to examine emotions and understand their impact.

1. What is the state of mind of the (e.g., Angry) person?
2. Who do we usually get (angry) with?
3. On what grounds do we get (angry) with them?

This leads to understanding anger as an “impulse accompanied by pain, to a conspicuous revenge for a conspicuous slight directed without justification towards what concerns oneself or one’s friends.” It must always be felt towards a particular individual and not ‘man’ or ‘the world’ in general, because this person did or meant to do something to you or your friends.

⁸¹ Compare Plato’s very similar – but very brief – treatment of these issues at Phaedrus 271c-272b.

⁸² For example, “The opposite of anger is calmness and to inspire calmness requires ascertaining the same three facts, what frame of mind calms, towards who they feel calm, and by what means a person is made calm. The frame of mind is the opposite of what makes them angry: amusement, satisfaction, feelings of success or prosperity, freedom from pain, justifiable hope, inoffensive pleasure. We feel calm to those who do not slight us in any way or those who do so involuntarily, or those who meant to do the opposite, as well as to those who treat themselves the way they treat us, to those who admit their faults and are sincerely sorry (because we accept their grief as satisfaction), to those who humble themselves before us, to those who are serious when we are, to those who do not insult or mock anyone at all or at least anyone like ourselves, those we fear or respect, those who themselves act out of anger, those who revere us” (II.3 1380a5-1380b1).

At the end we are left with a theory of emotion that highly values the felt experience and unmistakable cognitivity of emotions – and that is closely attached to or fundamental to a coherent, insightful, practical ethical theory. It even recommends ethical beliefs and helps answer ethical problems such as akrasia.

Unfortunately, the Stoics and (generally) the Epicureans drop the Platonic-Aristotelian framework and develop emotion theory and ethics in an exclusively cognitive manner. It was not until Lucretius that the P-A line of work was again well used and touched up with a then state of the art (and more contemporary-friendly) physiological foundation.

2.3 Lucretius' Material Treatment of 'Soul'

A. Précis

(Due to the length of this section I provide a précis here)

As insightful and powerful as the Platonic-Aristotelian conception of the emotions and their relation to ethical action is, it is easy to wonder if it could indeed remain relevant from a more realistic physiological perspective. When we look at the work of Lucretius on the subject, we'll see that he effectively crafted a state of the art materialist, physiologically grounded schema on which the Platonic-Aristotelian (P-A) insights fit comfortably. This more than bodes well for the P-A school of thought.

To show how this works, we'll examine Lucretius' basic mechanism behind perception and willful action so as to unpack the core of his psychology, the concept of spirit. This concept allows Lucretius to be a consistent materialist-physicalist about the emotions while maintaining the already discovered two types of emotions and acknowledging their complicated relationship to ethical behavior.

For Lucretius, everything must fit in a strictly materialist framework. He is so consistent about this that it leads to some obvious yet insightful errors. He argues that seeing is literally taking in atoms, in the 'shape' of the object one sees, which then physically impinge upon the mind. Thought in general works this way; the mind is pushed upon, which in turn sets a wave in motion that stirs the will. Because mind is so physically connected with the rest of the body, no action ever begins until the mind first 'sees' what it would do. The trick of course, is to explain the deep physical connection in a thoroughly physiologically centered manner. He does so by the highly complicated notion of 'soul' he uses.

Some interpreters have argued that Lucretius thinks the mind works like a two-way transmitter such as a walkie-talkie; it 'feels' the movement of an insect on the skin then tells the hand to squash it. But as we'll see this is incorrect.

Like Aristotle, Lucretius requires for action to occur that the mind *judges* the benefits and / or merits of the results of an action. But on Lucretius' model 'judging' need not entail *deliberation* because it may happen merely animal consciously.

In Lucretius' model, the mind and the body both are duplex transmitters, such as cell phones, which allow simultaneous communication. That is, Lucretius model of how the mind and body work together to lead to action entails a feedback loop between the two - there is duplex communication.

In Lucretius' system, every thing is replete with soul, which is as completely material as e.g., a foot or an ear. But this just scratches the surface of what he means by the concept. There is a complicated distinction between irrational and rational soul or mind, even as they are of the same material, vital spirit. That is, vital spirit, which comprises both the rational and irrational mind, is an admixture purely of physical particles and is distributed throughout the body. (In the end the system works much like the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems do.)

The animus, which is localized in the mid-breast, is the rational part of the vital spirit, and is responsible for all higher cognitive functions like abstract thought and planning. So in spite of its location, it is easy to translate animus as 'mind', with its contemporary implications of higher order thought and being the seat of morality.

Things the mind represents to itself can be superimposed on the impressions that impinge upon the mind, thus allowing forethought. But it also means that things not perceived by the senses can sometimes pass for sense perceptions. Going further, this

also entails that, as we saw above, sense perceptions are in a way *understood* by the vital spirit and not merely passively received. What the senses 'see' and 'process' are the plain facts of the world, but we have the ability and sometimes the strong urge to impose interpretations on them that are quite useful but can often be mistaken. In fact, it is very difficult to distinguish between the two, which leads to a lot of error and pain.

That being a very broad overview lets look at the mechanics of how vital spirit works. We said 'mind' (animus) particles were localized in the chest, but 'irrational mind' or 'spirit' (anima) is diffused throughout the body, *everywhere* mind is not. It moves to the minds sway and will but is itself the "body's guard and cause of health". And the rational mind and the 'cause of health' are so completely intertwined that it is impossible to take them apart.

It is easy to think that there is something paradoxical going on here; how can you be a strict materialist, say that all cognition is from the same 'stuff' and yet part of the stuff can deliberate while the other part cannot? The 'spirit' is effectively what we might call 'bodily awareness' not unlike our own understanding of the human nervous system and Lucretius holds this position consistently.

Our soul's, though of the same stuff, are not simple, and the complexity of the material that makes up soul gives Lucretius the theoretical tool box he needs to account for the different properties of 'mind' and 'spirit'. The stuff that makes them both up has various physical components, which are less interesting and will be discussed later.

The spirit - irrational mind - perceives in the sense of 'gathering through the senses', which at a minimum can be understood as feeling. But the spirit is also a fundamental part of the explanation of *what* is the physical explanation for the fact of

deep focused thought. Some kind of physical motion originates such higher thinking, and it must be some part of the 'vital spirit' from which animus and anima are defined.

There are sensory motions that initiate mental activity and then there are motions of higher order thought; it is difficult to overstate the importance of the distinction and interplay between the two. That is, there are 'plain facts' given to our minds from our senses that make possible higher order thinking. Higher order thinking on this account is a measurement of the data communicated to the mind by the rest of the spirit, in the body. When we recall that mind and spirit are both constituted of vital spirit, it is impossible to deny that the spirit engages in 'mental' behavior.

Lucretius goes into great detail as to how physiologically this can be possible and we'll examine it later. But the upshot is that sentience and contemplation go hand in hand, feelings and sensory perception are intimately tied to abstract thought. This goes against orthodox Epicureanism.

Because mind and spirit are both vital spirit, Lucretius finds himself even more at odds with orthodox Epicureanism – but in line with Plato and Aristotle regarding the nature of emotions; they straddle or complicate the divide between rational and irrational thought.

In his efforts to explain the physiology of thought he explains that mere flesh qua flesh can't have physical sensation, that it takes moving something extra in the body to cause that, but once whatever is moving starts moving, everything else that is required in thought and action can go into motion. That is, there is a physical system spread throughout the body that is responsive to outside stimuli that is directly connected to a centralized core made of the same material. The input received into the system guides the action of the whole being. More simply put (or in contemporary terms), the nervous

system allows for or creates the initial conditions for measurement and judgment, including abstract thought.

But this is why the duplex nature of the system is so important. The brain is not taking in data, stopping the data flow, working on it, and then sending commands to the body that is quietly waiting. The duplex communication between the two aspects of vital spirit allow for real-time measurement of both a superficial, fast variety, and slower 'meditation', as well as interplay between the two.

In sum, our bodies are sentient in a way akin to the way the mind is; they are made of the same stuff. But the body registers more than either the mind or even 'bodily awareness'. For example, the body reacts to a mosquito bite or radiation, even if bodily awareness doesn't pick it up the way it might a lurking predator.

This is why Lucretius says mind and judgment aren't "born in the head alone". That the rational part does 'collect itself' in one area does not make the irrational part automatically incapable of thought or judgment of any kind. Understanding how they are similar and different is the key to understanding the emotions.

Because the emotions are qualities of both animus and anima, they both process and communicate information and cannot be considered definitively to be irrational.

Emotions are felt physically in the heart, and are at least sometimes completely responsive to the mind's influence. Whether or not the mind controls the whole of the vital spirit – and so the emotions and action depends on what beliefs are formed, what is 'judged'. When incoherent or false beliefs are followed, we get bad desires and results. When correct or coherent beliefs are followed, we get good desires and satisfaction. The same is true regarding how spirit influences action – e.g. half perceived or misperceived

events such as threats may lead to some bad or even no action, while correctly perceived events will lead to useful quick feeling and action.

Emotions happen in the heart, paralyze the mind and upset the spirit. But just as Plato and Aristotle did, Lucretius believes there to be two types of emotion, one more or less purely 'mental' and one 'spirit-based'; more visceral and deeply felt, but still cognitive. (Of course both are still purely physical.) While some, say an existential dread, are cases where the mind is by and large the only part emoting, there may be a threshold past which the vital spirit is roused. Similarly, there can be emotions, say fear of a predator, that are more basic and active at the level of the spirit, but past a certain point the rest of the spirit system, the mind, may get involved.

Ultimately, because we distinguished between two centers for spirit, the 'centers' for emotion are different, and cause different things: in a sense the mind does experience its own emotions, and so does the body. After a certain point it can be that some emotions more fully involve the body too and others come to more fully affect the mind as well. But because they really are of the same stuff, both can and do perform 'mental' functions and can 'communicate' with the other part of the 'soul'.

This closeness can lead to counter-productive actions based on unfounded beliefs from judgments of basic perceptions, and it can also lead to misperceptions leading to bad decisions. Because separating interpretation from 'plain fact' is incredibly difficult, to the extent emotions exacerbate this, they are almost by definition irrational. But when everything is working properly, the emotions can magnify impetus to right action and intensify the reward of following through. If the mind is lazy, or one is stupid or has a bad character, it would seem being emotional would be quite bad. But nothing about the

emotions qua emotions makes them irrational or bad. Again, this is in nice agreement with Plato and Aristotle.

B. Introduction

In De Rerum Natura⁸³, which I take to be by far the best and most important work of Epicurean philosophy - and importantly different than more orthodox Epicureanism - Lucretius does a lot to explain how Plato and Aristotle's psychological and ethical work on the emotions can be given a thorough physicalist basis. Though thoroughly grounded in physiology and physical causes, this emotional theory has a strong cognitive component, effectively that of Plato and Aristotle. Starting by quickly running down the basic mechanism behind perception and willful actions will give us a solid platform on which to work, and naturally lead us into unpacking the main element of the his psychology, the concept of spirit.

Lucretius thought of everything in a strictly materialist framework, e.g. that seeing was literally taking in atoms projected off the "surface" of things; a physical image of very small particles penetrates into the eyes and all the pores of the body (4.335-38 & 4.888-91). So, if you decide you want to take a walk, an image of walking comes to mind and impinges upon it. Once the *mind* is *pushed-upon*, a wave sets in motion and stirs the will. The mind immediately jogs the vital spirit that is diffused throughout the body and the vital spirit jogs the body.

No one ever begins to act until the mind first *sees* what it would do - the image of the act. But because mind and vital spirit are interconnected it is not a difficult process

⁸³ Lucretius, On the Nature of Things: De Rerum Natura. Ed and trans: Anthony M. Esolen, (The Johns Hopkins University Press Baltimore 1995).

(to do, at least) (4.877-4.919). The trick is explaining the interconnectedness in a thoroughly materialist, physiologically centered manner and understanding what it means for the mind to 'see' in this type of case.

It is possible that the above claim goes against the Epicurean belief, explained later, in non-conscious action, but there is sufficient reason to think he is simply being a bit sloppy yet never denies non-conscious actions. Rather he thinks for the mind to see doesn't necessitate deliberation. As he puts it,

within one moment of our sensation (say we hear a sound), many tinier moments are hidden whose existence reason discovers; so too, at any moment, all the shadows are ready and waiting in their places" (4.792-4.796).⁸⁴

Though this does appear to acknowledge non-conscious deliberation, just what does go on is unclear. Below I'll explain that by 'discovers' Lucretius means straightforwardly that the contents are *right there* and need only to be 'picked up'.

Some interpreters argue Lucretius is saying the mind is something like a 2-way transmitter⁸⁵; it "feels" the movement of a spider crawling on the skin then tells the hand to squash it. But this is far from obvious. Lucretius is clear that it is spirit that causes sensibility in us, which allows the mind to have experience (4.464-500 & 4.792-940). All that he need be committed to at this point is that for action to occur the mind must *judge* the benefits and/or merits of the results of an action.

This does not have to be done consciously and it does not mean that the mind is a "two-way" transmitter unless mind is not really as attached to the body as one might expect from a materialist. If the mind is at all like a *two-way* transmitter – like a walkie-

⁸⁴ The translator notes that the shadows are ready "to keep the mind from having any part in creating sensation" (p. 268, fn 796.)

⁸⁵ Cf. John Godwin's translation (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 226 fn. 64.

talkie - then only one end at a time can communicate. That would mean that the body would feel the flesh and either the mind would fortuitously not be communicating just then or the body (or the mind) would know that the mind should stop transmitting or the body would know how to stop it. Else the default is that the body is constantly transmitting and only on very bad or good messages would there be a break. But still, how would this work? Every particularly 'strong' message would be accompanied by a built in message such as 'over' to allow the brain to transmit while the body ceased until it received its own 'over'? Is this at all realistic or even plausible? No, and it is not in the text.

I argue below that the more plausible reading in accordance with the text (and common sense) is that the mind and body are both *duplex* transmitters. A duplex transmitter, such as a cellular phone allows immediate simultaneous communication. Though this allows for the possibility of neither party successfully hearing the other - much like two overly chatty friends on the phone - experience and common sense tells us that communication implies the know-how to actually communicate when necessary. That is, two constantly running communications can be both understood by their respective targets. As much is suggested by Lucretius when he says among many similar points, "from the earliest age the mutual 'touchings' of the soul and body learn the vital motions" (3.344-345).

So I think it comes out in short order that the two-way metaphor couldn't possibly be right as a description of what Lucretius has in mind. Now I will supplement this common sense discussion with textual discussion that will explain Lucretius' distinction between mind and spirit and how they work together.

On Lucretius' account every living thing is replete with "soul", which is completely material, just as much as a foot, ear and every other part of the body. But this belies just how complicated his conception of "soul" is. Lucretius actually uses two terms that we might translate as "soul", *anima*, most traditionally equated with "soul" and *animus* – a "newer" term he uses to make a rather novel distinction.

Most simply put the distinction is between the *irrational* and the *rational* mind. But even this distinction belies the complexity here. Both the "irrational" *anima* and the "rational" *animus* are part of (or two types of) the same stuff, *vital spirit*. Vital spirit is an admixture of various physical elements and is distributed throughout the body. We'll see it works in a way similar to the central and sympathetic nervous systems. After this it gets complicated. In order to get a good grasp we should focus first on the part that is most accessible to us, the *animus*, the rational part.

C. Mind

The *animus*, the rational part of the vital spirit is responsible for all higher cognitive functions like abstract thought and planning. So an able translation for *animus* is "mind" with all its implications of higher order thought and morality. Lucretius at times refers to it as intellect, head, guiding principle and dominant force. He believes, like many Romans, Aristotle and Homer that mind is located in the middle of the breast. (Keeping in mind that on Lucretius' theory your "brain", your "thinking" is in your mid-breast will do a lot to make his 'visceral' theory understandable.) Again, like the *rest of the vital spirit*, mind is composed of matter.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ And there's no doubt that it is a type of vital spirit, as when he says, "Now I assert, the spirit and the soul are held conjoint and form one common nature" (3.136-37.)

Mind is able to *represent* events to *itself* much faster than they actually occur or would happen. This could mean that though some event, like a 90 mph baseball pitch, takes .46 seconds to be completed, the mental representation of it is *n* seconds faster in the thought than it would be in reality. Or the mind “finishes” events in that it *represents* them faster than they “would happen” in the physical world outside if we didn’t do this finishing.⁸⁷ I think it most likely he means both.

We superimpose mental assumptions so that things not perceived by the sense pass for sense perceptions (4.381-84, 4.462-8, 4.480-490). This not only implies that some (maybe even most) things are *understood* by the senses and not merely passively received by them. It also means that Lucretius is in lock step with Epicurus’ saying that in a manner, we *choose* to engage in poor or irrational behavior. That is, we often have a strong will to impose questionable –or even flat wrong – interpretations on the things we see and hear, on “plain facts”. Indeed these questionable interpretations are the hardest thing there is to separate from the plain facts attested by the senses. So much so that it seems certain to the individual that his interpretations are the plain facts. Which leads to error and pain.⁸⁸

Rather than immediately go into much greater detail about mind, I’ll now give a similarly brief sketch of what vital spirit is. This puts us in a much better position to understand all the intricacies of the whole theory.

⁸⁷ Reading a paper we miss spelling errors, we fill in words, etc. This may be making a point closely related to things like change blindness. Or Lucretius means both.

⁸⁸ But Lucretius – prefiguring Descartes - is a disbeliever in skepticism about the senses qua senses, giving responsibility for most error to bad judgment (Cf. 4.464-480.) And this fits right in both with Epicurus’ thinking on the matter and with what Lucretius will say about emotions.

D. Vital Spirit

Compared to the localization of the mind particles in the chest the *anima* particles are diffused throughout the body and move to the mind's sway and will.⁸⁹ That is, though the part of the vital spirit that we'd call "mind" is densely packed in the mid-breast and for reasons we'll lay out below, controls cognition, vital spirit proper, *anima*, is everywhere mind is not: everywhere else in the body but the mid-breast (so much so that "even the teeth share in sensation" (3.690).)

Much as mind rules, vital spirit is the "body's guard and cause of health" (3.323-324). So the vital spirit is in no small part a safety mechanism for the flesh. Good then that the body and vital spirit are "twine together with common roots" and cannot be ripped apart anymore than you can tear "aroma from a lump of myrrh". And yet spirit is "so thin, so light" that it can even be moved by "shadows (mental images) of clouds and smoke" - as in dreams (3.425-431).

E. Unraveling the Distinction

Understanding that Lucretius is a strict materialist and that mind and spirit are effectively one and the same thing, yet that mind is cognitive and spirit is not seems paradoxical: why should the same substance be able to act so differently? He may be an early precursor to "emergentist" theorists, but without resorting to such a bold claim we can see that there are good reasons within his theory for the apparent strangeness.

⁸⁹ Though Lucretius often refers to the vital spirit as being "in the limbs" he makes it clear that "in the limbs" should be understood in contradistinction to 'in the mid breast' and that it is present in the whole body (Cf. 3.216-219).

Lucretius says that mind “as one with the body...shares the body’s feeling” and “is affected” the same (3.168-169), which is important but not as revealing as the claim that it would be a mistake to think that “our souls are one and simple” (3.231.) Far from being self-contradicting, this claim allows him all the maneuvering room he needs to account properly for the different properties of mind and spirit.

Let’s be clear that Lucretius is certainly not making the simple and obvious logical point that mind and vital spirit are not identical sets. Another possible meaning is that the *combination* of the two things, mind and spirit, the *concoction* that forms is different than what each individually is – such as with table salt and its components, sodium and chloride. But he would seem to contradict himself if he meant that mind atoms and spirit atoms are simply not the same, e.g. as if one is carbon and one is silicon (or sugar and salt). The most simple and satisfactory explanation is that mind and spirit are two subtypes of the same basic type of stuff, some ‘uber-soul’ material. And indeed mind and spirit are “of the same stuff”, vital spirit. It’s just that this *stuff* is not a simple element.

In fact, mind and spirit (animus and anima) both have *at least* a three-fold composition: wind, air and heat. So mind and spirit, the cognitive capacity and the guardian and protector, are made of the same admixture. But then why *are* they different, and what’s the point of talking of this uber-soul, vital spirit?

Both questions have the same answer: the *spirit* turns out to be something of a ‘bodily awareness’, much akin to what we would call the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. This is complicated enough that I think it worth offering a direct look at the text.

Yet, all told, will these three suffice to make Sensation? The mind grants none of them the power of sense-bearing motion – still less the power of thought! Therefore to these we're forced to add a fourth Element – this one has no name at all, there's nothing finer or more readily moving, Nothing made up of smaller or smoother atoms – and *this* first deals to the limbs the sense-bearing motions. For its small atoms are the first to stir; then warmth and the invisible power of breath are moved, then air, then everything falls into motion, the blood is shaken to life, all the flesh tingles with every sensation, and last, the bones and marrow feel joy (if it's joy they feel!) or burning passion. (3.238-251)

In Lucretius' mind it is clear as day that the "warmth, air, and wind" that we expel when we die cannot possibly alone be the cause of sentience. Nothing in these elements could possibly account for feeling and (or) perception. If it wasn't for the last line quoted above one would directly conclude that whatever it is that does "create the sensory motions that originate" the mind's revolutions (in the chest), it is the mind that does all the feeling and thinking. But that last line and what follows make this reading impossible.

It is clear then, that if he means by perception, 'having a full mental grasp' the passage means one thing but if he means 'gathers through the senses' it means another. I'm confident he means the latter because believing otherwise would mean that the vital spirit has no part in *feeling*, much less thinking.

Again, common sense recommends that neither warmth, nor air, nor wind – the obvious components of the vital spirit we breathe out when we die – could possibly account for our mental life. But note the multiple steps: none of the three individually could 1) explain the phenomena of feeling or the phenomena of perception (however he means it) because they individually cannot 2) create the motions that *originate*, 3) the "meditations revolved in the mind". What's at stake here is an explanation of #3. So let's understand what it means.

The Latin root of meditation, *meditari*, has the base meaning “*measure*”, and is what we might best term “contemplation”: meditation is deep focused thought. Something has to be a *physical* explanation for the possibility and fact of deep focused thought. *Some kind of motions that also have a physical basis* originate such higher order thinking. Whatever causes these “originator motions” it cannot be warmth, air, or wind individually. And there is no mention of the possibility of some “emergent property”. So what are we left with? There is some other ingredient in the vital spirit that is spread throughout our body, the vital spirit that leaves us when we die, that begins the chain, that causes the “originator motions” that “originate” higher order thinking. But we’ve also made a *major* distinction between ‘sensory motions that initiate mental activity’ and ‘the motions of higher order thought’. I argue that the *full* vital spirit, (warmth, air, wind and whatever else is in it) *causes the ‘originator motions’* for thinking and they are our bodily, sensory perceptions – the “sensory motions throughout the limbs”. As we put it earlier, the “plain facts” given to our minds from our senses are what “originate” or make possible higher order thinking.⁹⁰ Going a bit further there is plenty of textual evidence to support the claim that for Lucretius’ theory, without sentience there is no deep focused thought.

Lucretius has strongly implied, if not outright stated in his own terms, that higher order thinking is measurement of the data communicated to the mind by the (rest of the) spirit. As well he should. Remembering that mind and spirit are both (identically) vital spirit would make it most difficult to deny that ‘mental’ behavior is attributable to the spirit

⁹⁰ This is of course completely in line with Plato’s theory.

but when the fear that troubles the mind is more vehement, we see the spirit in all the members agree, and the body blanches and beads of sweat break out all over, the tongue-tied voice cracks, falters...so anyone should easily learn that the spirit and mind are one, for when spirit is struck by the force of the mind, it thrusts and hurls the body (3.152-3.160)

We just have to see if his account really can explain away the difficulties in understanding how.

He begins by noting that heat, wind, and air are unable to account for our ability to perform measurements, to contemplate. In order to do so we'd have to believe they can allow us to perceive and feel. But they don't do that either: a special fourth ingredient is required for (vital) spirit to account for those capacities. It is evident to Lucretius that the three don't provide enough "impetus" to start a "stir" that could set the mid-breast spirit into motion, the mental action that allows for perception, and so something must be presented that does.

This strategy makes sense but it is not without immediate problems. For example, you might wonder if there isn't a cause-effect confusion here as to how perception of the outside world - e.g. I see today is a sunny day - gets started. Part of the problem seems to be deciding or explaining whether it would be vital spirit or mind that would be the one capable. If it was vital spirit, why wouldn't mind be able to, given it is the same mixture? If it was mind, why not vital spirit?

Mind is concentrated and perhaps the concentration level in the chest should count for something. But vital spirit is all over the body, and doesn't the whole body more than the mind qua mind directly feel/perceive the outside world? On some level contemplation and sentience do appear to go hand in hand. But given his strict Epicurean roots you may wonder if it troubles Lucretius that feeling and sensory

perception is so intimately tied to abstract rational thought, (and that *the emotions* are so entwined with the rational higher order thoughts).

At least two “Epicurean” reasons strongly suggest favoring vital spirit: first because a “nameless fourth element” (I’ll call it “the Quick”) is everywhere in the body and second because the senses first take in “the facts” which are *then* interpreted by the mind – often incorrectly.

But because of the nature of mind and spirit as both being *vital spirit*, Lucretius’ theory struggles to, among other things, comfortably place the emotions as either rational or irrational. To get out of this trouble he must explain *how* and *that* the contemplative faculty controls the emotions.⁹¹ And to get out of the problem in general he has to “flesh out” what is so special about the Quick, which turns out to be a quite complicated thing.

Recall that since the mind is located in the mid-breast and everything is material, thinking is literally a stirring of the chest. To start this stirring to the point of achieving sentience there needs to be a so-far nameless fourth element involved. It will do the trick, evidently, largely because it has the special property of being the smallest and most mobile (i.e. fastest) atom there is. The Quick is faster than even mind taken as a whole ‘system’ or object, which means it is also faster than the “suffused spirit” taken as a whole. Again, the Quick is also what starts sensory motion going in the body and so what allows the body “sense-bearing motion”.

We cannot yet have any physical sensation in our body because flesh is just made up of certain (presumably flesh) particles but also *includes* particles of warmth, wind and air/breath. Only when those *move* can flesh qua flesh move. But the three combined

⁹¹ That is, he needs a physiological account of what Plato explained conceptually.

need a motor as well, and the motor is the Quick.⁹² The first things to *move* are Quick particles, then warmth, wind and breath. After these everything falls into motion.

Does this make it clear that sensory motion throughout the body originates, or at least allows, measurement? There is a physical thing, the Quick, which is spread throughout the body that allows or originates the motions in the breast (the mind) and allows for contemplative mental activity. And this Quick also allows or originates sensory motion throughout the body, our ability to feel and *take in* the world outside us. And from what we said above, the intermediate step is the sensory motion (spirit) originating contemplation. But just what is the connection between the combined warmth, wind and air moving and physiological changes? Again, it seems what he is saying is that there is a physical system spread throughout the body that is responsive to outside stimuli that is directly connected to a centralized core made of the same material that uses the input to guide the action of the whole being. This centralized material, when activated by the spread out system becomes able to think and feel. Or more simply the *nervous system* allows for or creates the initial conditions for measurement and judgment (including abstract thought) in the brain.

The short answer to the above question would seem to be then that the mind regulates the physiological changes. But our discussion above about the nature of such mind-body communication is now crucial – it is *not* that the brain is taking in data,

⁹² Lucretius is quite clear on the point that neither the mind nor the body by itself could have sensation. But of course flesh qua flesh, the whole body, is manifestly sentient. A common motion – the motion of Quick – springs from mind and spirit and kindles and fans sensation in our flesh (3.332-36). With Quick the flesh is sentient, and because Quick, like the other elements of the spirit and body, is inseparably interspersed throughout the admixture, the Stoics and to a lesser extent the Platonists are wrong: it is not that humans have sentience and intelligence because there is a sentient thing – soul or spirit – in the body.

stopping the data flow, contemplating, and then sending commands to a body that is silently waiting. It couldn't possibly work that way. The Quick allows for *duplex* communication between outside stimulus and 'real-time' measurement (both in the sense of immediate mental activity and slower 'meditation' as discussed above).⁹³

Furthermore, Lucretius states that considering that the body is constantly impinged upon on all sides from outside, there needs to be a "considerable commotion" made in our bodies before the disturbance is felt *by the spirit*. That implies that the body may feel something that doesn't quite rouse the spirit (anima) (389-391). What could it mean when he also explicitly says that neither the body nor mind could be sentient alone? Either he has hopelessly contradicted himself or he thinks it clear that our bodies are sentient in a way *akin* to the way the mind is - and again they *are made of the same thing* - yet our bodies register much more than either the mind or our 'bodily awareness' registers. Not only does this fit in his theory, common sense dictates it to be true: not only are we often not *conscious* of things such as mosquitoes biting us, we have *no feeling whatsoever* of e.g., radiation yet clearly our body "registers" and, sadly, sometimes reacts very poorly to it.

So it turns out that in Lucretius' system appealing to the Quick is definitely a best explanation and not simply some arcane device. It supplies the missing link that undoes much of the confusion, even if he "pulls it out of thin air" as it were. Much as *atoms* stop a potential circularity (or regress) problem for metaphysics (cf. Aristotle on Democritus), the Quick undermines questions about the roles and characters of mind and spirit. In the former, since extended physical things do exist, *something* must be the smallest particle

⁹³ "from earliest age the mutual touchings of the soul and body learn the vital motions" (3.344-3.345).

of which they are composed. And in the latter, since *we do* think and feel, *something* must be *the quick*, else nothing would be alive and sentient. Theorizing that the thing is beyond warmth, wind and breath, beyond the level of the admixture that makes up spirit (including mind) alleviates these and the other aforementioned problems.

F. Real Complexities, Problems and...Solutions?

Note that above I (following Lucretius) referred to the elements of vital spirit (and body), warmth wind and breath in an indexed manner. Doing so allows an explanation of how body can feel what spirit does not register. The Quick first receives stimulus from the outside, then spirit *catches* the Quick. Spirit then enlivens the rest of the body, down to the marrow. It may seem rather strange to refer to the individual ingredients of the admixture as working “independently” as it were but as it turns out it is necessary to justify what’s been said above.

Lucretius has said that the Quick is the “soul of all the soul”(3.273) in a way both part of vital spirit and yet in a way a free agent. Is this conception coherent? Let me explain how it might be. Say that the other three ingredients of the vital spirit, (warmth, wind and breath), are *mixed in* throughout the body as described above. And they each have different rates at which they will be *absorbed* by some thing, some apparatus of the mind. It would be as if the brain were an assembly line with buckets for holding ‘the quick’ that allows for bodily changes and then action. In order for this not to simply be a charitably *ad hoc* exercise Lucretius needs to supply an in depth explanation of how each ingredient of the admixture functions. He gives us just that in his discussion of mood changes and emotions (3.288-95).

As I implied above by referring to fourth element as 'the Quick', it is the *mobile force* of the body. Lucretius says this mobile force "gives out from itself" to the combination of warmth, wind and air the *initial impetus* from which sensory motion "takes rise throughout the flesh." Perhaps the easiest philosophical comparison to this is to the "continuous fulgurations" of monads coming from the God-monad in Leibniz's *Monadology* (paragraph 47). And perhaps a more accessible comparison would be to picture the Quick as a sort of Tesla Coil. Either way, the four elements, warmth, wind and breath + the Quick, together create a single admixture, the most fundamental thing in our bodies, what I'll call the Motive.

The Motive is the thing at our very core as living beings and the Quick is the core of the Motive. So Lucretius reasons the Quick is the "soul of the soul" or the "mind of the spirit", the animus of the anima. By hypothetical syllogism, the Quick is the most vital element of the body (3.271-281). If it wasn't for the Quick one could say equally of *any* of these parts of vital spirit, *it rules* the body, which would make no sense. Now let's turn to the next level up, the working of the vital spirit and mind.

Lucretius says the "first thing" at the *mind's disposal* is warmth. The *mind uses it* when it "boils with rage" and "passion blazes" from the eyes. Then the mind uses "chill wind" when in a fright, setting "limbs atremble" impelling them to flight. And "calm steady air *prevails* in a tranquil breast" (Latham translation, 3.292-3).⁹⁴ Taken on its face this could mean that all three are constantly (or instantly) available to the mind to use and that for no reason of any consequence to his theory chose to discuss them in this order. But this overly simplistic reading goes against the language used and explains

⁹⁴ This is from Ronald E. Latham's translation of *DRN* (Penguin, 1994). Esolen has it "there's finally the state of calm air for the easy heart and countenance at peace."

nothing. I argue that the what makes *much* more sense of L's theory and fits the language is that the mind literally can and does take each element of the Motive in a specific order, starting with warmth, proceeding to wind and ending with breath.

Consider the use of the word 'prevails' in discussing a calm person. If by 'prevails' Lucretius meant "widespread in a particular area at a particular time" the indexing and the fact of the calm person having steady air in him are not related. It would just be coincidental that that was the progression. But if by 'prevails' he meant "proves more powerful" it would make more sense to read the above as indicating that when in an emotionally charged situation someone is agitated and ends up calm what happens is that they go from feeling the burn of anger to the chill of fright before setting in with calm steady air because of some fact about the way the mind and nervous system work.

This question is important but merely discussing language outside the bounds of the overall theory will not be decisive. It is crucial to remember the *basic schematic* of what the fourth element, the Quick, is and does. It is the *mobile force*, a sort of fulguration that sets all other movement in the body and mind going.

With this in mind its much more clear he means that it is not *the fully conscious mind* that "grabs up" the stimulus of the Quick, but rather that the stimulus from the Quick is taken up in stages as *duplex communication* between mind and spirit continues: *first* by the "anger part", *then* the "fear part", then the "calm part". (That is not to say that each *emotion* "grabs up" Quick but that the part of the mind that can create each (viz. *warmth, wind, air*) does so. If the Quick - mind - spirit connection works in the way I'm suggesting, then everything (e.g. blood pressure, galvanic skin response, sweat,

tremble, etc) is roused to movement relative to how much of the Quick was “grabbed up” into a specific ‘drum’ or ‘chamber’ of the mind.

So if the anger chamber got quite a lot of Quick you’d see those sorts of bodily changes and it would be much harder to resist acting out “in anger”. The significance of the indexing would be to point out perhaps that anger and fear have “first dibs” on the Quick (given the importance of anger and fear responses to survival this make sense – even for an Epicurean) by having, e.g. a faster absorption rate, more absorption ability, or more receptors available.

To illustrate, let’s say that when René gets angry, what happens is that much of the Quick gets taken up by the ‘warmth’ yet some is grabbed up in the other two. When all the taking up is done, the mind *uses* the contents of the ‘warmth container’ (but also may use wind and/or breath) to *regulate physiological responses*. Consistent with the whole theory, this would clearly mean that there is no *initial meditation* – conscious thought – regarding the Quick going from being scattered in the body to its being taken up by one, some, or all of the three chambers. That is, the vital spirit is ‘unconsciously’ able to “collect up” Quick impetus and it gets absorbed by each of the three ‘drums’ in some rate(s). But based on what? Either on the relationship between what the Quick *is* and what warmth wind and breath *are*, which is not in the text, or it is based on some initial ‘impression’ that isn’t made by mind qua mediator but on a more basic level.

Once the drums fill according with the overall level of the Quick or “impetus” involved and how much was absorbed into each chamber, the *mind qua mediator* has access to the “categorized” impetus or energy and uses this ‘fuel’ to create certain responses in the body, and to perform certain actions. Of course, unfortunately from an Epicurean’s point of view this would make it impossible not to act on the dominant

emotion – all action would be (crudely put) emotion driven. This is a problem for Epicureanism since it claims both that 1) you can be trained to not *act out* in certain ways and 2) you never lose your natural disposition. Education can varnish (polish) individuals but never completely change their basic temperament – you can learn not to let the Quick out of the chamber, but you can't change the uptake rate of each chamber. Another way they put the point is saying that your innate vices can't be completely eliminated – which seems to strongly suggest that being (too) *emotional* (read: acting out immediately and counter-productively) is an innate *vice*. And further evidence is forthcoming from the text (3.293-4): People whose passionate hearts “come to a quick and raging boil” have a surplus of warmth. It's as if their “anger” chamber soaks up the Quick at a higher than average rate. To illustrate this Lucretius gives the example of lions, which cannot keep the rage within their breasts and roar until their chests burst. Cattle, on the other hand, have a “bigger portion” (Penguin trans.) of the calm air in their *hearts 'mind'* (3.302-303.)

While this strikes me as a very good and consistent account for all that Lucretius has said, I may be including the concept of “mind” qua conscious thinker too soon. For instance, it may be that as soon as the chambers are filled with the Quick, the *spirit immediately* begins using this fuel. Imagine a water clock rigged so that once it is filled to capacity pulls out its own stopper, or a commode that can refill itself. The fuel would be used up as it becomes available and to the extent that it is available. Certainly the language Lucretius uses (impulse, tremor, thrill) are amenable to this understanding, and coupled with one's own subjective experiences of emotional “sudden” outbursts and “temporary” *moods* with no explanation, this reading has a lot in its favor. Indeed both the above analyses could be true, and surely it is plausible to think that the spirit is

set up to “run” as soon as there is fuel, but that qua *mind* it can dam up or constrain itself.

But now lets have some final thoughts on the nature and role of emotions. Understanding what we now do about the nature of the mind and the spirit, we can understand what Lucretius means when he says that mind and judgment aren't born in the 'head' alone (or the feet, etc), but that they do come to *cleave to* one sole dwelling place in everyone. He is reiterating that mind and spirit are essentially *the same*, they are the same admixture, and the admixture is all over the body. But he readily accepts that the “rational part, the animus does come to collect itself in the mid-breast in everyone.” This appears directly in line with the Homeric idea of the diaphragm as the mind, fitted over the heart and lungs. It is literally as if this 'stuff' is 'cut to fit', or 'latches on' to the chest area (3.613-15). Going with this literal interpretation we would like to *see* that 'the rest' of the stuff that is the same stuff as the diaphragm really is of the same sort and so has the same capability for sentience. A good candidate to match both the 'stuff' and the 'quick' would be the nerves (consider how densely packed the abdomen is with organs and nerves).

Still, as Lucretius puts it, by itself spirit can't feel or be (3.631). It takes Quick to allow it to do that. And once Quick is understood and involved there is this 'cleaving' such that mind, centered in the mid-chest “becomes” *animus* while the rest *remains* as *anima*. This does not say that *anima* cannot 'think' or 'judge' in any way, and he shouldn't say so because he clearly doesn't believe that. Clearly he thinks that there is an intimate link between the two and that *animus* is a *special case* of *anima*. Understanding the differences is part and parcel of understanding the emotions.

Are the emotions *equated* with either *animus* or *anima*? With both or neither? If the mind is in the chest and the emotions are there too, is this because they are the same, or because they are mental, or is it contingent? Are they rational or irrational? These are not simple questions to decide but I think the most sensible reply is that because the emotions are ‘qualities’ of both the *animus* and *anima* they – qua tools of the spirit to both process and communicate information – cannot be held to be *irrational* in Lucretius.

Lucretius clearly states that emotions are felt (physically) in the heart (3.1052-55). He appears to conclude (partly) based on this that the mid-region of the breast is the seat of intellect and mind, a claim he makes explicitly at 3.138-40. And he makes it clear that mind is a type of vital spirit, with the *rest* of vital spirit, spirit, diffused throughout the body and moving to the mind’s sway and will. But this does not mean spirit *always* follows mind’s will or influence but that at least sometimes, perhaps nearly always, it *does*. Whichever it does would appear to be based on what beliefs are formed, what is ‘judged’. When incoherent or mistaken beliefs are followed, we get bad desires and bad results. When correct beliefs are followed we get good desire and satisfaction. It must work the same on both levels, though clearly in a much more ‘immediate’ and attenuated fashion with respect to the *spirit*.

And its important to note that it is not as if just because he says that emotions are physically felt in the mid-breast that they are felt there wholly and exclusively. In fact it seems clear now that Lucretius thinks there is more than one kind of emotion, more or less purely mental (but of course still purely physical) and a ‘spirit-based’ ‘visceral’ emotion that is much deeper and stronger-but still ‘cognitive’. At 3.302-306 one might get the impression that he believes in only one level of emotion when he describes anger as “a smoky torch” that “clouds the mind with black and blinding shadow” and when

he describes fear as an “icy shaft” that “transfixes and benumbs.” But such a reading must be rejected when he discusses a “more overwhelming fear” that not only transfixes and benumbs (the mind) but also “makes the spirit upset in sympathy with the mind all over the body.” The spirit all over the body *and* the mind *together* “propel the limbs, change facial expressions, affect sight and hearing, cause sweat and pallor”.

For Lucretius, emotions are a natural phenomenon that happen *in* the heart, paralyze the mind, and also *upset* spirit. What seems to be happening – *at least* in the case of fear – is that up to a certain threshold the *mind* is the only part “emoting” but there is a tipping point where the vital spirit is roused. So again, the chest-brain is *usually* the only part handling fears but after a point, the whole “spirit-system” (quite akin to what we call the central nervous system) gets involved. But then clearly there is a difference between mental (physical) emotions and ‘bodily’ emotions.

One might problematize this, thinking I am overcomplicating the issue and that Lucretius is simply saying that no emotion is ever experienced without the mind, but some emotion is *only* experienced by mind, as when he says “mind thinks by itself, joys in itself...”(3.145-6). But one might just as well argue the converse: it might be that there is a low-high threshold for emotions. Since the mind is in the chest and not all mental action is meditation, all that may have been said is that the more ‘basic’ mind⁹⁵ is active at lower level fears and is *felt* only there, but that past a certain point the rest of the spirit system (sympathetic) gets involved – the spirit proper and the higher mental abilities.

So how do we adjudicate? Part of the argument for mind experiencing some emotion alone is based on 1) belief that the mind *can work* even when not getting input from the spirit (this doesn’t mean that the spirit is unnecessary for thought); 2)

⁹⁵ Akin to the vagus-brain system we’ll discuss in the final two chapters.

remembering the mind is a type of vital spirit. But the mind as one with the body, is affected the same and shares the body's feeling" (3.168). For instance, when the *body* (suffused with spirit) suffers disease and pain the *mind* is noticeably "seized with trouble and fear and sorrow" (3.461). And often when the *body* is ill the mind "will often wander; he loses his train of thought, he speaks astray, while drowsiness sinks him into a deep and lasting coma" (3.464-466). Lucretius even goes so far as to say "when men sense a weight upon their minds, a trouble deep within that wearies them, they could but recognize the source...huge misery masses in the heart..."(3.1052-55). These final comments really put everything in relief. Yes, in a sense the mind does experience its own emotions but clearly so does the body, and after a certain point in some cases the body-centric emotions come to more fully involve the mind, and at some points the mind-centric emotions come to more fully affect the body.

Finally, are emotions rational or irrational? A direct, definitive 'universal' answer cannot be forthcoming for this theory. Consider that Lucretius says the mind "thinks and joys". Does this mean thinking and joying are different things? On one hand no, both are activities of mind, and further, the 'and' may be inclusive and so 'joying' may be descriptive of 'thinking'. On the other hand yes, because the 'and' may not be inclusive and thinking and joying are in some important sense different types of mental events. Still, some joy is "purely mental" the type of joying the mind does. And this would seem to reject that *all joy is purely "spirit"-centric*. But it doesn't at all mean that joy is not *always* felt. In fact, it would mean Lucretius thinks the (physical) mind, in the chest, joys – it feels joy in the chest. And not in the way some other joy, or other emotion, is felt in the body but not the chest. Indeed, though I sometimes feel 'joy' in my chest,

such as when I see my girlfriend after a long absence, I also experience 'joy' in my head and back of my neck, as when I'm reading a fascinating book.

But the final word cannot exclude the original distinction we made between the 'rational' *animus* and the irrational '*anima*'. And that both in some sense can and do perform 'mental' functions, including emotions. However, we must remember that *error*, specifically the errors we attribute to our senses, are actually due to the mental (mind) assumptions we impose so that things that are not *perceived* by the senses pass for sense perceptions (4.462-8). This would suggest that *mind* chooses counter-productive actions based on unfounded beliefs, in turn based on judgment of basic perceptions – plain facts – of the spirit. Separating the interpretations and poor meditations from the plain facts, something Lucretius says is the hardest thing there is to separate, would then seem to be the real issue. To the extent an emotion disallows one to make a good judgment, or inclines one not to do so, or more generally leads one to "choose" counter-productive behavior, then they are almost by definition irrational. But in the end the real culprit is the *animus*, whose job it is, all things being equal to be *rational*, protective, etc. If the mind doesn't do its job when it is within its power to do so, then the cause must be stupidity, laziness, or a bad character. But nothing about emotions, or mind, or spirit, necessitates that emotions qua emotions are irrational or bad.

3. THE RISE OF COGNITIVISM

3.1 Epicurean Psychology and Ethics Beyond Lucretius

The essential belief of the Epicurean psychology is that there are three types of desires; natural and necessary, merely natural, and vain. In turn, the natural and necessary desires admit of three types as well: those necessary for happiness, for rest/peacefulness of the body, and for life (Epicurus 185).⁹⁶ Epicurus believed that properly understanding these types would allow us to make all of our *choices* for the sake of 1) The health of the body and 2), the soul's freedom from disturbance. Choice is something for the sake of mental and physical repose.

There is an intimate relationship between choice and action. Epicurean philosophy says that we always act to avoid pain and fear. But these are not "unconscious" or reflexive responses to fear stimulus – certainly not wholly or essentially such responses.⁹⁷ We *choose* consciously to act so as to avoid pain and fear and at the same time *for the sake of* mental and physical repose. In the end the two are the same. So we can say that we chose to act in order to avoid pain and fear or that we choose to act so as to have a healthy body and a soul free from disturbance.

⁹⁶ Epicurus, "Letter to Monoceus," in Ethics: History, Theory and Contemporary Issues eds. Cahn, Steven and Peter Markie, (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), 184-186, 185.

⁹⁷ Though not a Epicurean, Cicero sums up the position nicely when he says "fear is the anxious anticipation of distress to come" "Discussions at Tusculum," in On the Good Life. Trans. Michael Grant Penguin Books New York 1971 (p.79.)

Not everything we do in order to achieve these goals is conscious, but we do have the ability to be conscious of all the things that *motivate* “all choice and avoidance”.⁹⁸ At least some of these – the negative or counterproductive ones are “mere opinions” – appear sometimes not to be chosen. Without getting any deeper in Epicurean epistemology than is absolutely necessary let’s have a look at how all this is explained.

Remember that there are three desires. One type – vain desires – are clearly not “automatic”. We only have them because we in one sense or another *choose* them. Other desires – the merely natural – come to us in a sense automatically, but we can *choose* to ignore them almost completely. And even with the *necessary* desires, given that they are automatic and must be satisfied, we still have a *choice* as to what extent – if any – beyond the level required for physical and mental repose we will satisfy them. We’ll see Epicureans believe basically the same thing about emotions and choice.

According to Epicurus, whether an *action* is consciously chosen or not we always act to avoid pain and fear. This conclusion follows from three assumptions⁹⁹:

1. Pleasure is the first good and natural to us
2. Every pleasure is good, but not every pleasure is to be chosen.
3. Though every pain is an evil, some should not be avoided

It turns out however, that Assumptions 2 and 3 come to the same claim. In Epicureanism pleasure is the absence of pain.¹⁰⁰ In Epicurus’ words,

⁹⁸ Epicurus, 185.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ John M. Cooper reads this as Epicurus saying that for Epicureans the goal is absence of pain, which “in some way coincides...on Epicurean theory” with pleasure but for the rest of us it is pleasure and the two do not coincide.: “pleasure and absence of pain would surely not coincide for ordinary, non-Epicurean persons, who surely do make a distinction in their desires and motivations (mistakenly or not) between absence of pain or distress and presence of pleasure: all their actions surely are not motivated solely by avoiding expected bodily pain or mental distress – at least, that is not how they themselves think about their desires and about what motivates their actions...and so,

“when, therefore, we maintain that pleasure is the end...[we mean]...freedom from pain in the body and from trouble in the mind” (186).

So Epicureans believe that as long as we agree that pleasure is the first good and pursuing it comes natural to us, experience can tell us that some pleasures lead to pain and some pains to pleasure. As such, we should do what we can to avoid “pain-creating pleasures” or to pursue “pleasure-creating” pains. Sometimes our natural desire for pleasure means we must *choose* to act in a way that is (temporarily at least) painful.

This is obvious enough but it’s not as much of a bromide as one might think because it gives us insight into the nature of choice according to Epicureanism. Let’s consider what is revealed in saying that we not only act *to* avoid pain and fear but also *from* pleasure.

It *follows* from the central claims that pleasure *is* the absence of pain and all action is to avoid pain and fear, that all action is *performed in order to achieve* pleasure.¹⁰¹ Presumably when we successfully act in a way that truly maximizes our pleasure we are acting in accordance with reason (unless very lucky or perfectly adapted to static surroundings). But there are some times when we act for pleasure that require little or

presumably, is not in fact true of them Nor can one see how Epicurus could have thought otherwise” (Cooper 1999, p.487). Clearly I think this is a facile reading and my argument speaks for itself. But I am supported by the work of Richard Sorabji as well, e.g. cf. Emotion and Peace of Mind, 201.

¹⁰¹ Cooper also rejects that Epicurus was a “hedonist in the further sense of claiming that whenever any human being decides and acts as her or she always, as a matter of fact, does so ultimately with the idea of obtaining pleasure and/or avoiding pain for himself or herself”. Cf. Chapter 22, “Pleasure and Desire in Epicurus” in his Reason and Emotion.

But I don’t necessarily disagree with this conclusion: He appears to really be saying that Epicurus allows that a person can learn to be motivated by more than just the pain or pleasure of a particular, isolated, immediately possible action. That, in my opinion, is certainly true. But if he denies pleasure is the ultimate end of life, we are in disagreement.

no thought, and certainly no reflection. The upshot then is that all *choice* involves some level of ‘deliberation’, even if it is minimal goal-awareness along with awareness of the possibility of deceptive appearances.¹⁰²

But sometimes we choose to act in ways that do not give us what we seek but its opposite. In such failures, in as much as we *choose* to perform in the way we did, we *chose* to act for pleasure but were simply *mistaken* – acting based on mere opinion – about what the act would achieve. This is just as true for *unchosen* acts: when we do something that causes us real pain it is the opposite of what we *wanted* to *achieve*. And so whether we act in full “choice” or whether we act in a more basic or “reflexive” way, [real] pain-inducing acts are due to error. This is why Epicurus wants us to hone our abilities to be conscious of all that motivates chosen actions and what I take to be “avoidance” – reflexive acts meant to avoid pain (or what is the same, achieve pleasure). That is, error is often the cause of both our *chosen* (conscious) actions and our avoidant (reflexive) actions. And that was (and is) far from obvious. Yet it follows in a way from his assumptions and argument.

If we are to get what we want, no pain and fear, we are going to need to realize that many of our desires are based on error and that only proper pursuit of the absolutely necessary ones will ensure our true desires. That is, only if we act simply for the repose of the mind and body and nothing more can we ensure our goal of pleasure.

Putting this in argument form we have:

1. Definition: pleasure is the absence of pain
 2. We always act in order to avoid pain and fear
 3. The limit of quantity in pleasures is the removal of all that is painful
- ∴ Once the absence of pain is achieved, there will be no further pursuit or desire for pleasure (Epicurus, 186.)

¹⁰² This turns out to be a useful alternative conception of judgment.

So we go from the basic assumption that all our actions are for pleasure to the realization that much of what we do is due to error, to the conclusion that once we achieve pleasure we will have no further desire to act.

Let's check to see if all this is coherent and consistent. Recall that:

1. Pleasure is the avoidance of pain
 2. We always act in order to avoid pain
 3. We cease to act when the absence of pain is achieved
- ∴ No acts are not for the avoidance of pain

And note that

1. All action is for the avoidance of pain
2. When we succeed in eliminating pain, we cease to have any desires.
3. If it is true that when our desires are eliminated, we do not act, then it would follow that when we successfully act to avoid pain, we cease to have any more acts until another possibility of removing pain appears.

This indeed appears to be what he has in mind in LM when he speaks of the three types of desires and says that properly understanding them allows us to make all our choices for the 2 right reasons. Recall that the three types are

1. Natural and necessary,
 - a. Necessary for happiness
 - b. Necessary for care of the body
 - c. Necessary for life
2. Merely natural
3. Vain.

Presumably, recognizing that a desire is a vain one would lead a person to see that pursuing it does not remove any pain and so it is pointless. Similarly for merely natural desires; once we see that though we *desire* to have sex with a highly attractive person we aren't *obligated* to for happiness, for care of the body, or to survive. We may derive some slight alleviation of pain or avoidance of pain, but perhaps not obviously more than from becoming "free" of our sexual desires. That would leave us with the

natural and necessary desires and we would then *choose* to properly pursue them, or to avoid not having them fulfilled. Doing so would ensure the health of the body and keep our minds free from disturbance.

Acting only for the sake of our physical health or the mind's "freedom from disturbance" ensures that we will avoid pain. Since when we accomplish that we will have no other desires, we will have no other (real) reason to act. That is, the "tempest of the soul" what one might call the major *impulse* to act for either merely natural or vain desires, would be eliminated. And so we would simply *cease to act*.

Indeed, he sums this up (at the beginning) when he says that a pleasant life comes from "searching out the motives for all choice and avoidance, and banishing *mere opinions*, to which are due the greatest *disturbances* of the spirit".¹⁰³

Emotions from this point of view are trouble.¹⁰⁴ And as we'll see, the understanding and control of the emotions will also have a lot to say about how successful one is at being an Epicurean. Certainly strong emotions are to be eliminated, and to that extent Epicureanism is very similar to Stoicism.

Recalling that at the core of Epicurean philosophy is the thought that only a very small subset of all our desires are in fact necessary for and conducive to happiness, we can understand why Epicurus puts so much weight on understanding the types of

¹⁰³ Epicurus, 185.

¹⁰⁴ As Richard Sorabji puts it, "The Epicureans will not side exclusively with the advocates of moderate emotion, nor with those of freedom from emotion. It is better to think of them as believing in selective emotion." By this he means that some emotions, in some situations are not only exceedingly difficult to avoid, but actually desirable to some extent or another. And in other cases they are to be eschewed or eliminated. Cf. his Emotion and Peace of Mind, esp Ch. 14, "The Traditions of Moderation and Eradication" and to a lesser extent Ch. 13, "The Case for and Against Eradication of Emotion", esp. p. 191-193.

desires. Seeing clearly which of your desires really will make you happy will lead you to act so as to have a healthy body and a soul free from disturbance. But not everything we do is a result of a conscious deliberation, nor need it be.

According to Epicureanism we *always* act to achieve happiness or pleasure, to avoid pain and fear. But this means something else once we accept how seriously the theory takes non-consciously deliberated action. In order to actually achieve the conscious (and non-conscious) goal we must avoid errors in *judgment* of what is actually best for us, whether the *judgment* was a snap judgment or a considered one. The only way to ensure this is to stick to pursuing (consciously or not) only the absolutely necessary desires. That is, only if we can keep ourselves to acting just for the repose of the mind and body and nothing more can we ensure achievement of pleasure.

This means for conscious action we'll have to recognize when a desire is a vain one. But for unconscious action, it seems we'll have to be trained. And indeed society does do this in many ways, e.g. traditional sexual mores somewhat lowering promiscuity. Eventually, it is apparently thought, a vigilant conscience and a well-trained character would simply stop desiring anything besides the necessary and so simply cease to act after satisfaction. Properly calibrated emotional responses will do this work too. Yet Epicureanism makes this a Sisyphean task.

3.2 Stoicism and the Emotions

A. Introduction

It is clear that the Stoic theory of emotions has been very influential in Western history, and it has been very thoroughly discussed. To my mind it has been discussed much more than it deserves and at this point is so well understood, and is in the end so unacceptable, that I will be able to forgo giving a treatment as in depth as I've offered of the Homeric, Platonic, and Aristotelian theory. By the end of the chapter it will also become evident why it was the Epicurean theory of emotions that is more faithful to Plato and Aristotle, but particularly the Epicureanism of Lucretius.

The Stoic position on emotions is quite simply that they are bad, that they should be completely excluded from life if one every wants to become good and happy. In Cicero's words, the stoics "refuse to concede that a person ought to have any feelings at all".¹⁰⁵ How do they come to this radical position?

The Stoic philosophy of emotion builds on the bedrock claim that emotions are identical with judgments. The two other fundamentally important beliefs about emotions are that emotions are voluntary and that emotions should be eliminated. Below I will give a general explanation of why and how they believe these things to be true. I will also immediately discuss why, in spite of its strong cognitive component, obviously wide influence and high level of intellectual subtlety, I take this to be the least satisfactory account of the ancient world. This will both help organize our thoughts on

¹⁰⁵ Cicero, 315.

the rest of the ancient world's theories discussed and set the tone for critical analysis of Descartes' theory of emotions and Cartesian-influenced theories of emotion.

Specifically, my criticism of Stoic emotions provides the fundamental flaw present in all cognitive theories of emotion and suggests the great error of all visceral theories, particularly that of the overly visceral theory of emotion of Descartes and its heir, the even more misguided James-Lange theory. Between these three fundamental and fundamentally flawed theories we have the majority of the content and the intellectual firmament for nearly all the major contemporary theories of emotion.

Surely it is true that given the cognitive bent in thinking on the emotions over the last 30 years, the current high place in intellectual history the Stoic theory of emotions holds is due in large part to the fact that it so errs on the side of being overly cognitive rather than reductively physiological. And surely there is something to the thought since it is clearly not *having a body* that is the sufficient condition for having emotions since most living things do not have emotions, but rather having a certain level of intellectual sophistication that is the sufficient condition (given that it comes along with a certain physiological sophistication - but don't mix up the why and the how¹⁰⁶). But it is also very lucky for the Stoic theory that the scholar Richard Sorabji has given it the most favorable light the stoics could have hoped for. (By comparison, my best guess is that there will be very little to say in the future about those who choose to err on the side of radical physiological reductivism such as the neo-behaviorists and others close to them.)

While Sorabji is in a way correct when he says the subject of the emotions gained "new depths with the Stoics", I'd argue that in the end this means something more

¹⁰⁶ See Plato's Phaedo, 98a-101d for a sophisticated and entertaining early discussion of this.

negative than he thinks. No doubt the Stoics expended much serious thought on the subject, but they did so in service of a profound error of concept and of method. They should be applauded for their introspection and derided for their desire to argue in support of principle over common sense and the millennia of human experiences documented in our rich and varied intellectual and cultural histories. Not only do such thinkers ignore the common sense view that the emotions matter deeply to human experience, they seemingly do so (at least in part) simply to preserve their larger world-view. Such partisanship leads to bad theory, generally a wasted effort and even today many thinkers on the emotions are guilty of the same error.

B. Enchiridion

The theory of emotion implied by and expressed in Epictetus' *Enchiridion*¹⁰⁷ is really quite eye opening. It begins with the assertion that everything that is our own doing, our thought, our impulse to act, our will to get or avoid something and the like are *completely* within our power to control. And on the other hand *our bodies* are not under our control, not "our own doing" (§1). So from the outset there is a radical disconnect between what the mind is and does and what the body is and does that is not present in prior theories, but it is in Descartes and most theories he inspired.

Given the received intellectual landscape regarding the nature of mind and the mind-body relationship, this belief can only lead to a serious problem regarding what to say about the emotions and emotional actions. The Stoics' refusal to accept the basically Platonic picture of the mind that permeates Aristotelian psychology and ethics and

¹⁰⁷ Epictetus, "Enchiridion," in *Ethics: History, Theory and Contemporary Issues*, eds. Cahn, Steven and Peter Markie. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002), 189-200.

Lucretian physiological-psychology leads to a theory committed to the primacy of the “purely rational” intellect that is effectively ungrounded and at odds with all thought on the emotions since Homer.

And from this fundamental disconnect between the mind as “our own doing” and our body as “not our own doing” the Stoics are moved to conclude it is correct to consider one’s own only what actually belongs to him and to avoid doing anything against his will.

While Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus and Lucretius all are basically in agreement that the emotions happen to us, that they are a major source of human action and that virtue consists in properly acting on them – even that acting emotionally is often good and proper – the Stoics disagree. They think that nothing that “happens to us”, no “events”, can disturb our minds and so these things do not directly lead to action. Rather

What disturbs men’s mind is not events but their judgments on events...so when we are *hindered*, or *disturbed*, or *distressed* we should never lay the blame on anyone but *ourselves*, on our own judgments (§5).

And ‘judgment’ here is meant in the fullest most conscious sense – voluntary assent.¹⁰⁸ So there is no reason to look at emotions as good, beneficial, right, or anything but evidence of negative choices, of willful subversion of the rational intellect that is oneself. Indeed the only thing that you can really say is your own virtue (excellence) is how you deal with your impressions (§6). These sentiments are echoed by the later claim (§30) that “no one can harm you without your consent because you can only be harmed when you

¹⁰⁸ Sorabji p. 45-46: “Emotions are due not to nature, but to our own judgment which on the Stoic view involves voluntary assent.” “They depend upon and express the agent’s decisive opinion, at the time they are experienced, about what is worth reacting to and acting for” (Cooper 451).

think you are harmed" – and again 'you' is your aware mind and not your body, not your family or friends nor any possession of yours.

Scant evidence is given for this belief about harm and, as I argue below, it simply neglects any serious consideration of humans as social beings. Yet Stoicism itself is in very large part *about* humans qua social beings so that properly understanding what the Stoics say about emotions will reveal a fundamental contradiction in Stoicism that cannot be resolved without an inference to bad explanation, question begging, or by rejecting the Stoic account of emotions.

The *Enchiridion* leaves no doubt that emotions are identified as judgments. At §16 for example, Epictetus suggests that if we see someone crying in sorrow we ought to remember that

what distresses him is not the event (e.g. his child dying), because that does not distress another, but his *judgment* on the event.

The judgment is the reason one is distressed, the sorrow is directly from the judgment and is nothing but the judgment.¹⁰⁹ Yet already at §30 we ought to note a serious tension in the thinking as it is also advised that one will only discover what is proper to expect from people – what criterion to judge on – when you understand the *relations* implied by each type of person (e.g. mother, sister, employer, neighbor). The thinking is that if you only expect your mother to act the way that mothers act and to see the world through the eyes of a mother then you will not be disturbed by the way she acts towards you. So that if you perceive your mother to voice constantly concerns over e.g. your driving skills and you take offense to this and choose to become angry you have simply

¹⁰⁹ As Sorabji puts it, "though Plato does appear to be one of the first - if not the first - to describe the emotions in cognitive terms, it is not until the Stoic Chrysippus that anyone thinks to identify the emotions with judgments (20)."

misunderstood the situation and have made a bad judgment. When you see that the remarks are made out of love and care for your safety you will cease to be insulted and realize you are not hurt. Further, consider §42,

When any person treats you ill or speaks ill of you...if he is wrong in his opinion, he is the person who is hurt, for he is the person who has been deceived; for if a man shall suppose the true conjunction to be false, it is not the conjunction which is hindered, but the man who has been deceived about it. *If you proceed then from these opinions, you will be mild in temper* to him who reviles you: for say on each occasion, it seemed so to him¹¹⁰

Yet this makes little sense without the above-mentioned assumptions. (It would seem that there is almost an analogy made between you the ill-spoken of and with a conjunction! Indeed you do not find claims like this in Homer, Plato or Aristotle. Sorabji sees this as an improvement in that it appears to be evidence of a much more subtle understanding of the self and problems of the self as a concept, and he may be right. But it would also seem to be a regression from the point of view of understanding the emotions and human relations. It simply is rare (if it ever happens) that a person *only relates to you in one way*. And experience tells us that we often care very deeply – because of our relations to certain people – when they make such mistakes!

C. Important Specifications on Orthodox Stoicism

The Stoic account holds further that all judgments involved in emotions are *always false*¹¹¹, that they are wholly voluntary and that they can be arranged under four basic species¹¹²: “distress, pleasure, fear and appetite”.¹¹³ More importantly, each

¹¹⁰ Epictetus. Enchiridion. Trans. George Long. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004.

¹¹¹ Sorabji, 21.

¹¹² “Distress: the judgment that there is bad at hand and that it is appropriate to feel a sinking; Fear: the judgment that there is bad at hand and that it is

emotion involves *two distinct* value judgments, one that there is good or bad at hand and the second that it is appropriate to react¹¹⁴

In every emotion-instance the ‘subspecies’ is determined based on the good or bad in question. So in the case of anger, one decides it is appropriate to get revenge, or to punish the culprit. Even if neither you nor any one else does or could actually act on the judgment, the emotion is experienced because you have decided that revenge or punishment would be right.¹¹⁵

With these definitions and further Stoic theoretical considerations in tow, the Stoic Chrysippus had four reasons he needed to insist that the second judgment, ‘appropriate to react’ was the very bad one.¹¹⁶ I take it that this argument by Sorabji is tacitly saying that the thought that there was a second judgment involved in emotion, it was *ad hoc* – it had to be added to save the principle that all emotions are bad. Finding that there was a separate judgment ‘appropriate to react’ was

1. Results-practical: it was the belief that most needed to be removed to console the distressed. As Sorabji says, this is an improvement on the older Stoic position that what was wrong was the belief that something good or bad was at hand, that in fact almost nothing is good or bad. Less charitably, the move saves Stoicism from being irrelevant and useless because it could not lead to therapy.
2. Theory-practical: What do you say to someone, say a new indoctrinee, who is exposed as truly lacking in virtue even after having learned the teachings? Traditional Stoicism would again be exposed as irrelevant: the person in this situation is truly miserable so the teacher cannot advise him not to feel distress, thus contradicting his theory.

appropriate to avoid it; Pleasure: the judgment that there is a good at hand and that it is appropriate to feel an expansion; Appetite: the judgment that there is a good at hand and that it is appropriate to reach for it” (Sorabji, 29-30).

¹¹³ Sorabji, 29. Sorabji further points out that two directed to present, two to future, one each for apparent goods, one, apparent evils.

¹¹⁴ Other judgments come indirectly (e.g. anger (from fn 5): the judgment that it is appropriate to react may depend on further judgments that the injury was intended or undeserved) (Sorabji, 29).

¹¹⁵ Sorabji, 31.

¹¹⁶ Sorabji, 32.

3. Motivation-practical I: Emotions create impulses in us to act, but impulses aren't so much stirred up by the first appearance that something is good or bad but only the realization of what is appropriate to do, this is the true 'motivating appearance'.¹¹⁷
4. Motivation-practical II: Emotions fade over time even though we don't stop believing that the present situation is bad. It is the judgment that *x* action or response is appropriate that fades.

Now let's take up the voluntary nature of emotions. In a word, the evidence for emotion voluntariness is *eradicability*.¹¹⁸ The fact we can get rid of an emotion is supposed to be evidence that emotions are by their nature voluntary. Of course this doesn't logically follow, it may be rather like being randomly selected to win a prize - nothing you did or can do got you selected, but you can refuse or accept the prize. But still this *is* the Stoic view and it *is* the view because it needs to be true.

Moreover, on Seneca's account (the most prominent Stoic analysis of anger), that anger appears to go in stages shows *how* it can be subjected to voluntary control. Seneca says the whole point of the effort is to show that anger is controllable. But, he says, this can only be so if it is a judgment dependent on assent and will. Since, he says, anger appears to go in stages, the initial appearance and the 'first movements' or 'shocks' don't have to lead on to the full emotion precisely because emotion requires *acts* of assent and will. Since you *can* question appearances and not accept them - at least not at 'face value' you don't have to become angry. If you don't bother to question the appearances and let the initial 'shock' guide you to act out, that is your own fault. Though they are right to point out that time for reflection (often) enables us to halt our emotions, this oversimplification seems to completely miss - or ignore - the idea we found in Platonic, Aristotelian and Lucretian thought that there are levels of emotion, or of emotional

¹¹⁷ Sorabji, 33.

¹¹⁸ Sorabji, 45.

intensity some of which you cannot ignore or 'put down'. Of course, the Stoics have to believe the emotions are voluntary judgments if they are to have any way of convincing anyone that they can and should get freedom from them.

D. Slight Developments in Stoic Emotional Theory

John M Cooper's work on the Stoics on emotions is useful to help us tie all we've said so far together with the rest of the chapter. The 'orthodox' Stoic theory held "'emotions', so understood, to be functions of the reasoning power, the ability adult human beings have to think out and decide what to do..."¹¹⁹ And so with all other "human motivational states", every one of them are really simply and only functions of the rational faculty.

And Cooper rightly chastises the Stoic orthodoxy for their dubious methodology in reaching their conclusions, saying that

correct methodology requires selecting first principles in accord with the 'obvious' facts and forbids denying the facts because they are inconsistent with one's 'principles'. Moreover the Stoic dogmas were themselves the product of nothing but contentiousness and the desire to glorify oneself at the expense of such eminent ancient authorities as Plato and Aristotle (452).

Let's take a closer look at how this is obvious in Stoic thought from the beginning and why it matters enough to subvert the whole project.

E. Problem: Socialization

§1, and seven other of the 52 sections of the *Enchiridion*, concern themselves at least in part, with the social aspects of being a Stoic and a philosopher. Considering that

¹¹⁹ Cooper, 449-450.

Stoicism in large part is an ethical system and that ethics is about interpersonal relationships makes this seem perhaps unrevealing. But analyzing these sections reveals a serious contradiction in Stoic thought regarding the true place of the emotions and what they really are.

§1 counsels making clear to oneself the difference between what truly is controllable and what is not. And if something is not in your power it should be nothing to you. Then §10 fleshes out how to follow this advice by explaining that one is to look at what faculties they have that can deal with a particular *impression*, with whatever happens *to you*. So that if you have to deal with someone speaking obscenely to or around you, recognize that you have the power to be patient. Training yourself to see that you always have a faculty to deal with what is not directly in your power should ensure that your impressions won't "carry you away."

All of this is quite orthodox for Stoicism so none of it should be very shocking, but what follows simply does not mesh with it for two reasons. First we shall see that other people's views of you matter a great deal. Considering the fundamental role of the distinction between what is in us and in our control as mattering and what being out of us not mattering, this is incredibly difficult to accept. It is complicated further because in the midst of various discussions about the importance of other's opinions of you is a rebuke of the opinions of others. Second, much of what is said about the social costs of their philosophy is tendentious at best and absurd at worst.

At §33 it is recommended to "refuse the entertainments of strangers and the vulgar" because you will "share the stain" of any stained comrade even if you are clean yourself. Since from the point of view of Stoicism and of philosophy you are faultless, the only problem with having a 'stain' is that it will have a social cost. But why should

that matter? In the same section we are further advised to avoid talking too much about ourselves because others don't take as much pleasure in hearing about our adventures as we have in telling them. And in §36 it is said "If you want to maintain social decencies it is worthless to do things like taking the larger portion at a banquet, even though it is 'worthwhile' for your body. You should remember to maintain your self-respect before your host." In effect even if you are hungry and it would be good to eat, you should go hungry rather than *appear* immodest to a host at a party.

While I agree that for the most part these things are true, why any of it should *matter* to a Stoic is hard to fathom. They must believe – rightly – that one's social standing matters. But their views here, and their closely related disregard for emotions show they do not. A more telling answer might be found in §30. There it is said

every living creature has a natural tendency to avoid and shun what seems harmful and all that causes it, and to pursue and admire what is helpful and all that causes it.

Again this seems quite true. And yet it would seem to be completely irrelevant to a Stoic in a social situation, for whom *nothing* should get in the way of right action, as is clearly meant when Epictetus says, "*If your action is wrong, avoid doing it altogether, but if it is right, why do you fear those who will rebuke you wrongly*" (§35). Neither being punished nor being poorly thought of is ever a reason to avoid a wrong action. So the only reason we could have for following the advice of §33 would be that there are reasons to avoid right action that involve the impressions you will cause on others. But this seems largely impracticable; how could you go about trying not to create bad impressions on strangers by avoiding friend who are stained – perhaps even wrongly stained – and by not talking too much about ourselves so as to offend a stranger's sensibilities? This is all the more difficult to grasp when we recall that *nothing* that is not in our power matters *at all*. And

how can one say with a straight face that we can control how a third party feels about our friend? Do we even have that much control over how others judge our actions? While there is some control over how we present ourselves, what goes on in another's head, by what measures and prejudices they are judging us would be largely a mystery and serious attention to being inoffensive must lead to inaction. So perhaps the position is to avoid all action that is not obviously *good* and *necessary* but when something is good and necessary then it is to be done no matter what. But now we've not got a socially concerned ethical theory.

Let's take a step back and ask why the advice from §33 is good advice. Why should we avoid stained friends? Are those who would rebuke us *right* to do so? Are we the proper object of social sanction or punishment? If loyalty is of no concern in itself then the only reason the 'rebuker' would be wrong to chastise us for consorting with a stained person is if they were wrong in their opinion of him. But nothing is said in §33 to make this distinction. But let's assume that the stain is there. Why should we be rebuked for spending time with our unsophisticated friend? I venture to suggest that it would be because in doing so we are in some serious or conspicuous way flouting a *social norm*. That is, society has its rules and if someone is not going to follow them, they must be punished even if it is not by legal sanction. As Mill says, the power of social coercion is often much more successful. But it only works if the person being singled out truly feels the sting of being 'shunned'. By consorting with your dirty friend you alleviate him and flout society.

Should this matter? Certainly not if he is a good man. But again, even beyond that it should not matter to a Stoic. Consider §20 where it says – in keeping with the

fundamentals of Stoicism - that “foul words or blows” are only an outrage because you judge them to be so. In themselves they are not.

Further reading only makes the case for the Stoic sympathizer worse. §29 is a stern reminder to the would-be Stoic of the costs of choosing the life of philosophy in general and that of a Stoic in particular. The hours are long and grueling, you will have to “abandon your own people” and suffer the (social) humiliations of being looked down on by slaves and being “ridiculed by those who meet you”. In fact you will get the worst of every type of social good such as honors and offices and even justice. The reward for losing out on everything social is “peace of mind, freedom and tranquility”.

In the end the orthodox Stoic position is simply lost when it comes to the emotions and socialization. The two go hand in hand. And ad hoc revisions made later, while they might make sense in the context of the theory are intellectually spurious when seen from the outside. Advocating that a person lose all their sentiments, leave their family and give up any real chance at a meaningful social life simply is absurd for a human being given the way our minds and bodies are structured as *social* creatures. It is no surprise then that the Stoics are inconsistent about whether social issues such as reputation are truly damaging or beneficial. Its as simple as realizing that if you really believe that when someone makes you angry that is simply “just you” who has angered yourself is a hopeless proposition.

The fundamental case of anger as described by Aristotle and understood by Greek and Roman (and our own) society as a social phenomenon and as existing at both a “hot” and “cold” level is – whatever its other flaws – at least correct in that. And so their theories on the role of emotion in ethics are of some use to us. The same cannot be said for the Stoics.

Part 2: The “Materialists’” Turn

4. COGNITIVISM AND MATERIALISM IN THE 17TH CENTURY

4.1 Introduction

In the last chapter I characterized the major theories of emotion in the ancient world as visceral¹²⁰ (Homer) pluralist (Plato, Aristotle, Lucretius) and cognitivist (The Stoics, Epicurus). I now turn to charting the fate of these camps in the modern world. The dominant figure in the 17th and 18th centuries in the theory of emotions is René Descartes, who claims to commit himself to break from all previous theories and start thinking on the subject anew. Instead he combined his ardent belief in strict mind-body dualism (which we saw in Stoicism) with the mechanistic philosophy that dominated his times. The result of the combination was a severely flawed but highly influential theory of emotions that effectively turns the mind into an epiphenomenon and makes the emotions and volition almost completely visceral. The theory was and remains immensely influential and reaction was and remains two-fold. Theorists tried to either: 1) make the mind qua non-physical fit into physiology or they 2) take his view of mind as standard and coherent but hopelessly wrong and so eliminate mind, gutting both feedback and two-level emotions, if not emotions altogether.

I believe this was a major influence on the rise of sentimentalism in ethics and by the time we arrive at the end of the chapter, David Hume, taking route two, puts forth a

¹²⁰ As a reminder, the visceral theory is basically that reasoning and emotion are physiological, largely undifferentiated responses to intense fleeting desires. More specifically, the emotions are nothing but certain physiological changes and the behavior they engender.

full-fledged sentimentalist ethical theory in combination with a theory of emotion and cognition related to the visceral theory of Homer.

While any one approaching emotions - or ethics - from anything like a common-sense or 'humanistic' perspective ought to find this troubling, theories like that of Descartes and Hume share a much more fundamental problem; they *cannot* drop the cognitive element in emotion and remain coherent. In the end they 'slip' the cognitive component of emotion back into the visceral account by means of some *ad hoc* concept or mechanism they are not entitled to, which usually makes them internally incoherent, and worse, useless.

4.2 René Descartes

A. Overview of Descartes and the Passions

After briefly explaining Descartes' theory of emotions from the *Passions of the Soul*¹²¹ (POS), I will discuss three serious problems for the theory that make it untenable, what I call the "Cartesian errors"¹²². They are especially problematic because he should have known better and because they have been embedded in thinking on the emotions ever since he made them.

The *first Cartesian error* actually has as much to do with his problem solving method as his commitments to dualism and the mechanistic philosophy: the belief that 'mind' or 'mental activity' is pure cognition and that 'body' is an unthinking machine responsive only to pleasure and pain and having nothing to do with cognition.¹²³ The *second Cartesian error* is that he has irreparably separated emotion from cognition and is forced into an untenable, *ad hoc* distinction between calm and violent passions in order

¹²¹ René Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, trans. Stephen H. Voss (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1989).

¹²² Though the phrase "Cartesian Error" is my own, and chosen for obvious reasons, it is worth noting that what I term his 'first' error is also the error referred to by the title of the book *Descartes' Error* by Antonio Damasio, though I explain and develop it in much more detail than he. Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain*, (New York: Putnam, 1994). As Damasio puts it: "This is Descartes' error: the abyssal separation between body and mind, between the sizeable, dimensioned, mechanically operated, infinitely divisible body stuff, on the one hand, and the unsizeable, undimensioned, un-pushpullable, nondivisible mind stuff; the suggestion that reasoning, and moral judgment, and the suffering that comes from physical pain or emotional upheaval might exist separately from the body. Specifically, the separation of the most refined operations of the mind from the structure and operation of a biological organism" (249-250). And further, "how intriguing to think that Descartes did contribute to modifying the course of medicine, did help it veer from the organismic, mind-in-the-body approach, which prevailed from Hippocrates to the renaissance. How annoyed Aristotle would have been with Descartes, had he known" (250).

¹²³ Recall the Stoics' split between what is and is not under our control.

to imbue some emotions with intelligence. As a consequence he can find little good to say about the emotions from the perspective of ethics and effectively takes the stoic position that they are to be eliminated.¹²⁴ The *third Cartesian error* is that he cannot coherently explain how the mind and the body could have duplex communication.

B. The First Cartesian Error

Again, the First Cartesian Error is the belief that ‘mind’ or ‘mental activity’ is pure cognition and that ‘body’ is an unthinking machine responsive only to pleasure and pain and having nothing to do with cognition. At the outset of the *POS* Descartes is fundamentally committed to metaphysical dualism, the belief that the soul is the mind, the nonphysical source of thought and the body is its vehicle, physical, extended, sensitive and mobile. This is made clear by noting first that Descartes’ philosophical claims are deeply tied to those of his ancient predecessors, particularly the Stoic psychology and perhaps influenced by Lucretian physicalism.

Descartes is also convinced his problem-solving method will enlighten us as to the nature of dualism. He explains in the first part of the *POS* that human nature is fundamentally puzzling and little progress has been made in explaining ourselves to our selves. He believes his method can help and its fundamental premise of breaking down problems into their smallest possible components leads Descartes to offer an explanation for splitting a person into his basic parts, the non-physical mind and the mechanical

¹²⁴ Below we will see how Descartes forces the conclusion that a person with a strong enough desire can – and ought – completely control (and eliminate) their emotions by their will.

body, which fits with his bedrock belief.¹²⁵ Descartes' combination of assumptions and methods leads to the immediate, unassailable result that the *exclusive* function of the soul is thought and that everything else is the function of the body. If we can understand each part separately – and at his time it was strongly felt we were making tremendous strides in understanding the body – we could then come to properly understand the mysteries of the union that is a human. As we will see taking these two beliefs together quickly leads to disastrous results.

Descartes' method, as explained in the *Discourse on Method*¹²⁶ has four parts: 1) Never accept anything as true that you can't obviously accept as true, 2) Divide each of the problems you are examining in as many parts as you can, 3) Develop your thoughts in order, beginning with the simplest and easiest to understand, 4) When you go to review, make sure you establish every indubitable claim possible and every link you possibly can among them and check that everything you've included is correct. He is convinced this method will work because he is convinced that every truth that can be known by humans could be deduced one from the other as in a geometric proof, so long as no falsehoods were accepted.¹²⁷

So what's the problem with being convinced of this admittedly useful method?

Consider this passage¹²⁸:

...And I had little trouble finding which propositions I needed to begin with, for I already knew that they would be the simplest and the easiest to know..."

¹²⁵ *Passion and Virtue in Descartes* . Eds. Williston, Byron and André Gombay, 2003. Amherst, NY: 12.

¹²⁶ René Descartes, "Discourse on the Method." *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, ed. David Weissman, (New Haven, Yale UP, 1996), 3-48. The 4-step method, with explanations, can be found in the Discourse, p. 13.

¹²⁷ No doubt this method works wonders for things that can be known deductively.

¹²⁸ Discourse on Method, §1, p. 13

Simply put, Descartes' method absolutely depends on as much intellectual rigor as possible in establishing the "first principles" but he will not challenge mind-body dualism because it is obvious to him and the emotions are evidence of it; he thinks that the emotions are the perfect 'wedge' with which to pry open the secrets of the union, thereby explaining the essence of humanity. So among other things, there is no way he could ever fail to think the body fundamentally incapable of thought. And that somehow he must show that the emotions are evidence of a mind-body union.

As such, Descartes' method of breaking down problems into their bits leads to a need for an understanding of the two basic parts of a person, the mind and body. This understanding takes the form of the attribution of functions to each part.¹²⁹

Descartes might have begun by parsing the things done internally by humans into those that can be performed by inanimate objects such as machines or animate objects such as animals and extrapolated out to the things performed by humans. But his fundamental acceptance of the mechanistic philosophy and so mechanistic physiology disallows this and instead he decides to categorize things as capacities either A) experienced by us as 'performed by our body qua inanimate machine' or B) as 'conceptually impossible to belong to such an inanimate machine'.

That is, Descartes method of breaking problems down into components has "made" the body into just a body in the way that a clock is just a body – a machine with interacting parts that when set in motion can perform various actions but when not set

¹²⁹ Cf. the translator's introduction to Passions of the Soul, pp. viii-ix. For further discussion of how Descartes approaches the problem, see the Passion and Virtue, pp.10-13, 33-39.

in motion does nothing.¹³⁰ So when he turns to examine which things we experience can be performed by the body alone and which could not possibly be performed by the body alone the answer is “self-evident” – or question-begging.

What, Descartes must have thought, could you never be able to make a machine do? Whatever that turns out to be must be attributed to the soul (*Passions* A3). While common sense would tell one that e.g., dogs and monkeys are capable of myriad functions and behaviors, because Descartes assumes that the best science of the times is correct in suggesting that animal bodies are just bodies, machines that given the proper fuel (e.g. steam, water, blood) can move about in all sorts of complicated manner, there is a lot to liken them to automata.¹³¹

This leaves comparatively few functions for the mind to perform. While the body *alone* can create and use heat to create movement, only the soul can think(A4). Because of his principles Descartes’ method hands him the conclusion that nothing but the soul can be mental¹³², and that the soul can be nothing else but mental – there’s nothing else left to distribute to it.¹³³

Whatever else the soul turns out to be, Descartes is committed to it being nonphysical. It has no extension or mass, does not create heat or move the body and is not understandable in terms of mechanical science. To this we can add the definition of

¹³⁰ Cf. *Passion and Virtue*, p. 11 for further evidence of this position.

¹³¹ The stories of the “humanness” of automata in Europe and China from at least the 13th century on did not escape Descartes attention. There is speculation that he himself was very involved in creating automata, but such stories are impossible to verify. And he must have know of Leonardo’s own production of such automata (See for example, Mark E. Rosheim, *Leonardo’s Lost Robots*. 2nd Ed. Springer: Berlin, 2006.) So this is evidence of just how strong his prejudice towards dualism was.

¹³² “We do right to believe that every kind of thought within us belongs to the soul” (A4).

¹³³ Especially important to note is that soul cannot impart movement to the body (A5).

the *res cogitans* from Meditation II.28, "...a thing that thinks...a thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, and which also imagines and senses."

So Descartes advocates for and undermines a robust conception of the mind and the mental aspect of emotions at the same time as much more convincingly advocating for a mechanistic view of the body. Thus Descartes does irreparable damage to the credibility of the relationship between cognition and emotion and delayed the possible development of a pluralistic theory of emotions.

C. The Second Cartesian Error

Recall that the Second Cartesian Error is the irreparable separation of emotion from cognition that forces one into an untenable, *ad hoc* distinction between calm and violent passions in order to imbue some emotions with intelligence.

In Meditation II, Sec 32, Descartes defined perception as 'non-cognitive', providing little more than basic 'shapes' to be interpreted by the soul. But in the *POS* he comes to difficulties over how to characterize perception with respect to cognition; his ultimate treatment of the emotions reveals that perception, though not really of the soul, has cognitive aspects, thus undermining his thesis.

The substance of the view in the *POS* is that the passions are cognitive, that they are not perceptions or sensations or excitations of the soul, which are referred to the body or to anything else 'other'. They are purely 'psychic events' in that their 'locus' is the soul and their content is 'referred' to the soul, but they are physically caused and continued by the movements of the spirits.¹³⁴ But what *kind of psychic event?* Several

¹³⁴ Further explanation of the definition, such as why the passions can be called perceptions and why perceptions must refer to the soul can be found at (A28-29).

complications arise from answering this that ultimately lead to the unraveling of this thesis.

Descartes explains that when you consider perceptions to be “all thoughts that are not *volitions*, actions of the soul”, it is easy to see that passions are thoughts that *happen to* the soul.¹³⁵ According to the theory experience also shows us that passions are also *not knowledge* because people in the grip of a passion don’t even know *that* the best.¹³⁶ The implications that stem from these points taken together are intolerable. While, as Voss points out, it may be fair to say the ‘impassioned’ person is largely ignorant about the immediate cause of their being impassioned, it does not follow that you can’t *generally* know about your passions, and passions in general.

But then, passions are “received into the soul” in *the same manner* as the objects of the external senses so it might seem appropriate to call them *sensations*. Descartes decides a better term would be ‘excitations’ because it can describe all changes – all the thoughts – that “take place in” or “come to” the soul. And no thoughts can agitate the soul as much as the passions. Another reason to call passions *excitations* rather than *sensations*, is so as to distinguish them from sensations such as odors, pains, hunger and thirst. A third reason, already hinted at, is that there has to be an account of the difference between volitions and passions. It is a fundamental premise¹³⁷ of the theory that the same event can be described in either way, relative to the subject and object

¹³⁵ This seems to be incompatible with the Stoics’ claim that we judge all emotion.

¹³⁶ While this makes some sense he immediately steps into a problem by then saying that another reason why passions can’t be said to be knowledge is that they are one of the perceptions that are made “confused and obscure” because of how close the bond between the soul and body is. Why is it that the closeness of the bond between mind and body should engender the confusion? This really hurts a central thesis of the book that the passions are the perfect wedge with which to understand the mind-body union.

¹³⁷ It is stated at A1 and A17.

involved in the event. But Descartes also holds that volitions and passions have two distinct proximate causes, which makes for great confusion.

Descartes also says the only reason volitions aren't labeled as 'excitations' of the soul as passions are is because volitions *are caused by the soul itself* whereas the most proximate cause of the passions is *some particular agitation of the spirits*.¹³⁸ I believe this *already undermines* the point he was trying to make in saying that passions are *of the soul* – the passions are really *completely physical in all but name*.

Descartes argues that the nerves, spirits and pineal gland excite the passions in the soul because the pineal gland is moved about in certain ways, which the soul feels. Further, the pineal gland presents images, e.g. 'bear' and if the "shape" the soul sees is frightful, the images excites a general "apprehension" in the soul, not *fear* but a "psychic state of affairs where a particular emotion may develop. Which *passion* develops depends on three factors: 1) The temperament of the body, 2) The strength of the soul, 3) Previous success in dealing with the thing, or similar things, by defense or flight. Any one of these three can be the dominant factor in determining the emotion that develops in the soul in an apprehensive state.

¹³⁸ Descartes here also tries to distinguish the passions from perceptions of the external world but the argument is beyond repair. He says that the most proximate cause of the perceptions referred to the external world is an activity of the nerves and the spirits only play a bit part. Meanwhile, it is particular agitation of the spirits that is the proximate cause of the passions. But seeing as the nerves are really hollow filaments, which serves as speedy conduits of the spirits, this is nonsense. He's arguing that jiggling the tube full of spirits around is fundamentally different from the moving spirits in the tubes considered in themselves such that one causes perception of the outside world and another causes perception of anger, joy, etc. And that these things are causally unrelated. the nerves are the tubes by which spirits move. And it would really seem that its the spirits that do all the work! As such there's no real difference b/w the last and most proximate cause of the perceptions of the outside world or our body and that of the passions. Voss says cf. A12, A23, A24 for more discussion.

With this we have enough to make the *soul - cognition - irrelevant for the production of passions*. In some people, experience can so predispose the brain that the spirits that reflect from the image formed on the pineal gland flow right out to one or more of three places (A36): 1) The nerves that turn the back and move the legs for running, 2) The nerves that expand and contract the heart, 3) The nerves that so agitate other parts of the body from which the blood is sent to the heart that the blood gets rarefied in the heart and sends spirits to the *brain* that maintain and strengthen the passion. By entering the brain's pores these spirits excite a particular movement in the pineal gland, which is naturally suited to make the soul feel the passion. This explanation works for all the passions: some particular movement of the spirits in the brain principally causes each. *And they seem to have no "mental" content in the sense of analytic thought or judgment*, leaving the soul merely to 'feel' the outcome. The system is perfectly capable of totally bypassing the soul and effecting emotions of all kinds based simply on perception, memory and natural-born tendencies.

To escape this conclusion Descartes has to commit the second Cartesian Error, and insist that these actions aren't full-fledged emotions but emotion-like behavior. This can immediately be seen to be a very strained reply given that the behaviors in question are often quite a bit more complicated than the typical 'performings' of the body. If it can be shown that these *behaviors* do have mental content above simple perception, he will have to accept that they are volitions or passions. But they can't be volitions, because the soul doesn't chose to do them or create them from it self. That is, he has to accept that these are passions, whether or not they have mental content and he's going to have to accept that many passions can happen without mental content.

Descartes' great interest in mind-body dualism, human physiology and the mechanistic philosophy make this conclusion inevitable. Emotions *must be mental, must be of the soul, must be a type of thought* but there has to be a physiological basis for *how* they feel to us as if in our bodies, in our viscera, etc.

He defines passions at A1 by making the broad point that "a passion with respect to a subject is always an action with respect to something else".¹³⁹ And at A27 he defines them as

perceptions or sensations or excitations of the soul which are referred to it in particular and which are caused, maintained, and strengthened by some movement of the spirits

Passions are "passive events" that happen to the person (soul) in question but that specifically refer to the soul as their subject ("who" it happens to). This of course fits with the discussion above regarding how *images* are put into the soul. At the same time their formal and material cause - what they are made from and how - is completely explainable by mechanistic physiology. So it falls on Descartes to find a way to show that emotions *are* thinking and therefore a *performance of the mind* and so could not possibly be a *performance of the body*, but in fact, he does just the opposite and makes an argument that effectively shows the passions to be only performances of the body.

On Descartes' theory the body is supposed to have no part in cognition. But, the fact is that on his theory the body can cause, continue, strengthen and end emotional behavior with no input from the soul, and regularly engages in such behavior.¹⁴⁰ If this

¹³⁹ What this means is that for some thing P that happens to S, it is a passion from the perspective of S and it is an action done by some thing else R, involving S.

¹⁴⁰ At the least this strikingly undercuts what is said at A38-39 and A47, that the movements of the body 'accompany' the emotions.

analysis is correct, then the mind or soul is left impotent or at best redundant, with respect to emotions, a position that fits easily with sentimentalism in ethics.

Though the “home” of the emotions is said to be the soul, the emotions are caused by the body and it is the body and memory that in large part – perhaps completely – apply all the “belief-content” necessary to start the physical processes that are emotional actions and reactions.¹⁴¹

As is explained in A38, the movements of the body that “accompany” the passions do not depend on the soul and all that is required to put a passion in the soul is the proper course of the spirits towards the nerves of the heart. As certain spirits make their way to the nerves that make the legs move they automatically cause movement in the pineal gland and this movement is what causes the soul to “feel and perceive” the flight from danger. This process can be started by a learned response or by the “disposition of the organs”. And different people can have different emotional responses to ‘the same’ stimuli because different brains are disposed in different manners to the same pineal gland movements.

So, if I am correct, either the passions qua ‘of the soul’ are *completely divorced* from the physiological responses such as flight from danger and are *nothing but the feeling you get when you surmise what the body is doing* or the passions are related to these responses in that they are judgments you make about what the body is doing based on memory and perception – yet judgments the soul is wholly unable to do anything about.

¹⁴¹ This is reinforced when one recalls that it was made clear at the beginning that the soul does not provide heat or movement to the body.

This “no role but location” is just what A40 claims: the passions mainly incite and dispose the soul to will the things for which the passions already prepare the body (A40). That is, the soul is a rubber stamp-judge who can’t affect, or effect, anything.¹⁴²

And the ground for this was paved by what appears to be an argument that there is *volition with respect to the body*. As he explains at A39,

...all brains are not disposed in the same manner...the same movement of the [pineal] gland which in some excites fear, in others makes the spirits enter the brain’s pores that guide part of them into the nerves that move the hand for self-defense, and part of them into those that agitate the blood and drive [the blood] toward the heart in the manner needed to *produce spirits suitable to continue this defense and sustain the volition for it*.

That is, there are certain spirits that flash through the heart in such a way as is needed to *sustain volition*, the volition needed to keep fear and its behaviors going. This is easily overlooked but is in fact very important because it makes the *object* of the volition in question *fear*. But in what sense is fear so understood a *mental object*? Animals surely ‘fear’ and even if they don’t we’ve already seen that the body can start and continue passions without any direct influence of the soul, meaning that whatever ‘mental’ content they have is provided for *by means other than the soul*. But then there is no reason to say that the object of the volition that spirits are needed to sustain is ‘of the soul’. This would mean that the volition to fear is directed at “something in our body”: the “performings” of fear such as pallor, sweat, running, etc.

At A33-34, Descartes argues that the pineal gland is the real locus of the felt passions, even though the passions feel as if in the body. At A52, he argues that the *only use* of the passions is to inspire volition in the soul. Passions

¹⁴² This smacks of simply trying to be consistent with the principle from A1 and A17 that the very same thing is an action from one (agent) perspective and a passion from another (recipient) perspective.

dispose the soul to will the things nature tells us are useful and to persist in this volition, just as the same agitation of spirits that usually causes them disposes the body to the movements conducive to the execution of those things

So the passions provide the initial motivation for, create and sustain volitions. Add to this that, as I noted above, the passions are inciting a “will to” things *for actions that they (already) prepare the body* and it becomes obvious that passions are caused, in both the sense of how and why, by the spirits. The pineal gland can instantiate them without any input from the soul. It can also motivate, incite and reinforce the volition in the soul to act according to what *nature says* is useful, even as the soul has *no part* in the daily ‘performings’ or in imparting *motion* to the body.

The body is already performing and doing what needs to be done in emotion-situations, as well as in day to day actions, just from the image in the pituitary gland and either learned responses or the natural organization of the organs. What we have is *an* argument for why the soul is irrelevant to the passions, that the passions are of the body, running concurrently with an argument that the body is merely the physical substratum on which the *passions of the soul* perform. Further information regarding how Descartes ‘slips’ and allows bodily volition can be found in Appendix II: Descartes.

D. The Third Cartesian Error

Descartes third error is his half-duplex¹⁴³ theory of mind-body communication, which is internally inconsistent and metaphysically incoherent. The mind as Descartes explains it in books such as *Meditations on First Philosophy*¹⁴⁴ is in the *POS* completely

¹⁴³ It does, however, allow for some discussion of multiple levels of emotion.

¹⁴⁴ René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress. (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1979).

incapable of affecting the body at all.; human physiology as he has constructed it is completely capable of starting, continuing and ending emotions and emotion-based behavior and the only possible influence the mind can have on the emotions is indirect and fleeting.¹⁴⁵

In the *POS*, like in Meditation VI, Sec. 13, Descartes says that the soul is united to all parts of the body (A30-33), not just the pineal gland as he had earlier posited. Still, the soul is able to exercise its function “more particularly” in the pineal gland than any other part.¹⁴⁶

The soul acts on the body, and soul and body act on one another by means of “radiating” into each other. The soul “radiates” into the rest of the body from the pineal gland (A34). He does not give any discussion as to just what “radiating” is but it seems he has in mind the process by which he thinks we receive our sensory information – the object of the image sends out into us an image of itself. An analogous process happens from the soul to the pineal gland and vice versa.

¹⁴⁵ Voss makes a point something like what I want to say about the quixotic nature of the project, but finds some good in it, saying “we may well expect to find the pages of this book soaked with the poisonous compound of soul-body dualism and quaintly obsolete brain physiology” (p. viii). But by and large his goal is to sell the reader on taking Descartes seriously, and while I certainly agree with this aim, my point is not just to “be honest” but to show just how it was a “poisonous compound” and that Descartes should have known better. (Voss does seem to imply Descartes should have known better (p. ix).

¹⁴⁶ In personal correspondence with Princess Elizabeth of Bohemia, Descartes is moved to accept that the soul is “somehow diffused through the body and therefore as in a way extended or material” but tried to insist “that thought, unlike extension proper, does not exclude other bodies” (*Passion and Virtue* p. 13-14). However, neither Descartes nor Princess Elizabeth took seriously the idea that thought could be “extended but permeable”. In the end we have to do a little interpretive work to decide what Descartes’ ultimate position on the ‘location’ of the soul is and it seems to me that the attempted explanation of the mind-body union leaves it fairly settled that the soul is “non-physical’ and ‘diffused’ in name or in principle only: in practice, Descartes’ really thinks the soul has some physical properties (such as being able to move the pineal gland) and is located in the pineal gland.

It is easy to see this theory is a half-duplex communication theory when we think in terms of cell phone text messaging or 'SMS' systems. A message goes from one cell to the SMS site, and delivery to the other phone is attempted. If 'delivered' the other user can then read and reply in like fashion.¹⁴⁷ This is exactly what goes on between the soul and the body with the pineal gland being the 'SMS site'. I'll discuss this at greater length below.

The claims to explain and support the dualist position are that 1) the soul is truly joined to the whole body, no part is excluded, 2) because of the centrality of the [pineal] gland's location the soul can perform its function in a more particular way there than anywhere else, 3) The central location of the pineal gland *allows the soul to "better alter the course of the spirits with the slightest movement"*. Similarly, the slightest change in the course of the spirits can greatly change the movements of the pineal gland, *affecting the soul greatly*.

This activity can happen because of the "mediation" of the spirits and the nerves and blood that carry them as he explains in A35 with the example of sight. In sight the *brain* composes a single image from the images entering the two eyes. The brain qua organ suffuse with spirits receives and holds the visual input, modifies it into one image

¹⁴⁷ This is reinforced by the explanation of animal perception vs. human cognition in as much as that makes clear that the brain receives the input and holds it for the soul to examine and then form knowledge of. The point is also furthered at (A47-48): "as the little gland in the middle of the brain is capable of being driven from one side by the soul and from the other by the animal spirits...it often happens that these two impulses are in opposition and the stronger one prevents the other from taking effect." They do not work together, at the same time.

and sends it to the soul. The soul then immediately recognizes the basic object in the image for what it is, as explained in the quote above from the *Meditations*.¹⁴⁸

Consider also that Descartes was thoroughly impressed by inanimate objects such as hydraulics-powered organs and automata capable of walking about with amazingly human and animal like motion by ingenious use of coils, gears and string. Indeed, by all accounts Descartes was convinced that animals were really nothing more than automata made of bone, blood and sinew. He makes it abundantly clear throughout the *POS*, e.g., at A6 where he says that the difference between live and dead bodies is “just like” what differentiates wound, functioning watches from watches that lack the “bodily principle of their movement”, e.g. physically broken watches: once you set up a mechanism to run a certain way and you supply it with the physical energy to start the mechanism going (and continuing) the machine will work exactly as designed because of the nature of the components and how they are ordered.

He explains that for the body, “fire” or “heat” in our heart is the bodily principle of all the movements (A8).¹⁴⁹ In sum sense perception and muscular movement are possible only because of animal spirits being present and directed in this or that manner by the body and that this explains ‘non-conscious’ motion (“performings”)(A16).¹⁵⁰ But

¹⁴⁸ I take this to mean the object qua object, though not “contextualized”, i.e. ‘tiger’ but not ‘run for your life that tiger looks hungry’, unless as he explains at A36 such a thing was in our learned responses to that picture being in our soul. It ought to jump out at you that he’s now found a way to circumvent the claim of A4 that the soul does not create or provide heat or movement to the body. Or you might say he’s contradicted himself a bit. Again, this is a half-duplex process.

¹⁴⁹ At A5 he lays down a further claim that only makes more difficult the task of bridging the gap between the mind and body, saying (as his mechanistic philosophy requires) that it is erroneous to think the soul imparts motion and heat to the body.

¹⁵⁰ As he puts it, “the movements we make without our will contributing (as often happens when we breathe, walk, eat and in short do all the actions common to us and

because the soul imparts no motion to the body (A5), it is fundamentally impossible for duplex communication to occur and, I think, for any defensible, meaningful communication between them to be coherently claimed by the theory.

E. Devaluation of the Passions Necessitated for Ethics

Descartes' theory is ambivalent at best as to the moral status of emotions and emotional behavior. His apparent Stoic beliefs pressure him to recommend that the emotions are fully controllable and eliminable by the mind and that *not* controlling them and eliminating them is *wrong*, and this is where he does end up.

I think Voss is clearly correct in saying that Descartes is *committed in principle* to the idea that only our thoughts are absolutely in our power (fn. 41). If the emotions are more like our natural appetites or drives for food or sex then they are not in our power to control, but if they are more like a desire to contemplate Platonic forms, then there is all the reason to think they can be managed.

Descartes recasts the traditional struggle between the parts of the mind, or between the natural appetites and the will as actually the opposition between the spirit-caused movements of the pineal gland from the body and the will-caused movements of the pineal gland from the soul (A47). Since there are no 'parts' of the mind, there is no competing 'power' in the soul to go against reason-guided volition, including the emotions. But it doesn't end up that way.

The *POS* ends (A48, A50) with an attempt at explaining why and how some people can actually completely stop their emotions. I started by saying he begins

beasts) depends only on the arrangement of our members, and on the course...[of]...the spirits..." (A16.24-26)

assuming this and needs to fit it in, but it just doesn't make any sense. The story is that people with stronger souls can more easily "naturally conquer" the passions. To make an analogy with video games or military weaponry, it's just that the 'energy blast' some souls naturally muster are much stronger than average and are typically stronger than the normal emotional 'blast'. Some people, however, can't test the strength of their soul in this way. They never make their will "do battle" with the right weapons. Instead all they do is in a sense "manipulate" an emotion-blast by attacking with another emotion-blast, forcing oneself to experience an 'opposing' emotion. e.g . If you are attacked by sadness, attack back with anger. In this sense some passions supply a weapon to deflect other passions, but they don't actually 'undermine' or 'undo' the passion that was causing the problem.

The proper weapons of the will, those that can actually undermine a passion-blast are "firm and decisive judgments concerning the knowledge of good and evil, which it has resolved to follow in conducting the actions of its life" (this seems more like a shield or armor). One might object that it is just this that emotions attack, but Descartes sees it differently: the weakest souls are the ones whose will does not decide in this way to follow certain judgments but continually allows itself to be carried away by present passions, even as they oppose one another. This (literal) twisting and turning makes the soul "enslaved and unhappy". The happy ending is that no soul is so weak that it cannot, when well guided, acquire absolute power over its passions. One can undo the

learned attachments between particular movements of the pineal gland to particular thoughts and replace them with others by habituation.¹⁵¹

F. Conclusion

In the end Descartes' theory fails as a coherent explanation of the emotions, it fails in its treatment of the major ethical issues surrounding emotions and it fails the study of emotions because of the harm done to the credibility of a strongly 'cognitive' theory in comparison to physiology. I think they are the fundamental errors in his theory that are repeated throughout the 17th and 18th century equivalent of "cognitivist" (rationalist, dualist) theories such as that of Richard Cumberland and they lead to a strong favoring of 'sentimentalist' (expressivist) ethics and purely physiological theories of emotions by the 19th century.

¹⁵¹ He gives as examples, re-defining words and coming to hate food one formerly loved due to tasting foul food. This makes me think of nothing so much as the shocking treatment given to the gang leader in Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*.

4.3 Richard Cumberland

Given the religious climate of the 17th and 18th centuries we should not be surprised that religiously inclined thinkers such as Cumberland, who were also well versed in mechanistic physiology seized on Descartes fantastically intricate dualist theory. Nor should we be surprised when, as we'll see, despite Cumberland's improvements in the Cartesian theory, Hutcheson, Shaftesbury and Hume increasingly repudiate of the 'cognitive' line of thinking on emotions and morality and pave the way for William James' wholly 'visceral' account at the end of the 19th century.¹⁵²

A. Descartes' Influence on Richard Cumberland

Richard Cumberland's work on the passions in *A Treatise on the Laws of Nature*¹⁵³ is greatly influenced by Descartes' theory of the passions.¹⁵⁴ Cumberland accepts in

¹⁵² It is hard to prove just how much influence Cumberland could have had on, e.g., Shaftesbury but it would appear there was some. Cf. Linda Kirk, Richard Cumberland and Natural Law, (Cambridge, UK: James Clarke Company, 1987), 96 and Lyons, Alexander Lyons, Shaftesbury's Ethical Principal of Adaptation to Universal Harmony, (Ph.D. diss. New York University, 1909).

¹⁵³ Cumberland, Richard Cumberland, A Treatise of the Laws of Nature, (The Liberty Fund, 2005).

¹⁵⁴ "From among many possible examples, compare the 'science of morals' developed by Richard Cumberland who was influenced by the views of Descartes, as well as those of the Cambridge Platonists", John Cottingham, Philosophy and the Good Life. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 169; "Richard Cumberland, who later became a theologian and a bishop and is also said to have been interested in mathematics as a student, studied at Magdalene College, Cambridge, from 1649 - 1656, and probably got to know Descartes' philosophy through Henry More (1614-87), who had initially been an enthusiastic Cartesian (Parkin 1999: 115f., 176, 72ff.)" and "Parkin 1999: 151: 'There are more references to Descartes in De legibus naturae than to any

principle the mechanistic philosophy of Descartes, is an earnest metaphysical dualist, and is an even more assiduous student of anatomy and physiology than Descartes himself. At the same time, he moves past Descartes' theory in key ways that at once undermine core Cartesian beliefs and yet further the more general "Cartesian project" on the nature of emotions. Cumberland's work in advancement of the basics of the Cartesian line of thought set the stage for the twin emergence of fundamentally physiological theories of emotion and *the sentimentalist theory of morality that depends on it* by making the body's physical processes even more central to the creation of emotions and further clouding and diminishing the role of a separate mind in their generation even as he fights to protect the 'fact' of its existence. Given his popularity and influence in British thought of the 17th and 18th centuries, the level of care he devoted to understanding the processes of the body likely greatly influenced Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, whom in turn influenced British thought all the way through to David Hume.

Unlike Descartes, Cumberland advocates an understanding of the similarities and differences between human and animal anatomy and physiology, which makes him far less dependent on the concept of the soul to distinguish man from the rest of creation. Because of this Cumberland: 1) is able to allow for animal souls, beliefs and emotions; 2) differs with Descartes on the nature and scope of the will; 3) has a basic, well-founded conception of two types of emotions; 4) he is seriously concerned with a duplex theory of communication between brain and viscera, and 5) he thinks that

other single philosopher apart from Hobbes." Natural Law and Laws of Nature in Early Modern Europe, eds. Lorraine Daston, Michael Stolleis, (Ashgate 2008 Burlington, VT), (Ch. 10, *The Approach to a Physical Concept of Law in the Early Modern Period: A Comparison b/w Matthais Bernegger and Richard Cumberland*. Hubert Treiber), fn. 36, fn. 45.

properly harnessed, emotions are a wonderful thing. Explaining these points will allow us to critique his theory, understand its relation to Descartes' theory, and set the stage for the theories of Shaftesbury and Hutcheson's and for the rise of sentimentalism based on their understanding of emotions as visceral.

Whereas Descartes cuts the world up between bodies-qua-machines and human minds (souls), Cumberland has a much more nuanced approach, making strict distinctions between human and animal bodies and bodies and souls (e.g. on p. 440.) The two moves are a quantum leap.

The distinction between human and animal physiology is an enormous development over Descartes and coupled with the distinction between *animals* as things with mental lives and everything else as *not* having mental life fundamentally alters what he is able to do with emotions. Whereas Descartes was content to just discuss body qua machine and take the human body as a typical example, not essentially different than animals or robots, Cumberland sees animal bodies as evidence of *sensation* and perception. Descartes' First error forced him to pack so much into the soul and make it so different than the body that he simply was unable to tie them together convincingly. This certainly doesn't say Cumberland convinces anyone of dualism but that his theory is able to account for "body-level" consciousness, which makes him able to develop an account of two types of emotions as well as feedback loops between brain and viscera and mind and body that go far towards avoiding the Second and Third Cartesian Errors.

Cumberland seems quite satisfied to think of animals as having souls and so beliefs¹⁵⁵, and emotions of a rudimentary kind. This means he is not as dependent as

¹⁵⁵ Cf. Cumberland, 406, 440

Descartes on the soul for distinguishing man from the rest of creation.¹⁵⁶ Cumberland's conception of man being special due to our "spiritual, incorporeal, godlike" mind means Cumberland still falls prey to the First Cartesian Error.¹⁵⁷ But he has a certain degree of latitude in discussing *kinds of emotions*, something Descartes *grasped* but was unable to address convincingly.

The first type of emotion we find in Cumberland, labeled 'passions' are the vehemence (either intense feeling about or intense force with which done) regarding actions of choosing and refusing; the second, 'emotion' is disturbance in the body that is visible in the passions. Clearly the latter is more akin to what a "feeling theorist" or "visceral theory" would say emotions are. To understand the relation between the two we need to flesh out how Cumberland views cognition and volition.

For Cumberland the *will* is still a function of the mind, different than abstract thinking, and *both* A) the agent for what does the "real work" *and* B) the strong feeling one has about the actions. This isn't so much parting ways with Descartes as being better organized. In Descartes the will *is* thought and it ends up being ineffectual while the passions are defined as being (A) and (B).

Cumberland's serious concern for mapping out the communication between the brain and the heart and his detailed knowledge of the subject lead to a dramatic change in the extent the *brain* does the "mental work" in a person rather than the soul.¹⁵⁸ To the extent he is able to consistently attribute mental work to the brain he has a duplex theory of communication. In fact, if you consider the soul qua mind rather than spiritual

¹⁵⁶ As I noted earlier, had Descartes taken this route, it's likely his method would have taken him to different conclusions.

¹⁵⁷ Cumberland, 372.

¹⁵⁸ Or depending on how you read Descartes, it allows Cumberland to give this work to the brain on the 'up-and-up'.

substance he has a workable (duplex) theory of mind-body simultaneous cross-communication, something methodologically impossible for Descartes. And Cumberland surpasses Descartes' work in physiology by going into much more detail as to how the brain and viscera interact, though he does not insist on this or other such points.¹⁵⁹

In Cumberland, the soul is no longer as it was in Descartes, abstract thinking regarding information passively received, with the ability to manipulate the pineal gland and thereby the body. It is also the 'home' or source of strong emotions in that they seem to emanate with the choice or refusal to do something. This has the crucial implication that thought qua *abstract* thought is not the only function of the soul as Descartes preferred to think. And that reason – through the emotions it helps beget – has a serious role to play in action.

The final way I want to point out Cumberland goes against and beyond Descartes is that he believes that properly harnessed emotions are a wonderful thing and absolutely necessary to being moral. This is no doubt in part because of basic disagreement with – but respect for – Stoic philosophy, as when he comments that mankind would be better off “left to the sentiments of nature” than to be forced into a “hardened virtue” that does not recognize the passions as “divine and gracious...divine virtues, if their objects be things divine” and allowing for sympathy with our fellow man.¹⁶⁰ Further, the same passions that unrestrained give birth to ‘distempers¹⁶¹’ can, when conducted by reason, “make men hale, brisk, lively, and *fit for all duties*”.

¹⁵⁹ Cumberland, 403, 445.

¹⁶⁰ Cumberland, Essay II, 78. He goes on to say that “the wisdom and goodness of parental providence is seen in the usefulness of those instincts of nature, called the passions, which are implanted in man and other animals; the substantial happiness of

B. Cumberland and the Mechanistic Philosophy

Cumberland admires the mechanist philosophy supported by Descartes and Hobbes, and expects that it is broadly correct. Notably, however, he is also committed to free will and substance dualism – and as a result runs into problems similar to the ones Descartes found in trying to mesh these three things together.

Though in the end he does have conceptual problems fitting dualism and materialism together, Cumberland has high hopes for what natural science can do and will accomplish, noting tellingly in Chapter 1.3 that the whole of what we can learn of moral philosophy “is ultimately resolved into *observations of nature* that are known by the experience of all, or into conclusions acknowledged and established by *true natural science*”. That is, *both experimental physics and psychology are at the core of how we can learn about morality*. Again, we shall see how this idea goes on uncontested and is at the core of later visceral theories of emotion and leads eventually to the conclusion that sentimentalism encompasses all of morality.

There is no need to detail most of the claims he makes about science that will eventually lead to these conclusions, but there are four¹⁶² in particular that have

life consisteth in them, thereby man hath a little kingdom within himself, consisting of subjects and sovereign; the passion of veneration is requisite in government; anger for the exercise of fortitude, commiseration is for succouring the afflicted; fear, for avoiding dange; and all the other passions are of great use, which sheweth that nature had a very wise and designing author..." (907)

¹⁶¹ Affections that “disturb the economy...certain distempers of the blood, and brain perhaps, and somewhat akin to the rage of a mad dog” (406-407).

¹⁶² They are: 1) Natural science shows that the laws of motion account for all impressions upon our senses (Ch 1 sec 10). 2) Impressions are natural effects insofar as matter in motion produces them. (Ch 1 sec 10) 3) Perceiving the identity or coherence of any (two or more) particular impressions “as they exist in the imagination” is simply the “perception” that both impressions are “made upon us by the same cause” (Ch 1 sec 10).

important ramifications for how perception, cognition and the emotions work, and how we come to understand right and wrong.

The basic position is that the world outside us is responsible for creating all ideas in our minds. The regular motions of matter produce thoughts and even thoughts about thoughts. There is no room for any explicitly behavioral or emotional response other than what is necessitated by what the *mind* will do given what it is given. Thinking qua “apprehending simple terms and putting them together when they obviously coincide” leads to necessary propositions. In other words, when two terms (subjects, things) are clearly presented before the mind, it will of necessity make certain conclusions about them.¹⁶³ And so it will necessarily follow that certain emotional responses will follow from the impressions on our senses. Cumberland wants room for the mind – distinct from the bodily mechanism – to have something to add to the picture but in the end we will see there is precious little.¹⁶⁴

4) The perceptions by which the mind “even apprehends [any things] placed in the imagination, perceives their connection, and is[self-aware], follows naturally and necessarily upon their presence in the imagination and upon the intrinsic, natural, faultless inclination of the mind towards observing the things that are placed before it” (Ch 1 Sec 10).

¹⁶³ “Given the natural impressions of motion, and given an intelligent nature before which they are clearly and distinctly placed”, the conclusions the mind reaches about them are necessary effects (Ch 1 sec 10).

¹⁶⁴ This must be given that he says that scientific advances have established that “all changes in all bodies...due to an external cause...take place according to those theorems about motion which are discovered and demonstrated by geometrical analysis” even though “the things which have so far been proved concerning this matter are few in number, though great in importance”. The whole nature of body – save for changes determined by the “internal freedom of the will” – is to be reduced to questions about its “extension, figure, and motion, related together in different ways...” (Ch 5 sec 4). But as we’ll see this will lead to confusion later on.

C. Mind-Body Dualism

Cumberland is explicit in his claim that man is composed of two parts, body and mind (25, 363). Still, he has a quite different understanding of the nature of the essential difference between man and animal and body and soul because of his defining man as ‘an animal with a mind’ (363).

i. The distinction considered in abstract

Conceptually, Cumberland’s belief in substance dualism stands on appeal to the eminent authority of Descartes. (N.B. The rather long appendix in *De legibus* on substance dualism was not written by Cumberland and is based almost entirely on Samuel Clarke’s arguments, and the basic argument can be fairly easily summarized as follows: the soul cannot possibly be material when you consider that ‘sense’ (thought ‘in general’ or ‘reflexive’ thought)¹⁶⁵ exists and that it is conceptually *impossible* for matter to think, and so *a fortiori* to be self-conscious.¹⁶⁶)

Cumberland is convinced of a simple proposition, to be conscious there needs to be a discrete, coherent subject that has the thoughts, memories, etc. and he uses a *reductio* to make the point. He argues that matter is divisible and anything made of matter always consists of actually separate and distinct parts. As such no system of it, no matter how it is organized, could ever be an *individual conscious* (being). And so they can never make an *individual*. It makes no sense to talk about anything being *conscious*, much less *self conscious* if there is no *particular locus* for the “experiencer”.

¹⁶⁵ Cumberland, 759.

¹⁶⁶ Cumberland, 760.

ii. The distinction considered “in vivo”

Like Descartes, Cumberland allows that animals have sensation to the limited extent of sensing the world around them, and by the same basic mechanism as humans of impressions entering the organs, which are then transmitted by nerves to the brain and, depending on the circumstances, transmission to muscles and organs.¹⁶⁷ Also like Descartes, he thinks the power of “observing” or “distinctly perceiving” impressions is “peculiar to the [human] mind”. That is, the human mind allows us to understand things such as what in us “determines the figure of the object”, that a position in or part of the object is different than the thing in the retina, its size, how it is moving, etc.

Cumberland can’t see how it would be possible for anything in the “corporeal substance” to separate out all the information coming into the eye, “compare them with one another, and distinguish them”. It seems to him the data would simply remain “confused”, at the very least upside-down as in a camera obscura.¹⁶⁸ From this it is not difficult to gather how he will define the mind. And though this is quite similar to Descartes, there will end up being significant differences.

Cumberland says the mind is *understanding and will*.¹⁶⁹ The understanding is responsible for “apprehending, comparing, judging, reasoning, a methodical disposition, and the memory of all these things, and of the objects about which they are conversant”.¹⁷⁰ The will is attributed with “the simple acts of choosing and refusing and that *vehemence of those actions which discovers itself in the passions, over and above that*

¹⁶⁷ Cumberland, 364.

¹⁶⁸ Cumberland, 365.

¹⁶⁹ The object of the understanding is truth and of the will is good (Essay I).

¹⁷⁰ Cumberland, 365.

emotion or disturbance of the body, which is visible in them".¹⁷¹ Out of these two aspects of mind¹⁷², he teases out 5 powers, the essence of which are the ability to obtain knowledge of abstract concepts (specifically God), and to decide on what is properly moral, properly socialized action.¹⁷³ The five powers of the mind are:

1. "Right Reason, the standard of which is rectitude."¹⁷⁴
2. Universal ideas (e.g. 'human nature') and the judgments or propositions thence arising concerning the properties agreeing or disagreeing with those ideas, and general or undetermined acts of the will agreeable to, and consequent upon, such judgments. (This includes the ability to use language to express these ideas and volitions).¹⁷⁵
3. Knowledge of number, measure and weights.¹⁷⁶
4. The power of either observing order already established, or of establishing it.¹⁷⁷
5. 'The exalted privilege' of the power to *raise, stop and moderate the passions, and to direct them to desire greater good, and to avoid greater evil than what any other animal is capable of knowing*".¹⁷⁸

This last point is so important to him it bears repeating; the power of the soul "immediately disposes or qualifies" us to *keep ourselves from succumbing to any sudden rush of passion, and to conform our behavior to law(s) and so to form and live in civil society*..¹⁷⁹ *This directly contradicts the above stated claim* that our thoughts come to us necessarily, based on the regular motions of matter affecting our sensory organs and

¹⁷¹ Cumberland, 365.

¹⁷² He is quick to point out that the power of the soul is the "concurrence of the Understanding and the Will, not something over and above them." (cf. 375-376)

¹⁷³ Cumberland, 372.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Cumberland, 372-373.

¹⁷⁶ Cumberland, 374.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Cumberland, 375.

¹⁷⁹ Cumberland, 376.

brain.¹⁸⁰ But the confusion only gets worse when we detail his account of human physiology, particularly the role of the brain.

D. Anatomy and Physiology

Cumberland wants to think about human bodies from three points of view: that of the anatomist, the physician, and the natural philosopher (scientist). The scientist still focuses on the mind, but specifically in its relation to the body. For both the anatomist and the physician the focus is on the body, with the former chiefly looking at its organized nature and the latter at its liability to preventable and curable “distempers” (Essay I).

He says that based on personal observation and his study of anatomical writers he has uncovered “peculiar, remarkable” things in the body that “enlarge and strengthen the imagination and memory far beyond their level in animals”.¹⁸¹ There is not the space here to detail all of his findings so I will summarize the most interesting things from the point of view of how his theory is similar to and an improvement upon Descartes’ theory of emotions.

The human *brain*, he says, is “conspicuous” among brains for its size and the amount of “influence it has on the control of action”.¹⁸² This is because all the nerves come from either the brain or spinal marrow, which tells him that “*all voluntary motions*

¹⁸⁰ He argues that our first apprehension of things, being passive, is necessary; what we see when we open our eyes is necessary (as Descartes explained in *Meditation VI*). The same goes for the desire for good and the aversion from evil, because *the mind* innately is constantly working, understanding, choosing, refusing, and deciding how to move the body, so as to get what it wants (371).

¹⁸¹ Cumberland, 432. This means, of course, that he thinks animals have imagination and memory.

¹⁸² Cumberland, 432-433.

of the body are directed and governed by means of the brain" (which means the soul does not direct and govern voluntary motions of the body unless it governs the brain directly).¹⁸³ And it is with the *brain* that we "observe sensible objects more accurately and *examine* how much such things are good or evil¹⁸⁴: the spirits, the most active part of the blood, when conveyed to the brain, assist the imagination and memory and when conveyed to the nerves and muscles aid the motion of animals.¹⁸⁵ He admits it is unclear *how* the spirits do this¹⁸⁶, but he accepts on faith that physical science will explain it in time.¹⁸⁷

But science can't explain everything and so everything is not reducible to mechanical talk;

Even though we have so many helps to the imagination and memory in our heads, and they provide great service to the *mind*, they are no way sufficient to [reduce] the above mentioned operations into the mechanical powers of matter and motion...the better we understand the nature and functions of the *brain*, the more we shall despair of the possibility of explaining the operations of the *mind* by its motions.¹⁸⁸

So even with his repeated deference to contemporary science he will not budge from his dualism or the belief that the *mind* can in the end control its reactions to sensations. Of course he needs this to be true but he has not given any reason that should convince us that it is so. Instead, so far he's given a powerful explanation of just why the "mind" is unnecessary and irrelevant to thought and to emotions (the First Cartesian Error).

¹⁸³ Cumberland, 434.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Though he has a lot to say about the spirits, he qualifies it, showing his deference to established science, by saying he won't vouch for any understanding of the spirits unacceptable to Harvey (435).

¹⁸⁶ He does say that they "contain the first seeds of passions" (444). We'll see this is incredibly reminiscent of the Homeric view of the psyche.

¹⁸⁷ Cumberland, 435.

¹⁸⁸ Cumberland, 439.

In addition to the brain, the viscera have great influence in the “governing” and “determining” of the affections to pursue the good rather than the hurt of others (Section 26). Basically, because of the structure of our body, we are “continually admonished of the necessity of governing our affections with a strict hand”: the source of every virtue and the whole reason we respect the law(s) of nature is to be found in the government of the passions that are “employed in settling or securing every man’s property”.¹⁸⁹

The main idea is that there is much greater interconnectivity and communication amongst the viscera and between the brain and the viscera. And from this he argues that the heart, diaphragm, “and all the bowels of the lower belly...are variously affected in all *violent passions* about good or evil and that the nerves in the bowels are the “instruments of these motions”.¹⁹⁰ The *heart* is more affected in the ‘good-focused’ passions than other animals’ hearts are because “it communicates or sympathizes with the other bowels” (by the innumerable branches of the “intercostal nerve”, AKA the thoracic spinal nerves). In addition, the heart and the other bowels are more moved “in every kind of passion” by the influence of a more powerful brain than animals are and by the impulse of more active spirits. The heart is also the *fountain of all the pleasures* we enjoy and so the passions that help or hinder it “more powerfully in men than brutes must necessarily affect us more than animals”.¹⁹¹

More specifically, there are two basic properties, peculiar to *human* bodies that naturally motivate us to pay more attention to governing our affections *than animals*

¹⁸⁹ Cumberland, 440.

¹⁹⁰ Cumberland, 445.

¹⁹¹ Cumberland, 440.

do.¹⁹² The *first* is the nerve plexus unique to humans¹⁹³, and the *second* is the *connection* of the pericardium¹⁹⁴ and the diaphragm¹⁹⁵ and the *communication* by the phrenic nerve.¹⁹⁶ The first property gives us the ability to better effect diligent government of the passions and the second gives us the motivation to do so – making it more necessary to our health and lives.¹⁹⁷

But he hasn't forgotten the soul/mind in all this so it is still too early to conclude that he is really a confused visceral or feeling theorist. Cumberland argues that the fact that all these things are peculiar to man strongly suggests to the mind that *its province* is "to diligently attend the helm committed to its care, and to steer it skillfully".¹⁹⁸ And remember that "the strongest passions are employed regarding the settling of private property" in both things and human services "because nothing moves men more strongly", meaning that concepts, beliefs and expectations play a huge role in passions – or at least in a certain *type*.¹⁹⁹ By communication of the "mutual sensations of heart and brain" the

¹⁹² Cumberland, 440. He's intimated animals have beliefs, now they have emotions as well. Further evidence for these claims can be found at 406 in a pregnant passage where he discusses both how false opinion leads to bad emotions and hydrophobia, common to both man and animal.

¹⁹³ A great number of minute complicated branches of nerves he says is "subservient" to the praecordia, the front part of the thoracic region.

<http://www.medicalook.com/human_anatomy/systems/Autonomic_nervous_system.html>

¹⁹⁴ The layer of tissue enveloping the heart.

¹⁹⁵ The sheet of muscle separating the chest cavity from the abdominal cavity

¹⁹⁶ Which controls the contractions of the diaphragm) and the aforementioned nerve plexus

¹⁹⁷ Cumberland, 440. The connection between the layer of tissue enveloping the heart and the sheet of muscle separating the chest cavity from the abdomen makes the government of passions of greater importance to man (445). Again, reminiscent of Homer.

¹⁹⁸ Cumberland, 444-445.

¹⁹⁹ Cumberland, 445.

“conceptions of the *brain* affect the heart” altering blood flow, respiration, and changing the state of the spirits.²⁰⁰

And this seems to be *duplex* communication since “for the *thought* relating to acts of the will or understanding to be *duly formed* the torrent of *blood in the chest* must be kept within bounds and the inordinate motions of the heart restrained, by the nerves, as reins, and be reduced to regularity”.²⁰¹

E. Conclusion

In the end Richard Cumberland has acquitted himself quite nicely from many of the charges leveled at Descartes. Indeed, it is just the First Cartesian Error that keeps him from being properly listed as in line with the P-A-L progression. At the very least we can say that though he is a partisan of the Cartesian philosophy of emotions, this is a serious advancement of that project. But either way his theory is clearly not without its flaws.

Just as Descartes did, Cumberland finds himself confused as to whether and how the emotions are physiological phenomena or phenomena of the mind (e.g. 407-408). In trying to walk this line he fuzzes the role of the soul in mentality and emotions as much as Descartes did, though in a more “agreeable” way; he is methodologically trapped by his assumptions regarding the soul and spirits. And though occasionally cautious he is in the end too trusting of scientific advancement to fill in gaps in his theory when he at the same time must insist the advancement will not undermine his claims that the mind really can control our emotional responses to matter-determined sensory phenomena. This can be seen as a weak version of the Second Cartesian Error.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Cumberland, 444.

For our purposes here the most important lessons to take from all this are that 1) Cumberland should be credited for further solidifying the methodological point that the physiology of the body is absolutely fundamental to the nature of the emotions, even to the exclusion of the metaphysically distinct 'soul'; 2) Cumberland keeps the 'core' of his theory squarely linked to the important, partly independent role of *mind*. But he must be faulted because 1) he gives the strong impression of being seriously confused about just what role the metaphysically separate soul he so strongly insists on has in *mentality* to the point that he is guilty of the same *incoherence as* Descartes; 2) Due to his important place 17th and 18th century thought, this turns out to manifest itself most importantly in making it quite unclear whether he is a cognitivist or a sentimentalist about morality, a question very closely related to whether or not you are a cognitivist or visceral theorist about emotions. More so than Descartes, Cumberland has a feel for this confusion, but he still has it. While working in his general framework, his peers, Shaftesbury and Hutcheson will take different positions on which theory is better. In the end it is the sentimentalist theory that fits best with a purely physiological conception of the emotions, effectively making David Hume and William James the "state of the art" in the morality and psychology of the emotions by the turn of the 20th century.

5. POST-CARTESIAN THEORY AND THE RISE OF VISCERAL THEORY AND SENTIMENTALIST ETHICS

5.1 Lord Shaftesbury

Shaftesbury's basic premise about morality is that you can't call anyone truly bad unless they are "naturally pernicious" to their own species such that you can show they improve *nothing* in the world around them.²⁰² And this general principle plays a major role in his explanation of the nature of the emotions because he further argues that *sensible creatures* can only be measured good or bad, natural or unnatural based on their *affection*. The only actions that make a *sensible creature* naturally bad are ones done through some *affection*.²⁰³ Relatedly, a sensible creature can only be measured "good" if it is because of the world being an object of "some passion or affection moving him that he is causing the good".²⁰⁴ So in order for Shaftesbury to explain his moral theory he is going to have to give a clear account of what passions are and which are good and ill. Unfortunately, his account is quite messy and inconsistent, at least in part because of his basic assumptions.

Shaftesbury reasons that chastising someone for a "unaffected" act is equivalent to saying someone is bad for having an epileptic fit, or to praise them for not misbehaving while their hands are bound. This of course means that affections are not the only 'sources' of action. But they are certainly the *favoured* source; acting free of affection is acting not in control of yourself, if the analogies are to be believed. For example, somehow "disinterestedly" helping a little old lady across the street has as much moral

²⁰² D.H. Munro, ed, A Guide to the British Moralists, (London: Collins Sons & Co, 1972), 236-7.

²⁰³ Munro, 237.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

worth, on the one hand, as having an epileptic fit, and on the other, as remaining seated quietly with your hands bound, rather than stealing a briefcase full of money left in your presence. In both *analogies*, you are clearly not acting of your volition, your intentions are irrelevant or masked, and you can't help but acting the way you do. Apparently then, acting from the affections must be revelatory of your true volitions, your actual intentions, and the way you act because you are free to do as you please. This would appear to be the *opposite* of what the Stoics and Descartes would have you believe and would be hard to fully accept for anyone. Even those philosophers who find the passions or passion-based actions to be chosen to a certain degree would stop far short of saying that this is true for all passions or passion-based actions. So it remains to be seen if Shaftesbury means that *all* passion-based action is good or even if he really means that "unaffected" action is never morally worthy.

Clearly, the *basic point* Shaftesbury wants to make is sound; a bad person, a person generally disposed to harm and never to help cannot be considered good simply because he finds *some reason* to behave. He must be *earnest* in his desire to contribute to the world around him. And for Shaftesbury, *earnestness* is measured or defined as "some immediate affection, directly, and not accidentally, to [do] good and against ill".²⁰⁵ So understood, a bad person isn't simply someone who never helps, or one who never helps from affection, but someone who *totally lacks right affection*, someone who is lacking "of force enough to carry him directly towards good and bear him out against ill".²⁰⁶ But what about the *positive* formulation that you are only truly good if you wholly, earnestly mean to do good?

²⁰⁵ Munro, 239-240.

²⁰⁶ Munro, 240.

Again the basic point, or minimal requirement, rings true; you don't call a creature who is naturally gentle 'bad' because of a "breach of temper" because such a creature "*is usually returned to its normal disposition*".²⁰⁷ And beside the practical point, this also is supposed to work as evidence of sorts for the claim that nothing is really goodness (or badness) in a creature "except what is from natural temper". But if it is *natural* then in what way is it *chosen* behavior? Could it be he means that both affected and unaffected behavior are not really "up to us" but that because "natural behavior" is done "earnestly" it is the proper type to judge a person on? So the *positive* formulation goes from only being good if you earnestly endeavor good to a good person being "one that is *carried by*²⁰⁸ the natural temper or bent of his affections, *primarily and immediately*, and not secondarily and accidentally, to good and against ill".²⁰⁹ And he means this very strictly; a natural temper is good *only* when "all the affections or passions are suited to the public good, or good of the species".²¹⁰ If *any* "requisite passion" is lacking, or any one "disserviceable or contrary to the main end" then the natural temper is "in some measure, corrupt and ill".²¹¹

Now it certainly seems that given these statements and the analogies before, that affected actions are unmediated and flow out of us *in spite of* our conscious judgments

²⁰⁷ Notice the passive sentence construction: this is surprising, if done on purpose, since it is supposed to be the "unaffected" actions that are like possession by epilepsy or being bound.

²⁰⁸ Again note the passive sentence construction.

²⁰⁹ Munro, 239-240.

²¹⁰ Munro, 240.

²¹¹ So selfishness, like any affection that considers any good private, is an "ill affection" even though it can often create good; every good is a public good and should be automatically and cheerfully recognized as such (237-238).

and what would normally be called volition.²¹² So the pausing to think over and ‘calculate’ an action based on, e.g. utilitarian or Kantian grounds would seem to be a deception, putting lipstick on a pig, as it were.²¹³

On the one hand this sort of theory seems completely counter-intuitive for making an action we can’t “choose” be representative of our character, our true selves. But on the other hand it didn’t come out of a vacuum; indeed its pedigree seems to be Descartes’ jumbling of the power of the soul with respect to the body and the Cartesian philosophy’s influence with respect to standardizing the mechanistic view of the body as a crucial basis for metaphysical and moral theorizing.

The Cartesian philosophy’s butchering of the argument for the soul having any serious power to affect anything the body does while allowing the body to have a large share in “the mental” practically forces one to ask anew how in the world we know *and come to act* properly. Hardly anyone wants it that we are simply brutes educated by the sting of the whip and even with the success of the mechanistic philosophy most 17th and 18th century thinkers believe there has to be a *real* role for the soul to play in our daily

²¹² Shaftesbury’s theory appears to have slipped from having good behavior be somewhat based on cognition or judgment to simply ‘reaction’. The question is how much room for some kind of thinking there is in his conception of ‘reaction’.

²¹³ I was absolutely shocked to read in the D.D. Raphael’s essay on ‘Moral Sense’ for the *Dictionary of the History of Ideas* <<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/cgi-local/DHI/dhiana.cgi?id=dv3-28>> that he believed Shaftesbury’s ‘most relevant’ influence on Hutcheson regarding moral sense was “the notion that reflection upon motives is a necessary condition of moral approbation”. This could be thought to mean that Shaftesbury thought an agent needs reflection on her own motives for doing an act before deciding that it is the right thing to do. But what this must mean, on my reading, is that for an observer of an agent’s action to approve or disapprove of the morality of that person’s action they must be able to analyze why that person was motivated to act in that way – regardless of whether the agent in question ‘knew’ or ‘could explain’ their motivation. That is, a third party must be able to see that you are acting out of a benevolent character and for no ulterior, considered motive or end.

lives. So a moral sense theory fits perfectly; the soul has a sense that is able to tell, immediately, without “judging”, what is right and wrong and that in effect is the *motor* of the body, tied as it is to pleasure and pain.

Indeed a lot of Cartesian philosophy is “clarified” by Shaftesbury’s moral theory. We can see much better how the machine-body works and what the limited roll of the soul *qua* mind could look like in practice. The soul doesn’t have much to do on a day-to-day action level; the body can handle itself very well. And the emotions don’t really answer to the soul. But the soul does have a ‘faculty’ or ‘sense’ attached to it that works much like the bodily senses. And just like the bodily senses it can tap into the body in the sense of bringing on pleasure and pain, much like the sound of a beautiful song or the screech of a car wreck do. And even more to the point, this “moral sense” theory of emotions shares the Cartesian philosophy’s fundamental confusion with whether the emotions are judgments or not. Though at this point it would seem that on Shaftesbury’s theory they are *not*, he also seems to make a good case (in Section III) for why they are (which, if true, would undermine *his* moral sense theory).

Shaftesbury argues that the “objects of affection” are not limited to the things our senses show us, but include “the very actions involved in having the affection” and the affections themselves (e.g. pity, kindness): they are “brought *into the mind* through *reflective sense* and then become the subject of like or dislike”.²¹⁴ Suddenly abstract thought, or at least reflexive thought, which is certainly higher order thought, can be objects of the emotions. Of course this makes sense, but not in the context of his theory.

The body and its senses are continually presented “shapes, motions, colors, and proportions” of ‘physical objects’, which “necessarily [and immediately] results in a

²¹⁴ Munro, 240.

beauty or a deformity, according to the different measure, arrangement and disposition of their several parts...".²¹⁵ And similarly, the mind needs its own "eyes and ears" to perform its function of "spectator and auditor of other minds" and "*discern* proportion, *distinguish* sound and *scan* each sentiment or thought which comes before it".²¹⁶

Now this description is supposed to be making an analogy between seeing the beauty of, e.g. Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* and capturing the motives and nuances of another person's behavior in a particular context. In the former the sense is hit by the many variables such as motion, color, proportion and is *immediately* struck with the appreciation (judgment?) of beauty. So it should be that when we see a stranger helping a fragile old man across the street we immediately appreciate that he did it out of benevolence and a good character. (We best not turn away too soon and miss the pickpocket ply his trade!) But he insists that the moral sense is quite acute at *feeling* "the soft and harsh, the agreeable and disagreeable, in the affections" and perceives "foul and fair" harmony just as it does in e.g. musical numbers.²¹⁷ But he is neither coherent nor consistent in this view.

Shaftsbury thinks, just as Descartes before him, that the mind is under constant bombardment from "forms and images", here particularly the "moral and intellectual kind".²¹⁸ They press on the mind "just as images of bodies, colors and sounds of sensible objects press on our senses".²¹⁹ And the heart simply cannot remain neutral regarding

²¹⁵ Munro, 240-241.

²¹⁶ Munro, 241.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

these “pictures of manners” that the mind “unavoidably” displays or imagines “to itself and carries about with it”.²²⁰

The glaring problem here is that the analogy is exceedingly weak even when we are ‘observing’ a mind we know well, and it simply doesn’t work when observing an unknown third party in a context we don’t understand. Any *act* divorced from context and hidden motives can appear ‘proportionate’ and ‘morally beautiful’, but that is just not how we assign praise or blame in matters of rightness and wrongness. Indeed, I’m sad to report, even natural physical beauty can be magnified or diminished by a “better look” at the person overall. Yet Shaftesbury is convinced that the inclinations, the passions and behavior of every person gets represented in *several perspectives, immediately*, in the mind, forcing the *heart* into a “trial or exercise” where it must *choose* between positive or negative emotional reactions to good and bad behavior

[it must] affect what is right and just and disaffect what is bad *or* it must affect what is ill and disaffect what is good (Munro 242)

Now the trial analogy really makes it difficult to see how we are talking about an immediate emotional reaction. It seems that there is a ‘multi-perspectival snap recognition’ of moral proportion in an act and then a choice has to be made *by the heart* on whether to cheer or boo the action. There is no explanation how the heart could have this ability, which certainly seems ‘cognitive’. Indeed its not even clear that its not *the mind* broadly construed that isn’t the one doing the choosing: for anyone – or anything – to be truly good or bad it must be more than just compassionate, it must be able to ‘reflect’ on what it does or sees others do.

²²⁰ Ibid.

That is, in trying to explain the heart's 'choice' to endorse or denounce what the mind immediately knows to be good and bad acts, Shaftesbury leans upon the idea that reflection is necessary to "take notice "and make what is good the object of his affection - it is the *only way* one can be capable of having a sense of what is right and wrong, a "*sentiment or judgment* of what is done from good affection or the contrary".²²¹ This would be a blatant self-contradiction except for the switch in venue from the mind to the heart, from imagination to affection. But does that really get him off the hook? Of course not. The fact is that to be moral means to have a moral sense, which immediately tells you right from wrong. And good people automatically feel "love" towards good behavior just as we automatically are attracted to physical beauty. But a true understanding of right and wrong is not possible without being able to reflect on things so as to have accurate feeling or judgment about what is done and why it is done.

Further telling against Shaftesbury is his own contention that you can misconceive or misapprehend - but not misperceive (apprehend could mean perceive with senses) - the value of a (moral) object. Doing so leads to giving the wrong amount of affection to it and is a wrong. But there is a big difference between mistaking a fact and mistaking an attribution of right or wrong. Mistaking facts doesn't seem to logically entail "ill affection" whereas mistakes of seeing something as "right" - how you could get this correct when your facts are wrong is beyond me -causes bad affection *necessarily causes* vicious action in intelligent beings.²²² So apparently the seeing of something as having a certain size or proportion can be mistaken yet not wrong as, I suppose, senses do err (echoing Descartes but also undermining the analogy to moral sense). But then

²²¹ Munro, 242.

²²² Munro, 243.

mistaking something as right and going on to have the improper affection for the thing is immoral.

So the lesson seems to be that you can have a mistake of fact but *not* choose incorrectly the affection you give to it. But this is beyond strange! He tries to qualify it, saying that because its often difficult for even the most discerning to determine a matter of right it takes more than a slight mistake to destroy someone's character. But if someone makes a gross error in "assignment or application of the affection" due to "superstition or ill custom" then the "character of virtue is forfeited".²²³

If you aren't convinced of the internal contradiction in his theory yet, consider that he then turns around and says that in the end "knowledge of right and wrong...sufficient to secure a right application of the affections" have a very strict limit on to what extent they can determine the worth and virtue of a person.²²⁴ No principle of reason, no law, no custom, religious or otherwise can ever be destructive of "*that natural affection by which the species or society is upheld*". No such principle can ever rightly be held up to esteem as it can never "alter the eternal measures...and immutable independent nature of worth and virtue".²²⁵

²²³ Munro, 244.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid. I'll briefly paraphrase Berkeley's already brief attack on this as it is recounted in Munro: The position is supposed to be that 1) understanding "balanced" mind or emotions involves a feeling or sense but is not an object of "the discursive faculty" (252). 2) A moral sense perceives moral beauty just as the eye perceives color and the ear sound. 3) Humans have instinctive sensations or passions from nature, such as fellow-feeling, tenderness, and indignation. 4) These are planted in the soul with fears, appetites and aversions. 5) Which of these is strongest in an individual's mind varies from person to person. It should follow from this that such passions are horrible guides in morals, as they'd lead different men different ways depending on the dominant passion (253). So duty and virtue are more likely to be practiced if people are led by reason and judgment, balancing higher and lower pleasures, present losses with future gains, and the disgust of every vice with the delight of the opposite virtue.

In D.D. Raphael's opinion²²⁶ it is not that Shaftesbury is contradicting himself but that "moral sense" has a variable meaning.²²⁷ Of course this is a polite way of putting the same point. He says that on the one hand the expression "is purely causal and has no more special significance than the phrase of ordinary language, "sense of right and wrong". That is, for Shaftesbury we *know* right and wrong because of a literal *sense* and that this 'discovery' is no more controversial than the commonly accepted claim that people tend to have a basic understanding of right and wrong as pretty much standard equipment upon reaching the age of reason. On the other hand, Raphael points out, Shaftesbury is happy to also talk about a "knowledge of right and wrong" and of the use of "'reason' in moral judgment, and of 'eternal' and 'immutable' virtue" implying a much more conscious, purposeful effort and understanding of right and wrong.²²⁸

²²⁶ Dictionary of the History of Ideas, Vol.3, Ed. Philip P. Weiner New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974, s.v. "moral sense". The entry was written by D.D. Raphael.(Abbreviated hereafter as DHI).

²²⁷ DHI, 231.

²²⁸ DHI, 230.

5.2 Frances Hutcheson

In Raphael's estimation the main influence of Shaftesbury's moral philosophy on that of Hutcheson – whom he deems the true father of moral sense theory – is the linking of ethical and aesthetic judgment.²²⁹ Hutcheson, says Raphael, deserves full credit for the development of moral sense theory and is the major influence on Hume's ethical thought.²³⁰ He says Hutcheson and Hume both used the word 'sense' to mean *feeling* and not some actual or metaphorical faculty of perception and that it signified the "capacity to experience *feelings of approval and disapproval*". The theory is meant to contrast or be in opposition with the belief that "moral distinctions are perceived by reason".²³¹

But while he, with good reason, puts the development of this theory in the "context of empiricist epistemology", this misses what I've spent the last three chapters showing, that the fundamental issue here that informs both the epistemology and the moral theory is the idea of what the emotions are and how they relate to judgment. Moral sense theory is describable as being based on rejection of a flawed Cartesian explication of the powers of the mind and its relation to the body as well as to an overtly and overly mechanical view of the nature of the body and its powers.

So it is important that Hutcheson – like Hume later will – thinks that research and speculation about the role of the body in the creation and expression of the passions is not for him to pursue. Rather, he wants to "Let Physicians or Anatomists explain the several Motions in the Fluids or Solids of the body, which accompany any

²²⁹ DHI, 231.

²³⁰ DHI, 232.

²³¹ DHI, 230.

Passion.(Essay, p. 57).²³² It is argued, correctly I think, that in Hume's case the belief is that a biological account of the passions will be forthcoming and effectively complete.²³³ Is Hutcheson as much of a reductivist? Given that he is dedicated to improving Shaftesbury's conception of a moral sense, the presumption is that human physiology will play a major role in both the practical and theoretical understanding of the passions.²³⁴ But we'll see that his theory preserves a distinct and irreducible role for abstract thought and judgment – whether he wants to or not.

As Munro (254) explains, Hutcheson thinks it is imperative that we understand the *affections and passions* in order to understand the nature of human emotion. And indeed, to do so he will offer a conceptual distinction between the two.²³⁵ Let's begin with the passions, which he defines as “those modifications or actions of the mind consequent upon the apprehension of certain objects or events, *in which the mind generally conceives good or evil*”.²³⁶

Hutcheson's account of the nature of the emotions starts with the uncontroversial claim that we receive ideas of familiar objects in one of two ways: 1) some power or perception or *sense*, or 2) some *reasoning* upon these perceived *sense* objects.²³⁷ But the concept of *sensation* is both very complicated and of the utmost importance in his theory.

Whatever else it is or does, *sensation gives us both the image* (or representation) *of a thing and feelings of pleasure or pain*, as in smells and the feelings of hunger or thirst.

²³²Quoted by James Fieser, “Hume's Classification of the Passions and its Precursors.” <<http://www.utm.edu/staff/jfieser/vita/research/passion.htm>> (15 March, 2008).

²³³ Ibid, footnote 23.

<http://www.utm.edu/staff/jfieser/vita/research/passion.htm#N_23> (15 March, 2008).

²³⁴ Munro, 254.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ibid.

(Ibid)²³⁸ These pleasures and pains can be simple or ‘complex’. In the case of simple ones, the only other “previous” or “concomitant” ideas that accompany them are those such as “duration” that necessarily accompany *any perception*, whether it be *sense perception* or *inward consciousness*. ‘Complex’ pleasures and pains “only arise upon some previous idea or assemblage or comparison of ideas”.²³⁹ And these pleasures and pains that presuppose previous ideas are “perceptions of an internal sense”.²⁴⁰

Above we saw that there are two types of perceptions, sensory perceptions and inward consciousness. Both are necessarily accompanied by certain ideas such as duration. And apparently, no matter how simple, they come with pleasures or pains. So what is the point of further qualifying pleasures and pains that presuppose previous ideas as “perceptions of an internal sense”?

It must be that there is a serious difference between the simple perceptions of inward consciousness and they’re accompanying feelings of pleasure and pain on the one hand, and the pleasures and pains that *are* the perceptions of an internal sense on the other hand. And the difference rests on the nature of the ideas upon which each rests. The pleasures and pains of inward consciousness are just as the pleasures and pains of a scent or taste. The pleasures and pains of internal sense are in some important way different than these.

To understand what the difference amounts to we have to consider why Hutcheson thinks that the simple fact that pleasures presupposing previous postulations are perceptions of an internal *sense* explain why humans always find regularity and

²³⁸ Clearly these are non-moral instances of like and dislike, but moral ones will work in the same way.

²³⁹ Munro, 254-255.

²⁴⁰ Munro, 255.

uniformity pleasing (as in, i.e. “figures, tastes, smells, music”).²⁴¹ Presumably he means that this is because they “fit” with pre-established ideas, both the type necessary for cognition, such as ‘duration’, and other ideas based on previous perceptions. Or perhaps for the same reasons, fit with ‘non-conscious’ expectations. But just what “fit” amounts to, is difficult to pin down without begging the question.

Whatever the true nature of *fit*, Hutcheson’s theory of emotions depends on the idea that we as a matter of fact naturally, necessarily find regularity and uniformity pleasing. It is unclear just what makes Hutcheson think regular and uniform taste or smell is and it is left unsaid whether this is supposed to mean we always dislike irregularity and variation. If so it would seem false on its face.²⁴² Nonetheless,

affections, tempers, sentiments and actions that we observe in others or in ourselves upon reflection constantly cause “agreeable or disagreeable perceptions, which we call approbation or dislike (Munro 255-256)

That is, the emotional ‘outbursts’, and more generally the behaviors of our selves and others, register with our senses and we of course have ideas about them. As with the like and dislike of tastes and figures, our observations of emotions and behaviors constantly and automatically lead us to approval or disapproval of what we take in about others and ourselves.

The important point is that this is occurring like clockwork and is not due to deliberation or *judgment*. When the approval is of our own emotional states and actions

²⁴¹ Munro, 254.

²⁴² Just considering cheese one can think of how different many cheeses smell, and how very objectionable some are in their aroma. Does the fact that such cheese occasionally tastes very good provide a problem for his account? Or are we not to think of “regularity” across cheeses but relative to a type of cheese such that Roquefort cheese ought to smell like a wet dog and it is really only when it doesn’t have that smell that we find the smell objectionable qua not being typical of Roquefort? It would seem important if we want to later avoid the creeping in of cultural relativism in moral theory.

there is necessarily *reflection* involved in as much as we are having second order ideas about ideas but there is no other *reasoning* necessary. Though we do receive our ideas both through sense perception or reasoning on ideas based on sense perception, in the case of, e.g. our liking or disliking cheese or the fact of someone's tears of sorrow we are perceiving not reasoning based on these perceptions. This of course is at the heart of expressivism.

But are the "feelings of pleasure or pain" that sensation gives us the *same sort of thing* as the "perceptions" called "approbation or dislike"? At the very least, Hutcheson wants to have us believe that perception of like and dislike in a moral sense arise as necessarily as any other *sensations* of pleasure and pain, which arrive necessarily and constantly along with our sensory perceptions. That is, *perception of like and dislike*, moral or non-moral, *is a sensation*. So at its inception, sentimentalism (moral sense theory) is "perceptivism". As long as we are awake and our sensory organs functioning we are powerless to stop sensations in general and as long as we keep our previous *apprehension* – or opinion – of some "affection, temper or intention".²⁴³ Trying to stop your feeling of approval for some intention of a person you see before you that you have already 'accepted' – or come to *believe* – is the fitting intention (and so is good) is "like trying to make honey bitter". This leaves the question – which I think is of fundamental importance – of just what "having an opinion" or "coming to believe" really amounts to. What is the process involved here? Hutcheson has to insist that they are like all the ideas of *sensation* – *inward consciousness* and not at all like the ideas of *reasoning* – *internal sense*.

Raphael says that Hutcheson (like Butler) wants to show that men can act from disinterested motives ('benevolence') – not merely for their own advantage and that they

²⁴³ Munro, 256.

can judge something good for reasons other than it being advantageous to themselves, which is expressed as 'approval' and 'disapproval' (Raphael 231).²⁴⁴ On his theory the "moral sense" is a "*feeling of approval*, the natural *reaction* of a spectator when he sees a man act from the motive of benevolence" and a *feeling of disapproval* would be the reaction to something done from "the motive of malice" (clearly, ascribing *motive* to a person is very often highly difficult to do successfully and it requires a lot of experience).

Hutcheson likens the 'reaction' of the moral sense to virtuous action to the "natural", "immediate" reaction to seeing a beautiful one. We just automatically feel a warmth, perhaps a "species of love". However, as Raphael points out, he ends up with a utilitarian ethical theory where ethical judgment depends on the "thought of consequences and not on an immediate reaction of love for the motive of benevolence." Indeed, as I see it, if the theory works at all, the *judgment* is built in to it at the ground floor in as much as it takes some advanced reasoning to seize correctly upon a person's motives, even when the categories are as broadly construed as 'benevolent' or 'malicious'. Too many actions could be classified in either *or both* camps depending on multiple factors such as the *observer's* own assumptions and history. Indeed we often find it hard to know what even those closest to us feel when doing - or not doing - things. A mildly paranoid person sees 'benevolence' as manipulation and a hayseed sees 'maliciousness' as accidental. An astute judge of an individual's motives for an act and how the act is *in fact received by the object* takes into account an enormous amount of data along with a 'gut' instinct (which in humans we'll see is a short-cut to more data processing).

²⁴⁴ DHI, 231.

5.3 David Hume

A. Introduction

David Hume is a seminal figure in ethics and his theory of the emotions is central to his work in the field. In turn, his theory of the emotions is dependent on his theory of the nature of perception and thought. But when we study his account of perception and thought, his philosophical method, influences and assumptions we find: 1) he is guilty of the first two Cartesian errors, 2) his theory fails to meet his own standards for how to do philosophy well, and so, more importantly for our purposes, 3) he fails to give evidence for his account of what the emotions and their role in moral judgment are.

I contend that Hume's fundamental failure to motivate his account of the emotions and of sentimentalism leads directly to a similar failure in current theories of emotions and their role in ethics; because he is wrong about the nature and role of the emotions in judgment and action he fails to motivate his non-cognitivist (sentimentalist) theory of ethics,²⁴⁵ a problem that is now endemic of visceral theories of emotions and of sentimentalist-related theories in ethics built on them.

B. Influences: Descartes

Hume's debt to the work of René Descartes and Frances Hutcheson are unequivocal, though the former's may not be as clear at first glance as the latter's.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ Munro, 232.

²⁴⁶ Both the D.D. Raphael and Harold Noonan stress Hume's indebtedness to Frances Hutcheson in his ethical theory. For example, Hume is motivated by Hutcheson to pursue the idea of an "empiricist grounded ethics and psychology" (DHI, 231).

Unfortunately, being so implicated in the Cartesian programme.²⁴⁷ leads to fundamental, deadly problems for Hume's philosophy of mind and by extension, his sentimentalist ethics.

As I've mentioned numerous times, René Descartes, unlike Plato, Aristotle and Lucretius, was guilty of what I've called the Cartesian errors; untenable distinctions between the rational mind and irrational body and a well intentioned²⁴⁸ but simplistic distinction between calm and violent passions based on it.²⁴⁹ I've detailed how these errors were passed down in the empirical psychological theories and the related sentimentalist theories Descartes did so much to inspire. I argue that Hume's philosophy of mind and ethics is effectively the philosophical fruit of this long chain of related theories. Later I will explain the James-Lange theory to be effectively a more scientific presentation of fundamentally the same theory.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁷ It's assumptions about the way the mind works generally, about perception and about the nature of the passions.

²⁴⁸ The intention is to get the benefit of rationality or judgment in the passions without an explicit appeal to 'soul' or 'mind' or 'reason'. The actual error is the assumption that perception is purely passive and anything that seems active or engaged about it is really the consequence of programming. As I say below, if another organ or organs, or a physical process that doesn't require conscious awareness and abstract thinking can be said to do all the work 'reason' was needed for, then all is well enough. But if not there is an irreparable problem unless you are willing to say we are completely irrational. Consider how Galileo and others made automata that appeared to move about 'at will' or 'at random' - by tying string to posts in certain angles so that when unwound the machine would turn in specific, planned ways.

²⁴⁹ See also Fieser <<http://www.utm.edu/staff/jfieser/vita/research/passion.htm>>

²⁵⁰ I see the relationship of James-Lange to Hume as quite related to the relationship of Cumberland to Descartes.

C. Influences: Hutcheson

Hutcheson made the fundamental distinction between calm and violent passions, committing the first and second Cartesian errors. In his theory they are called ‘affections’ and ‘passions’, respectively. Affections were described as involving “rational perception of the situation”, and had this property due to their being “the products of the immaterial soul”.²⁵¹ The *passions proper* Hutcheson described as violent emotions “grounded in instinct” - violent because they “rise from disturbances within the material body”. In this he is simply following the Cartesian error of making an unfounded, question-begging split between the powers of the superhumanly serene mind and of the animalistic, depraved body his starting point.

It is important to again make perfectly clear that this error is not due simply to the assumption of an *immaterial soul*. Descartes made this distinction *in part* because of his belief in the immaterial soul but an immaterial soul need not be flawless or serene. The idea of the immaterial soul exhibiting calmness, reason, and judgment opposed to the violence, passion and immediacy of the body was made because he broke the world up into things fundamentally reasoning and things wholly incapable of reasoning.

The actual problem stemming from the soul being thought *immaterial* is that there is no credible way to maintain this belief and explain how the mind affects the purely physical systems of the body *at all*.²⁵² And the way out of this, the view, that emotions exhibit aspects of both the mind and the body, though fundamentally correct, leaves Cartesian theorists in the unenviable position of having to create an ad hoc,

²⁵¹ Friesan.

²⁵² As I’ve said before and discuss below, it also motivates the belief that the mind is eliminable.

unsubstantiated, non-existent apparatus to keep from contradicting fundamental premises.

It might be reasonable to think that someone who rejects the idea of an immaterial soul wouldn't have this problem. So long as, e.g. Hume doesn't believe in an immaterial soul, then the gravest error we might expect him to make would be to split the world up into reasoning humans and irrational animals. Of course this is already a *grievous error*, but the supposition is incorrect. Hume, because of a tacit acceptance of the first Cartesian error, cannot escape the second Cartesian error.

Hume, like Hutcheson,²⁵³ makes the distinction between calm and violent passions the bedrock of his psychology and despite its improvements it fares little better than Hutcheson's or Descartes' versions. Its implication in the Cartesian errors and its own particular internal inconsistencies undermine it and so too his famous claim regarding the enslavement of reason to the passions. I argue that this can be summed up by the theory's inability to account for the 'reasonableness' of anger.

Making the first Cartesian error and splitting the world into reasoning things and non-reasoning things requires a subsequent account of what makes this distinction possible. Unfortunately, most thinkers who take on this debt would rather not pay up. It turns out that it is much more economical to make the mind impotent. If something else, an 'organ', or more likely, a physical process that doesn't require conscious awareness and abstract thinking can be *said* to do all the work 'reason' was needed for, then all is well enough.

²⁵³ Inevitably, really, given what I just explained about their complicity in the Cartesian error.

In fact, since Descartes, we have been continually presented with ever more physicalist and reductivist thinkers, grappling with what amounts to the mechanistic theory of body and mind in the *Passions of the Soul*. As we noted in that discussion, this theory leaves *nothing* for reason to do. No surprise then if in the mind of a non-believer the mind and 'reason' are all but pointless and the best case for an acceptable role for the mind is some version of epiphenomenalism²⁵⁴

What are *we* to make of this? I think it is clear that denying the mind and reasoned judgment are of any serious importance in human action and ethics is the *inexcusable result* of bad assumptions, unprincipled foot-stomping and ad hoc reasoning. Such theories are in *no way superior* to those that insist that the mind exists as a superhuman, immaterial substance that controls its vessel, the mindless animalistic body and that ethics has nothing to do with life as experienced by a fundamentally physical being. This was clear enough to Plato, Aristotle and Lucretius and it ought to have been for a man as smart as David Hume.

To explain all this we must understand Hume's theory of perception and his theory of emotions that is so intimately tied to it. First we'll get clear on the intricacies of the position, which will expose its internal tensions and then we'll discuss those as well as the failures stemming from this unprofitable collision of method and assumption. This will lead us to note how the failure to properly evidence his account of emotion necessarily leads to failure in properly grounding Hume's sentimentalism.

²⁵⁴ Harold Noonan points out that some argue this is in fact Hume's position. At this point it is undecided, but if it is, so much the worse for him and the psychologists who followed him.

Looking ahead, we'll then turn to William James' even more radically physiological account of the emotions to set the stage for the final chapter when we will lay out the ramifications of these errors for contemporary visceralist and cognitivist theories of emotions and for sentimentalism and rationalism in ethics.

D. Perception and Thought

i. Reason

To show that Hume's reductionist philosophy of mind and sentimentalist emotions and ethics are the culmination of a fundamentally mistaken tradition of increasingly reductivist physicalism and a related ethical sentimentalism we must first understand how he employs the concept of 'reason'.²⁵⁵

Hume defines reason and sets its limits in his dissertation on the passions, saying

Reason, in the strict sense of "judgment of truth and falsehood" can never, of itself, be any motive to the will. It can have no influence except as far as it touches some passion or affection (Hume, 170).

The Encyclopedia Britannica clarifies this somewhat by saying that reason – judgment of truth and falsehood - can only move one to action “in accordance with some prior want or desire”, it can never determine a person's ends, only how best to achieve them”.²⁵⁶ Judgments of truth and falsehood are nothing more than “abstract relations of ideas”, “objects of curiosity, not of volition”.²⁵⁷ And “matters of fact”, “known or unknown, right or wrong”, “can't be regarded as any motive to right or wrong” if they are not also

²⁵⁵ David Hume, “Of the Passions”, Four Dissertations and Essays on Suicide & the Immortality of the Soul. Introduction by John Immerwahr, (South Bend, IN: Thoemmes Press (St. Augustine's Press), 1995), 121-181).

²⁵⁶ Encyclopædia Britannica, Encyclopædia Britannica Online, s.v. “ethics” <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/194023/ethics>>, (14 September 2009).

²⁵⁷ Hume, 170.

“good or evil”. When they fail to excite desire or aversion, they are neither, they are “totally indifferent”.

So, to be clear, if Hume is right about what reason is, then some type of sentimentalism surely follows. If you reject sentimentalism, and this is the common sense opinion, you have to think something has gone wrong. Well, quite a lot has gone wrong; Hume’s claims and conclusions are excellent examples of what results from the Cartesian assumptive and methodological errors.

Hume also describes reason as a type of passion; a “general and calm” one that takes a “comprehensive and distant view of its object and actuates the will, without exciting any sensible emotion”.²⁵⁸ Properly speaking, this is impossible on his theory as will be explained below. From a strategic view, what Hume is trying to do here is establish two “reasoning tracks” without having to call one ‘reasoning’ in the proper sense, or while trying to save his claim that ideas aren’t vital enough to cause action; this is his version of the second Cartesian error. He needs to co-opt what people normally call reason into some type of passion since on his theory passion is what actuates the will. We’re going to have to see whether his distinguishing “calm passions” holds any water.

ii. Ideas and impressions

It is easy enough to point out that we now know Hume’s theory of thought and perception to be fundamentally incorrect. No one accepts a literally imagistic theory of the nature of thought such as he puts forth. As Harold Noonan reminds us, Wittgenstein made it clear that any such image needs interpretation and a theory that wants to have

²⁵⁸ Hume, 170.

individual thoughts consists of literal images that are mirror-quality copies of the sensory experiences we had cannot accommodate the demand.²⁵⁹ In fact there is *much cognitive work* being done in perception. The body does not simply 'take in' given objects, we cannot just see what is in front of our eyes or in our minds. There is interpretation and classification going on right from the beginning of perception. And so there is *a lot more explaining to do* than such a theory can accommodate.

It would be much more interesting if we can make the case that Hume himself ought to have noticed what we might call Wittgenstein's discovery. I think he should have and failed to do so because of his unwarranted commitments regarding reason and emotion and how they fit into his non-cognitivist ethics: Hume should have caught 'Wittgenstein's problem' when he saw the mess the ideas of passive perception and impotent reason caused him to make of the passions.

If his theory fails on its own terms, we have a strong case to reject his related sentimentalism. If his failure is systematic²⁶⁰ then we can show that *any methodologically related theory* will fail to ground sentimentalism as well. So let's be clear about what would count as a failure of Hume's endeavor. There are (at least) three possibilities:

P1. Show that phenomenal experiences are not the basic coin of the realm.

P2. Show that though phenomenal experiences are the basic coin of the realm, the denominations are incorrectly cast and that their correct casting shows that the relationship between them is not one of mere derivation of thought from phenomenal experience. That is, *don't commit the Cartesian error – don't separate thinking from feeling.*

²⁵⁹ Harold Noonan, Hume, (Oxford, UK: Oneworld Publications, 2007), 52.

²⁶⁰ If someone as smart as Hume missed these errors due to some philosophical prejudice, how likely it is that it is still buried in his legacy – and perhaps in a more pernicious form.

P3. Show that though the denominations are by and large correctly cast, the explanation of the derivation of the less vivid from the more vivid is inconsistent or otherwise fundamentally flawed.

One might argue for one of these or any combination of the three.

The success of any of these strategies will mean at least three things:

C1. Because in some very important sense all mental activity is just not done in the same coin – whether as described by his theory or otherwise.

C2. Thought/belief and motivation/action are much more complicated phenomena than the Humean theory can accept and so the theory is not the best explanation of either.

C3. Insisting that action can only stem from impressions and cannot stem from ideas – a claim at the core of Hume's theory of the emotions and emotivism – is not the best explanation of what is happening in emotions or in 'value-laden' actions.

I focus on possibility 2, but 3 is so closely related it bears discussion as well. I will show that Hume's impressions in general and in particular emotions, which he takes to be a kind of impressions, have content that includes and needs interpretation, making Hume's explanation of what they are and come to be impossible.²⁶¹ And though Hume wants to make it so that they exhibit interpretation he *cannot do so by virtue of his implication in the Cartesian programme*.

iii. Perceptions

Hume makes *perceptions* the basic units or objects of mental life. They come in two basic, intimately related types: *Ideas*, which correspond to what we today would call thinking and *Impressions*, which correspond to what we might today call feelings,

²⁶¹ This is what I termed above the second Cartesian error.

what I'll term the *phenomenal experience*²⁶² of some object. Impressions, the phenomenal experience of some object, are the paradigm case of *perception*. Ideas are perceptions that are derivative causally and content-wise of the paradigmatic impressions; therefore they differ in degree of vivacity.²⁶³

Perhaps a more understandable way of putting it is that Hume wants to show all mental activity comes from and is transacted in the *same coin* and that the basic coin is *perception* (Noonan). Hume identifies two *denominations* for this *coin*, ideas and impressions: in both sensory perception and thinking you are trading in gold, but the gold is more or less pure depending on which one. Hume must – and does – reject out of hand the possibility that you are trading in gold in one case and rare feathers in the other *or that you are trading in something quite different all together, such as commercial paper*, which has not only the value of the gold it is 'based' on but its face value and its value within a larger economy. Though complicated, this is much more like what is going on in 'inward perception', in reflection, and even in perception of *objects* and *events* when we say have *meaning* for us. Whether everything is done in gold or in something more complicated is exactly what is at issue in having a correct theory of the emotions (and in insisting on a 'duplex' theory of emotions).

His account of the coin of perception creates the requirement that Hume give good reason to believe that the nature of the relationship between the two denominations is the derivative one he identifies. He does not.

²⁶² I think Hume is more of a 'phenomenalist' than an 'empiricist' but I also think no one has ever not been some type of empiricist, that is, that the distinction between a rationalist and empiricist or empiricist and phenomenalist is very hard to make clear.

²⁶³ This means thinking is a poor kind of phenomenal experience.

Having understood that ideas and impressions are the components of mental activity, let's see how it proceeds²⁶⁴,

For Sensation:

[IMPRESSION] Perception of external sensation $p \rightarrow$ [COPY] Thought (mental image) of external sensation $p \rightarrow$

For Reflection:

[IMPRESSION] perception of internal sensation $f \rightarrow$ [COPY] Thought of internal sensation f .

It is important to note that ideas (simple ones) are passively received by the mind from *both sensation and reflection*.

As Friesan explains, Hume uses another term synonymously with 'impressions' to pick out perception qua actual hearing, seeing and feeling as opposed to merely thinking about these things: 'sentiments.'²⁶⁵ There are two types of 'impressions' or 'sentiments', those whose object or source is the external world and those whose object or source is visceral. Respectively they can be termed 'external impressions', 'external sentiments' or 'external sensory-perceptions' on the one hand and 'internal impressions', 'internal sentiments' or 'internal perceptions' on the other. Clearly, examples of the former include anything you literally see with your eyes. Much more interestingly, examples of the latter include such things as *nervousness or anger*, emotions or passions.

Impressions, be they of something external or something visceral, are the same kind of thing. Therefore *anger* is a 'sensory' *perception of something inside the body*, of a physical effect on our physical system, and nothing more. Since anger is an impression, no copy of it could ever be as *vivid* as the original *feeling* and so no "reflection" on an old

²⁶⁴ From Friesan: <http://www.utm.edu/staff/jfieser/vita/research/passion.htm>

²⁶⁵ Friesan: <http://www.utm.edu/staff/jfieser/vita/research/passion.htm>

anger could ever burn as bright.²⁶⁶ In truth, I think this implication of his theory subverts it. To think that it is *categorically impossible* that an emotion – especially anger – could *ever* be as painful (or joyous) as the first time it was lived is playing at games. But Hume *must* say so because to show the passions are impressions and not ideas he must show the copy principle applies to the passions the way it does to impressions. Either way, the die is cast; Hume now cannot have it that there is any sort of *judgment* or *analysis* or *reasoning* in the passions.

It follows from Hume's characterization of ideas and impressions that vividness is the determining factor in whether a perception can cause action. If a perception has enough vividness, it can cause action, if not it cannot. Even the *brightest* idea could never have as much vividness as even the *dullest* impression. So there's really just no way, practically speaking, that an idea could cause you to act. And thinking is just and only the manipulation of ideas (images) in the mind which would seem to count against the possibility of a complicated idea reaching the vividness threshold – whatever that *is* – necessary to cause action.²⁶⁷

This *metaphor* of vividness has two crucial features for Hume's theories of perception and emotion.²⁶⁸ First, the relative liveliness of impressions and ideas, of sensory perception and reflection means we will have *different experiences* - we

²⁶⁶ To 'prove' this, Hume asks us to consider the difference between someone who is in a "fit of anger" and someone who "only thinks of that emotion";

When we reflect on our past sentiments and affections, our thought is a faithful mirror, and copies its objects truly; but the colours which it employs are faint and dull, in comparison of those in which our original perceptions were clothed. It requires no nice discernment or metaphysical head to mark the distinction between them. (EHU Sec 2.2)

²⁶⁷Noonan, 28-29, 34. Of course, if a thought could have enough vividness then it would seem to be able to cause action. This would undermine what Hume wants to do in ethics and it also would likely have very dramatic consequences for empiricism's argument against rationalism.

²⁶⁸ Noonan, 34-35.

experience impressions and ideas differently (Noonan, 34-35).²⁶⁹ They appear different to different people.²⁷⁰ The second important feature is that *vivacity distinguishes belief from thought*.²⁷¹ This point will be treated in the discussion on the nature of the emotions, below.

Now let's turn to reflection. Hume defines it as *inward sentiment*, which you will recall is another name for inward impressions, things we perceive happening inside our bodies, or impressions of the inner world, examples of which include anger and nervousness. We also remember from the above identifications that reflection is the *same sort of thing* as sensory perception; it is something that happens to us, the information provided us is received passively and with no feedback.²⁷²

By studying the etymology of the term 'reflection' we can be quite certain that Hume takes reflection, (an) inward sentiment, perception of the contents of the mind²⁷³, to be a *feeling*, an *attitude* often if not always colored by or *proceeding from emotion*. These are *not* 'ideas' - cold distant thoughts - these are what happen physiologically when you perceive, say, a loved one, just as the feeling of anticipation is what happens when you turn your eyes to the attractive stranger outside your window. And they cause ideas - hypotheticals - about them. Clearly if he is wrong about perception, he is wrong about reflection. And his problematic descriptions of the nature of and difference between

²⁶⁹ Noonan, 34-35. This also explains differences in the experience of emotions and lays the groundwork for the relativism inherent in expressivism.

²⁷⁰ Noonan, 35.

²⁷¹ Noonan, 43, 48-49. Knowing this, what do we make of the definition of internal sentiment as a passive viewing of the contents of our minds? Belief happens when vivacity is "transmitted" from an impression to an associated idea. (vivacity is starting to sound a lot more like "meaning") And Hume has no account of belief if the same exact notion of vivacity can't be applied to impressions and thoughts. His method and his assumptions collide and it doesn't go well

²⁷² Consider the Cartesian explication of perception in Med 5.

²⁷³ Noonan, 28. Loosely understood, of course.

ideas and impressions, which both cause reflections, leads us to be highly skeptical of the account of reflections and extra wary if they come up in a major way in the ethical portion of the argument.

E. Passions and the Theory of Perception and Thought

Hume discusses the passions in two major works, the *Treatise of Human Nature*²⁷⁴ and the later *Of the Passions*. Because the latter is in large part a rewrite of the former, and in the interest of conserving space, I will focus attention on *Of The Passions*, using the *Treatise* as a supplement.²⁷⁵

i. Generalized emotion and particular passion

Hume's position is that we have an 'organ' or 'faculty' of passion and when it is excited, a general emotional state and/or particular passions result. With the passion-organ is excited and we are in a general state of 'emotion', the mind will direct its view to some object and this will determine which particular passion is felt: there is a physical feeling or 'emotion' which is excited in us by the perception that some good or bad object/outcome has some probability p of happening.²⁷⁶ This emotion state provides the

²⁷⁴ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985).

²⁷⁵ Immerwahr, xxi. The major differences between the two are 1. the latter book's de-emphasis of 'indirect' passions in favor of 'direct' passions (Cf. Introduction p. xxii. where Immerwahr notes that indirect passions include pride, love and hate and direct passions include joy, grief and fear) and 2. The discussion of the concept of 'predominant passions' in the latter book, which seems introduced to explain how contrary passions experienced simultaneously affect one another (Ibid. This will also remind the reader of a similar issue at the end of Descartes' *Passions of the Soul*. Hume decides that (xxiii) in certain cases, the conflict of two contrary passions makes the stronger of the two even more intense. See *Of the Passions* (121-181) [p. 1757])

²⁷⁶ Probability comes from an opposition of contrary causes that keep the mind from fixing on either side (123)

energy to act and we act on whatever the *mind* directs itself. Thus is determined the particular passion one will have, i.e. love, hate, pride, hope. To explain how this works and that it is indeed a form of non-cognitivism, Hume needs to explain to us what sensations cause this general 'emotion' state as well as how and in what sense the *mind* picks the object for the passion.

A very basic, naturalistic hedonism is the true wellspring of the passions. Because of the way the human body is constituted, some things immediately produce an "agreeable sensation" in our bodies and some produce a disagreeable sensation.²⁷⁷ We call them 'good' and 'bad' respectively. There is no doubt that on this theory 'good' and 'evil' are purely physiological experiences of pleasure and pain and have no mentality beyond consciousness required to experience them. That our mind directs us towards successful acquisition of pleasure or avoidance of pain for this or that reason is beside the point. If we were otherwise constituted we might then take the opposite route and achieve the same goal.²⁷⁸

To recap then, 'passion' conceived generally, better known as 'emotion' is a sort of faculty or organ, the thing in us capable of feeling certain agreeable or disagreeable physiological sensations visited upon it, and by the guidance provided by the reasoning apparatus, this turns from a general excitation into a particular passion. Anything that

²⁷⁷ The things that conform to our passion are pleasing to us and so 'good', those that go against it are painful and so 'evil' (Hume, 121). For example, we find moderate warmth agreeable and so good but extreme heat painful and so evil (121).

²⁷⁸ So, in a nutshell, we perceive the world around us passively. We make copies in our minds of these experiences and can create hypothetical situations involving them that would bring us pain or pleasure. Some experiences cause us to physically feel a generalized emotional state in our bodies. This state creates energy and the desire to either expand or eliminate the feeling. In order to do so, we use the copies of experiences and perhaps the hypothetical futures imagined to focus our emotion in a way so as to act to achieve expansion or elimination of the feeling.

makes us feel good or bad will produce a passion.²⁷⁹ *Which* passion will be felt due to some e.g. good feeling “depends on the light in which the good (or evil) is surveyed’.²⁸⁰

So consider revenge. Getting the better of a bad person feels good to the passion-organ. This excited state is prime to become a particular passion, but how and what; pride, vanity, joy? Revenge excites the passion-organ, producing pleasure, which is of course good. Your understanding notes the similarities and differences between what is happening and past events, as well as previous and current ‘hypothesizing’ about how different reactions might turn out. Whatever is found on this ‘survey’ leads to the experience of a particular emotion, e.g. vanity. Without the surveying all that is produced by revenge is unfocused excited sensation of pleasure or pain. The problems start to crop up when we ask which *sensation* it would be – pleasure or pain? The only guidance Hume gives is that some things just naturally bring us pleasure or pain because of how we are constituted.²⁸¹

ii. Desire and aversion

The desire for something comes from “good considered simply” and aversion from evil considered simply.²⁸² Considered ‘simply’ because there are more difficult cases where both good and evil are present in an event or object and so in passion. More will be said about this below, but for now we’ll simply note the dual presence makes one ambivalent, alternating between desire and aversion. But note the underlying point that

²⁷⁹ “All good or evil produce passions and affections” (Hume, 122).

²⁸⁰ Hume, 122.

²⁸¹ Of course if the way we are constituted is not known – and it wasn’t by Hume – he isn’t entitled to lean on this claim by his own standards. More importantly, if the Cartesian programme leads to a flawed understanding of our constitution, the move is even more spurious.

²⁸² Hume, 122.

desire comes from something *considered*. That is, desires come from *beliefs*. To keep from equivocation beliefs must explicitly be labeled *impressions* and *not ideas*. That is, Hume does not think all desires are reducible to some base-level desire. Rather, the *belief* that a thing has or will create pleasure or pain causes us to feel emotion and then a passion and then a desire to seek or avoid the thing.²⁸³

We already noted that beliefs are very vivid *ideas*, *not impressions*. So desires come from very vivid *ideas*. If we have a very vivid *ideas* that a thing will create pleasure in us, we will get a very general excitation which when directed at an object becomes a particular passion, which gives us the desire to seek the thing. This is not what we'd have expected and will be discussed in my criticisms of Hume's theory below.

iii. Association of Ideas and the double impulse

Hume's methodology for finding the "real, efficient" cause of a passion is to examine the role of the *principle of the association of ideas*, a psychological concept Hume feels is an original contribution on his part and which plays a fundamental role in his theories of perception and the passions.²⁸⁴ The principle explains the easy transitions we make from one idea to another: our thoughts pass from one object to "what *resembles it*, is *contiguous* to it, or *produced* by it".²⁸⁵ These three relations guide and tie our thoughts together so any idea *s* that is united to a previous idea *p* by one of them is likely going to follow *p* due to that connection.

²⁸³ But rather confusingly, he also designates desire to be a (direct) passion (Treatise, 328)

²⁸⁴ It has a "mighty influence" on "every operation of the understanding and the passions" (133).

²⁸⁵ Hume, 133-134.

Similarly, there are associations between impressions or *emotions*²⁸⁶ that ‘resemble’ each other; they are connected such that “no sooner one arises, than the rest naturally follow”. So, for example, “grief and disappointment give rise to anger, anger to envy, envy to malice, and malice to grief again”.²⁸⁷

But they don’t have to resemble each other for the mechanism to work. Hume argues that because of the double relation, once you have your emotional energy focused on a particular object so that you are experiencing a particular emotion, say love, any other or extra emotion energy – say panic – that subsequently occurs is easily converted into love.²⁸⁸ It is even easier to unite two “full-blown” passions if they have causes that are just plain different as the “predominant” passion will swallow up and convert the inferior one, so that the strength of the *double relation* is not needed. The *physiological mechanism* that makes this possible is the nature of the spirits. When they are excited their direction of movement is easily redirected by the dominant affection.²⁸⁹

The point is that both “types” of associations, between ideas and between impressions or emotions” help each other and so reinforce the “impulse” they send to the imagination (and then to the will?). The move from one object to another is made easier when the association principles²⁹⁰ which forward the transition of ideas concur

²⁸⁶ He should say *passions* since emotions are basically ‘non-directed’ but he must be using them synonymously here.

²⁸⁷ Where does the pleasure of revenge fit in to this equation?

²⁸⁸ Hume, 173. “Hope is in itself an agreeable passion but can increase anger when that is the predominant passion.” [quote of Virgil] (Hume, 175) Because of the way we naturally are, any emotion (excited state of the ‘passion-organ’) that “attends” a passion is easily converted into the passion, even if they are “contrary to each other” (173).

²⁸⁹ Hume, 173. There is of course no possible way for Hume to acquire any empirical evidence for this, he is simply following the pronouncements of those who came before him.

²⁹⁰ Resemblance, contiguity, production.

with those which operate on the passion; they “unite into one action” and so “bestow on the mind a double impulse”.²⁹¹

iv. Pride as a paradigm passion

Hume chooses to give the passion *pride* as an example of his theory’s legitimacy. It’s a convenient test case for him but, as he admits, it has its problems. He starts by arguing that there is an obvious distinction between the *object of a passion and the cause*. Much rides on the success of this dubious ‘object/cause’ distinction. The cause of a particular passion is what excited the emotion. The object is what the mind directs its view to when emotion is excited. As he sees it, in pride, the object of the passion is the *self*, while the cause is some excellence or fault.²⁹²

This would seem to mean the *physical explanation* for pride is whatever caused the sensation that excited the passion-organ, in this case noticing an admirable trait. This is necessary but not sufficient to create a passion. The remaining ingredient is that *your self* is governed by this admirable trait; if we are going to be proud of something, it must in some way belong to us. The cause of pride can only be something “on which we value ourselves”.²⁹³ Since our self is the object of the passion, it must be related to the cause in some manner.²⁹⁴

Hume takes this identification-relation for granted and focuses on how there is a relation of impressions or sentiments²⁹⁵ when pride is felt that exhibits the double

²⁹¹ Hume, 135.

²⁹² Hume, 132.

²⁹³ As we’ll see, this can include another person or persons (Hume, 136-137).

²⁹⁴ Hume, 137.

²⁹⁵ It is difficult to know just what he means by ‘sentiment’. Just below on the same page he seems to equate it with feeling, which one would assume is the physical or

impulse or relation described above. As pride is an “agreeable feeling or sentiment” it has an agreeable sensation related to it.²⁹⁶ If he can show the circumstance that causes²⁹⁷ the passion first produces a sentiment similar to the passion, and there is an easy transition from one to another, he can better claim to have made his point.²⁹⁸

So, he says, that is why when we love someone who is related²⁹⁹ to us we will have a “species of pride” excited by their accomplishments and possessions.³⁰⁰ Relatedly, when we love someone for their accomplishments, these accomplishments “excite a pleasant sensation related to love”.³⁰¹

This pleasant sensation in us upon noting the person’s accomplishments has a connection with the person. If the person is also related to us, there is the following connection: from good sensation → the person → being your relative → you. Thus the “union of ideas” unites the sentiments (feelings) of pleasure at your successful relative and pride in yourself.³⁰² What’s more, the transition from him to us is *natural* and *easy*;

physiological feeling our nerves pick up. But in the same sentence he then says that *because* the feeling of pride is agreeable, it has an agreeable *sensation* to it. *This would have to be the physical or physiological feeling – but then what is a ‘feeling’?*

²⁹⁶ Hume, 137. He then claims that if it can be shown that every object that produces pride has a separate pleasure, the only explanation would be the double-relation of ideas and sentiments; it would be “incontestable” (Hume, 137-8) Nothing else could explain the variety except that in each individual’s particular experiences some set of ideas and sentiments flow from the experience of some particular object, causing a particular pleasure. They combine uniquely to create pride (138).

²⁹⁷ He should not be using ‘causes’ here because he cannot mean the physical cause but the mental events that determine the object. He should say the circumstances which ‘give rise to’ it if he wants to be consistent. Or perhaps he is unconsciously aware of his own problem here.

²⁹⁸ Hume, 137.

²⁹⁹ By family or friendship.

³⁰⁰ Hume, 165.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Hume, 163.

“the sentiments excited are agreeable and consequently related to pride”.³⁰³ We are “naturally vain of the good qualities...of those related to us”.³⁰⁴

This exercise brings to the forefront the centrality of the theory of double relations to Hume’s theory of the emotions.³⁰⁵ His psychology of perception should account for the passions and if he is right, should make the case that reason and ideas could not ever cause action as well as ground sentimentalism. As Hume clearly states in the *Treatise*,

“reason cannot move to action, as passion can, and since moral judgment is a motive to action it cannot be an expression of reason” (232).

and the related thought,

“moral distinctions are not derived from reason but are derived from a moral sense” (321)

In the end, he thinks, it should not be surprising that the “transition of the imagination” has such a large effect on the passions since “the idea of one thing being associated with another” with the imagination making an easy transition between them” is the only connection we ever know between two things.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ Hume, 164.

³⁰⁴ Hume argues that when you reverse the order and move from pride to love, the same easy transition does not follow; pride does not lead to love (164). This is a bit misleading. He should not say that simply ‘reversing the order’ shows this because his example also switches the ‘havers’ of the passion. He doesn’t mean that you don’t go from being proud of someone to loving them or from loving them to being proud of them. What he means is that if you love S because you admire their accomplishments and so are also proud of those accomplishments, it does not follow that S, being proud of her accomplishments will love you for being proud of him (164).

The explanation in terms of the associationist theory is that in the first case we are going from remoter objects to proximate ones (164), or from objects related to us in some way to ourselves, which is easier for the imagination to do.

³⁰⁵ Hume, 163.

³⁰⁶ Hume, 168. Also see his “traveling with a stranger” example for illustration (169).

v. Calm and violent passions

Finally, we come to Hume's version of the distinction between calm and violent passions.³⁰⁷ In the context of the above discussion on recognition, Hume seems to be saying that someone who is reacting emotionally based on recognition in the present situation of multiple, perhaps conflicting, memories or of a series of events with historically inconsistent outcomes is made to feel multiple confused passions and a very passionate response.³⁰⁸ Whereas someone looking at a situation in a more goal directed way might be able to eliminate many possible 'views' and so have a more directed but less intense response.

When something is put before the "quick and agile imagination", which allows many views of it, the imagination goes back and forth quickly causing a 'blur' which can be thought of in terms of strumming all the strings of a guitar at once. When we realize that this allows many "slow and difficult to control" passions to 'form' the emotion we get the result that "one two or more passions will always be mixed and confused".³⁰⁹

³⁰⁷ Recall that in the end reason itself is a calm passion!

³⁰⁸ E.g. the explosive barking of an angry or scared dog or the effusive tail wagging excitement of a dog content to see its master.

³⁰⁹ Hume, 124. The (accepted) probability of good or bad either grief or joy will "dominate the composition" and their intermingling will produce hope and fear (124-125). And As a result, the strongest passions come when the probability of any particular outcome is even because "the mind has then the least foundation to rest upon (125-126)."

F. Criticisms of the Theory of Perception and Thought

To criticize Hume for misrepresenting reason and its role in the emotions lends itself to an obvious counter charge: I, or any theory I'd care to offer that contradicts him, must be rationalist. The charge is facile and false. It is clear that experience is a necessary precondition for thought. It is clear to me and as I argued earlier, it is a basic premise of the Plato-Aristotle-Lucretius approach to the emotions.

Since the necessity of phenomenal experience for thought is not what is at issue, the truth of some form of empiricism is not either. What is at issue is whether Hume gives good reason to think his theory of emotions is correct. The argument is that he does not and the incoherence of his claims about the nature of perception and thought are the reason. The fruit of all this is that the failure of his theory of emotions undermines his sentimentalist ethics.

i. Hume's method and standard

Generally, Hume's method is to reject any philosophy not founded on experimental results or empirical fact.³¹⁰ Hume's method for studying the mind is to study each of the functions that can be attributed to reason.³¹¹ The expected outcome is that once the basic principles that govern how the body works are described none of the

³¹⁰ Hume explicitly states that there will be no progress in ethics unless we ignore all arguments except those derived from experience (The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Winter 2007 Edition, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2007/entries/hume/>>.

³¹¹ That is the method announced in the Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals. Cf. David Hume, "Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals" in Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals, 3rd ed., eds. L.A. Selby-Bigge and P.H. Nidditch (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1777/1975/1995). 173-174.

functions attributed to reason suffice for moral judgment.³¹² This ought to sound familiar as it is basically Descartes' method as well.

Recall that his insistence on breaking problems into their smallest components led him to split the man into his smallest components, which were of course the mind and body, as dictated by his bedrock belief that body is mindless and vice versa. Similarly with Hume, because he is a strident reductionist empiricist, he "breaks down" the world according to that framework.

we must enquire seriously into the human understanding, and show, from an exact analysis of its powers and capacity, that it is by no means fitted for such remote and abstruse subjects (Enquiry, 12).

And in the introduction to the *Treatise*,

it is impossible for us to form any notion of [the mind's] powers and qualities otherwise than from careful and exact experiments, and the observation of particular effects, which result from different circumstances and situations [because] the only solid foundation for the science of human nature "must be laid on experience and observation (Treatise, xvi-xvii).

The body *qua agent in the world* is 'mindless'. Whatever 'reason' is it is not relevant to the actual living of an active body, so the functions attributable to reason will be broken out to reflect this.

But when it comes to describing the nature of the passions, He prefers to leave scientific accounts to "the sciences of anatomy and natural philosophy"³¹³ content to believe that "that there is a biological account of the principles of association and thereby a biological account of the passions".³¹⁴ And so he ends up offering just the type of arguments he recommends we ignore.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ *Treatise*, 327.

³¹⁴ Friesan, fn. 24.

Given all the *theoretical* and *methodological* problems with the Cartesian programme and that Hume trades on the tenets of that programme, he is on insufficient ground to make the aggressive claims he does. And he certainly knew it. It also means that by his own standards he – and we – should reject his theory until and unless there is an experimentally based biological account of the passions. He can't even *begin* his project of studying the functions attributable to reason without first having a biological account to either aid his understanding or to compare to a “cognitivist” account. What he can and does do is try to find an explanation *loosely based on experience and evidently* no more (or very little more) scientific knowledge than what was known by Cumberland.

ii. The distinction between ideas and impressions

Hume claims that ideas and impressions are perceptions and differ only but importantly in terms of vividness. But, as Noonan explains, he never tries to *explain* the similarities and differences between the two. Rather, he wants to ‘capture’ them with this “vocabulary” of vividness.³¹⁵ What he *stipulates* – it has no basis in any experimental results - is that there is *something* in common between, e.g. seeing a tree and picturing one in the mind; between sensory perceptions and the mental activity performed ‘on them’.

That there is a *phenomenological* difference between the two is clear. But the simplicity of Hume's encapsulation is a major error. Hume offers *no empirical evidence to make this distinction except for the bald assertions that 1. it is known to everyone and 2. that only an insane person could ever confuse impressions for ideas.* This is not empiricism, it's not

³¹⁵ Noonan, 34.

even an argument, and it is false.³¹⁶ For it to be true it *must* be true that thought and reasoning are unable to lead us to action. But the idea that they do lead us to action is *at least* as clear as the phenomenological difference between visually experiencing something and mentally picturing it. We have little reason if any to accept that willing, or loving, or hating is *feeling and not thinking*.³¹⁷

Hume's stipulated basic distinction between the two types of perceptions only results from Hume arguing in a circle; His insistence on the differences of immediacy or vividness between what we think and what we experience and his assertion that this distinction is of fundamental importance create the need for the categories of 'ideas' and 'impressions'.³¹⁸ But the justification for the *insistence* is that *perception is split up this way*. If we thought, for example, that sensory perception is not divorced from reasoning, then we'd have no reason to believe the fundamental distinction between ideas and impressions *or* to think that there is clearly a *vividness gap* that needs to be accounted for and that precludes the possibility of ideas motivating action. What we have is a fossilized error stemming from the Cartesian errors and Hume failing to meet his own standards for philosophical argumentation. We simply have no non ad hoc reason given to think that sensory perception and thinking are as he describes them, with thoughts being but vague copies of experiences.

³¹⁶ "Only a crazy person" – but regular people (not just the insane) sometimes hallucinate due to stress, e.g. panic attacks, drugs, etc. If you fail to explain the fact of this with your theory it is no good to say it's an outlier and move on. There is a physical explanation and its not going to come about on your theory! And as I stated before, it is beyond the pale to insist that a relived emotion cannot be and is never as strong as the first experience.

³¹⁷ Examples abound of "mind over matter", such as being able to ignore pain even when measurements of galvanic skin response shows one is "in pain".

³¹⁸ For a longer discussion of the distinction see the Appendix on Hume, section A.

A charitable reading suggests Hume was honestly beginning from the personal phenomenal experience of feelings dominating his waking life and of the “cool” “removed” function of the understanding (mind) being in a sense artificial, forced, and very much unlike the rest of life as a conscious sensible agent. It is not hard to be sympathetic to this *long held view*. When coupled with a theoretical commitment to proving empiricism it is a short step to insisting on distinguishing perception as being either feeling or the thoughts that are created by feeling, evincing that all mental activity is dependent on experience. While understandable, it is beneath Hume’s standard for good theorizing.

iii. Reflection’s role in distinguishing the two

Even if Hume’s distinction had better support, a closer look at the definition of ‘impression’ shows a fundamental problem

By the term *impression*, then, I mean all our more lively perceptions, when we hear, or see, or feel, or love, or hate, or desire, or will...ideas...are the less lively perceptions, of which we are conscious, when we reflect on any of those sensations.

This quote indicates that Hume believes ideas, the less vivid perceptions, are arrived at - perhaps ‘created’ - when we *reflect* on our sensations. The point being the two types of impressions have quite different mental processes and powers involved in their production. Even if they have the same ‘efficient’ cause in that all perception depends on experience, the more vivid perceptions come from a passive acceptance of the sensory input registering on our senses while the less vivid ones come from the ‘machinery’ of the brain performing transactions with this ‘coin’; the two types of perceptions stem from different types of mental events.

The causes of ideas and impressions are very different types of thing. So they look and feel different to us; we – in a very real sense – have *different sensations involved in the two types of perceptions*. Normally, if you are comparing two things and you say they have disparate causes, different sets of qualities such that experiencing one feels different than experiencing the other, and only one is ever the source of belief, you would be *strongly* inclined to think that you were talking about *different types of things altogether*, not two of ‘the same coin’ differing only in their location on a “spectrum” of vivacity, with ideas causally derivative of impressions.³¹⁹

The point is, there is a serious difference that *really matters* to Hume’s conclusions, built into his theory that he does not pick up; it is a major difference in *kind* to say that one thing is an immediate sensation like any animal has all the time and that the other thing is the result of “reflection”, or “transacting” with our sensations – of

³¹⁹ Spectrum can be taken as it is used in common parlance, a scale where things are classified between extreme or opposite points, or analogous to the scientific use where it means a band of colors produced by separating the components of light by their different degrees of refraction according to wavelength. In either case Hume’s theory doesn’t work.

The scientific usage doesn’t work because the spectrum is composed in light. It is all light, all in light. It’s simply a matter of how light passes through an object and is refracted that reveals to us the components of light. But they all have the same cause and equal ‘standing’. In Hume’s theory, ideas are causally dependent on and derivative of impressions.

The common usage is closer to the point Hume wants to make, but is too simple for what he actually needs. He can’t really mean that ideas and impressions are in any real sense theoretically or actually ‘extremes’ or ‘opposed’. If he does mean that, he has that much more work to do to explain empiricism’s truth, which is the point of the exercise. What Hume really means is that they are on a *scale* such as ‘the relative size or extent’ of something or ‘a range of values forming a standard system for measuring or grading something’ (The Oxford American Dictionary, s.v. “scale”).

“turning the mind on itself”.³²⁰ When Hume tries to explain the absolutely fundamental concept of *reflection*, he simply misses the mark.³²¹

J. Failure of the Theory of the Passions

I will detail four failures in Hume’s theory of the passions, all of which are traceable to the fundamental assumption that perception is purely passive and anything that seems active or engaged about it, what most would call the working of an active reasoning mind, is really the consequence of programming. The first failure is that Hume does not show that the cause of ‘emotion’ is analogous to the cause of pleasure in the body. The other three failures are all exposed when we consider Hume’s analysis of anger: 1) anger can clearly be seen not to fit the analysis of particular passions exemplified by Hume’s discussion of pride; 2) the distinction between the object and the cause of a passion is ad hoc and incoherent; 3) Hume’s explanation that beliefs are just vivid ideas is inconsistent with prior claims about ideas vs. impressions.

Hume thought it was possible to substitute for reason a naturally occurring, mechanized physical process (as with the automata of Galileo being made to move ‘at will’ or ‘on its own’ by means of cleverly coiled strings that when unwound made the machine move about in particular, but seemingly novel, ways) that does everything reason is typically thought to do, but without having to actually postulate any thing so tainted with ethereality. If he could do so, there could not be any mental activity such as judgment or foresight; no analysis of any kind *that creates or in any way causes the passions*.

³²⁰ Ainslie, Donald Ainslie, (2001) “Hume’s Reflections on the Identity and Simplicity of Mind”, Philosophy and Phenomenological Research, 62, No. 3, (2001): 557-578.

³²¹See the Appendix on Hume, section B for a longer discussion of this topic.

This methodological move caused Hume, like the other members of the Cartesian programme before him, to make and use a distinction between calm and violent passions to fill this role. However insightful it be to distinguish between these types, the fundamental errors in the Cartesian programme undermine Hume's version and so too his famous claim regarding the enslavement of reason to the passions. This is evidenced by showing any perception at all is more than simple passive recognition. I'll show that that anger fundamentally exhibits reason: Hume's impressions in general and in particular emotions, which he takes to be a kind of impressions, have content that includes and needs interpretation, making Hume's explanation of what they are and how they come to be impossible. And though Hume wants to make it so that they exhibit interpretation *his attempt to do so is an instance of the second Cartesian error.*

i. The causes of emotion and bodily pleasure

Hume makes the uncontroversial claim that the causes of pleasure and pain in the body are purely physiological, 'non-mental' things such as the experience of more or less heat.³²² And this explains why we call warmth good and excessive heat bad. He then says that the causes of emotion are closely analogous to this process. But the examples he gives to buttress this are unconvincing.

Hume says punishing an adversary or getting revenge is good and the sickness of a friend, because it affects friendship, is bad.³²³ But whereas it could be argued that even flora distinguish between good and bad heat and certainly all manner of creatures do, it seems obvious that concepts such as 'adversary', 'revenge' and 'friend' are things that require more than simple consciousness to experience or understand.

³²² Cf. for example "On the Origin of Ideas".

³²³ Hume, 121.

It seems beyond consideration that Hume or anyone else could really think that such concepts are effectively the equivalent of heat. It is likely safe to assume Hume sees the difference in them, that reason – in some strong sense – is required to have the experience of friendship or revenge, to have their accompanying physiological experiences, and to behave appropriately. The problem, I have said, is that he, like all who commit the Cartesian errors, is wedded to the strategy of eliminating ‘efficacious reason’ as a concept relevant to morality and replacing it with a hard wired mechanism that can produce the exact same ‘results’.

ii. Anger, et cetera

The passion of *anger* does not and cannot fit the analysis of individual passions Hume’s theory provides, illustrated by the analysis of pride. There are three reasons, named above, why anger is mischaracterized by the theory. I will examine them and conclude Hume’s theory fails to properly explain anger and thus is fundamentally wrong about the nature of the passions.

I’ve maintained that all the passions, certainly at least anger, exhibit a feedback loop running from the interpreted perception of highly complex social situations to often but not always interpreted perception of internal physiological states and feelings based on them. This loop leads to decisions or judgments about the situations and internal states, which in turn can change the perceptions and feelings. It is thus that passions drive *reasoned* action.³²⁴

Hume’s account of the passions cannot accept any of this. So it is that his account of anger goes against common sense and experience readily available to him and

³²⁴ Or alternately, that passions exhibit reason and drive action.

therefore exhibits conflicting definitions of anger, an incoherent, implied suggestion of multiple levels of anger, a flawed distinction between the object and cause of anger and the related absurd explanation that beliefs are no more than particularly and inexplicably vivid ideas.

For the sake of clarity and brevity I left out an important concept in the discussion of the passion pride; pure versus impure emotions. Pride is an example of a pure emotion of the soul; it is complete in itself and doesn't *necessarily* produce some further passion or desire in us.³²⁵ In fact, pride lacks desire and doesn't immediately (directly) excite action.

In contrast consider the passions of *hatred* and *anger*. Hatred, is *not* "complete within itself", it "carries the mind to something farther" that the "emotion which [it] produces [sic].³²⁶ Hatred is always conjoined with, always produces *anger*, "a desire of the misery of the person hated and an aversion to his happiness" or the "appetite which attends hatred".³²⁷ Similarly, anger arises from "hate...plus aversion" ³²⁸ or alternately, "has its root in temper".³²⁹ It arises "when our happiness or misery have any dependence on the happiness or misery of another person, without any farther relation"³³⁰ The process is original to our natural constitution and un-analyzable.

³²⁵ Hume, 159.

³²⁶ Hume, 159. It seems that passions can create emotion in addition to the normal case of emotion creating a particular passion.

³²⁷ Treatise, 430.

³²⁸ From Friesan. The "temper" quote comes from "On Suicide"

³²⁹ David Hume, "On Suicide", in "Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion: The Posthumous Essays of the Immortality of the Soul and of Suicide", ed. Richard H. Popkin (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1998), 97.

³³⁰ Treatise, 430-1.

But Hume describes anger quite differently on other occasions. In *On Suicide* he says that “the soundest reason is *scarce ever* able to fully correct” it.³³¹ And as Adam Potkay³³² points out, Hume lauds anger in that he readily recognizes that not getting angry certain situations is evidence of “weakness and imbecility”.³³³ Anger is valuable because it is “the correct way of *evaluating* a situation”, it “*recognizes* the importance of communal ties that bind us all, such as when we are angered by the maltreatment of a friend.”³³⁴

Is the account of anger as reducible to nothing more than a desire or aversion that comes out of hatred congruent with the highly cognitive, social account?³³⁵ To the extent that there *is* a cognitive account here it is held in Hume’s use of the terms ‘evaluate’ and ‘recognize’. Hume gives us a way to interpret his meaning here in *On the Origin of Ideas*, distinguishing between two types of *animal* actions; those that are the result of ordinary, unsophisticated capacities and those that display “extraordinary instances of sagacity”.

Consider the difference between a dog who shuns strangers and caresses its master, and a bird building a nest and incubating eggs until they hatch. Hume says the dog does little more than avoid what experiences has taught it brings pain and seeking what experience has taught gives pleasure. The bird, on the other hand, carefully chooses a location and materials and cautiously sits on its eggs “for a due time and in a suitable season”. This is an example of sagacity.

³³¹ *On Suicide*, 97.

³³² Adam Potkay, *The Passion for Happiness*, (Ithica, NY: Cornell UP, 2000.)

³³³ Potkay, 105.

³³⁴ Potkay, 105.

³³⁵ Hatred itself is a rather abstract concept as normally understood, but Hume seems to take it, and pride, as unremarkable and not distinctly human.

This example is preposterous but the point seems to be that animals can exhibit judgment in as broad a range and largely as impressively as humans. The dog's actions are caused by memories similar enough to the impressions immediately present to the senses; having previously observed a series of events makes the dog 'see' that a similar conclusion will follow, and "as you vary this experience, he varies his reasoning". The bird apparently makes much more fine-grained judgments about specific matters, discoveries it has made by its discernment, not simple pattern awareness.

Now clearly these examples are terrible, at least for the reasons that 1) they are not as of emotions 2) it is question-begging and absurd to think of birds nesting as exhibiting the ability to make inferences. But they do tell us about the nature of reason as Hume sees it and perhaps based on what we've learned, we can see how passions must come out of that. In the case of being angry or proud what sort of recognition is involved? Is some more complicated type of thinking than pattern recognition or basic problem solving involved? Or is all *reasoning* simple enough that it can be so mechanical the best of it can be 'seen' in the behavior birds? And what role is 'reason' playing in leading to action? Just the 'laying down' of the best way to achieve ends?

Hume values anger because it *recognizes* the importance of communal ties such as when we are angered by the abuse of a friend. Recognition of the intricate particulars of a relationship and the complex social implications in slight or humiliation certainly seem beyond that exhibited by the dog. It has some 'understanding' of 'master' and 'social standing' wired into it as a legacy of being a pack animal. So it is not too hard to imagine it has some 'conception' of anger, but it would have to be quite simple, such as learning that taking the food of the dominant animal in the group will lead to massive retaliation.

This is quite unlike the complicated anger scenarios we might dream up for a human. So anger as valued by Hume would have to share the characteristics of the bird's ingenuity.

Whether or not it surpasses the bird's level of judgment will be taken up below. But we are also told that anger is nothing but an *appetite* that attends hatred, a desire for misery of the hated person. Assuming hating is a basic emotion, even a dog would seem capable of it and so would have the ability to *be angry*. This seems to suggest that Hume can accept two levels of anger, one an immediate, un-analyzable reaction and one stemming from a higher degree of recognition.

Whether and to what extent Hume's theory shows that an imperfect passion can have multiple levels is the issue. When we consider his penchant for reductionism and his sentimentalism it is not hard to think the discussion of anger as the recognition of social relations is no more than some natural processes he is forced to posit, the province of some suitable mechanism, largely unrelated to higher cognition. In fact, Hume cannot and does not literally accept an anger, or angry action that "stems from" discernment. The anger feeling comes first, delimiting the end goal and so the actions possible, then whatever discernment is available may be used to fix upon the best route. Given what we 'know' about dogs and birds, we have to say that whatever goals and actions are delimited, they are done so *mechanically*.

Consider once again how Hume establishes the association of ideas and impressions. Though memory and imagination can mimic the sensory perception of being burned, such ideas could never exhibit the force of the original. So someone in a fit of anger is quite differently motivated to act than someone who is *thinking of anger*. And you can never mistake the real "disorders and agitations" of anger for what happens when we *think of being angry*. There is little here to suggest that Hume's theory really has

any room for any mental functioning doing more than what is required for a bird to nest and incubate.

Let's consider how on Hume's theory a creature could come to be angry, and act angrily about something such as being passed over for a promotion or that a store was out of a desired product. You get angry at the employer who doesn't appreciate the value you bring to the business because you, like any beast, are simply processing dull memories of previous very similar events that caused you pain, events which caused you pain because nature just so happened to constitute you so that you would feel great pain from just such things in a way that would cause you to react with hostility.

So described it is hard to see the *benefit* of having developed concepts such as 'productivity', 'desert', 'salary', 'promotion', 'economy' and many others. There is nothing around to recognize such abstruse concepts or why one would come to have such intense beliefs about the particulars of such situations. What would it look like? If only experience allows for inferences but inferences are impossible about unknown objects or experiences dissimilar to those experienced, it would seem impossible to explain.

iii. Beliefs as vivid ideas

In these accounts of action from memory and from experience Hume finds the core of what *belief* is. It comes from the influence of custom on the imagination; a belief is just a "vivid steady conception of an object", stronger than anything the imagination by itself could ever obtain, a "conception more intense than what attends mere fictions and arises from the customary conjunction of objects", an intensity that is wholly independent

of the will (V.II *Essay*).³³⁶ The intensity is only “excited by nature from the particular situations in which the mind is placed” and no deeper understanding of how or why is possible.

This explanation is inconsistent with prior claims about the difference between ideas and impressions. How does one pursue future pleasure of a certain kind? How would the possibility even arise? The motivation to do so must come from having had experiences (in general), studying one’s situation now and imagining the result of taking different courses of action, and imagining how you’d feel on completing them.³³⁷ Is this process only and automatically naturally determined by the way we are constituted? Or is there some other explanation, such as a feedback loop? Empirical evidence would help decide but Hume provides none.

Belief can motivate action, can’t it? It is certainly true on this theory that desires arise from good considered simply. But Hume also wants it to be that *doubtful* objects can produce “the passions of desire or aversion”.³³⁸ That is, some outcomes that are in doubt can produce a desire (or passion) for that outcome or object: when the mind *decides* it likely will or will not happen, it “feels a brief impression of joy or sorrow”.³³⁹ But where is the explanation of how the feeling in the passion-organ ‘gets’ that something is “likely” or “doubtful but dangerous”? Hume claims that in the same way

³³⁶ David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 126.

³³⁷ We are notoriously bad at this, overestimating pleasure and underestimating pain.

³³⁸ He’s made it clear that an evil object being very probable suffices for the experience of a passion – namely grief or joy. And if a good or evil is uncertain, fear or hope are the passions we’ll experience. generally, when contrary passions arise from totally disparate objects they “take place alternately” and the mind ends up in a “state of indifference” e.g. you find out you lost a lawsuit and then that your child is born healthy (Hume, 130) when the passions are about one situation that has good and bad they can destroy each other and leave the mind in tranquility (Hume, 130).

³³⁹ Treatise, 487.

that “the understanding can be divided between contrary views”, the heart is “in the same manner divided between opposite emotions”.³⁴⁰ This seems to make the emotions the heart’s parallel to the beliefs (views) of the understanding. The passions are in some very important way just like beliefs. But beliefs are ideas and passions are impressions. Given the strength of the implied connection, we have to question again the distinction between impressions and ideas.

It seems that he must make this move to allow beliefs to cause action without directly contradicting himself; the vivacity of beliefs created by nature means he is not contradicting the thesis that reason and ideas can’t cause actions. Naturally, inexplicably strong feelings about certain ideas is perhaps the mechanism that can execute the processes needed to get the results of ‘reason’. This has about as much explanatory power as saying ‘god did it’ or ‘it’s the soul’ and the soul is utterly mysterious to us.

iv. Object and cause of a passion

Perhaps the most execrable error Hume makes is based on the claim that there is an obvious distinction between the object of the passion and the cause, a claim intimately attached to his impression/idea distinction. Consider pride and hate: in both the cause is some excellence or fault, but in pride the object is the self, while in hate the object is some other person.³⁴¹ Simply put, the idea that the physical cause is separate from the mental aspect is question-begging. You *cannot* have a passion without an object, as Hume puts it, they “raise” a particular passion. So why deny it status as a

³⁴⁰ Hume, 124.

³⁴¹ Hume, 132-133. Which he of course effectively denies the existence of. Given Hume’s theory of the *self* as a bundle of perceptions, one would expect the *real* object of the passions would be the quality of circumstance and that its attachment to “you” would be a given.

“cause”? For the simple reason that an object of a passion is a mental construct, effectively an *idea*. And surely ideas can't *cause physiological responses*.

This is quite the tortured way of looking at it. Given that the quality or circumstance in question, say physical beauty, for pride to be experienced instead of e.g. jealousy, the impassioned person must identify himself with the possessor of the quality. This is stronger than saying it is a condition *for* having an emotion – it is *constitutive*.³⁴²

K. The Undermining of Sentimentalism

Hume, like Hutcheson, believes “that moral distinctions are not derived from reason but from a moral sense...characterized by the pleasant feeling of approval and the unpleasant one of disapproval” (DHI, 231).

In the end, Hume is trying explain how the imagination *could be said* to perform the “generalizing function” that is normally ascribed to abstract reasoning by appeal to naturalistic, built in input-output mechanisms, inference from memory, and the working of spirits. This allows a person to identify all sorts of ‘mental objects’ such as beliefs and abstract concepts and complex emotions, even the moral character of things without ‘judgment’ as understood by those of us inclined to believe it is something that birds or dogs in fact cannot exhibit but that many humans can.³⁴³

This is the issue of reduction; that it is true that *everything* boils down to the physical sensation of pain vs. pleasure that we naturally feel to certain stimuli. The view may or may not be true, and since there are no non-physical souls in one sense it *is true*, but it misses the point. It is not the *proper level of description* and is *deceptive* as to the

³⁴² This is obvious if we want to accept that one can be proud in, e.g. their city or nation or a sports team.

³⁴³ DHI, 232-233.

reality we *live in*. And from a purely practical view, it cuts no ice. It is *not enough* information on which to accurately predict or mimic the ethical world and it convinces exactly none of those living in the day-to-day world permeated by serious moral questions.³⁴⁴ You are left with a philosophy of mind and of emotions that cannot answer any ethical questions, whose moral guidance comes down to “do what makes you feel good” and gives little reason to think you will have a shared understanding with anyone else of what that is.

³⁴⁴ Hume even claims to understand this point – but I see no reason to believe that.

PART 3: Where We Are

Chapter 6

6.1 The James-Lange Theory

A. Introduction

The James-Lange theory is widely thought to have been the first physiologically grounded theory of emotions, but as I've shown this is false. It may be considered the first theory in the modern science of psychology to be so grounded, but the concern for the physiology of emotions has been there since the beginning of the modern period and in fact is even discussed in Plato's Timaeus.

James was inspired to produce the theory because he believed that to have a truly scientific understanding of emotions required a central starting point, a first principle.³⁴⁵ And the principle would be that emotions are fundamentally physiological, not mental phenomena. Similarly, Lange argued that thinking of emotions in terms of mental entities was pointless.³⁴⁶

As with most of the theories we've seen, James-Lange attempts to make a strict distinction between standard, strong emotions and more "intellectual" emotions that are physiologically and feeling-wise weaker.³⁴⁷ And, just as the other visceral theories we looked at, this one fails as well.

The interest we have in James-Lange is in large part due to the need to answer its major challenge to a "mixed" account; it claims we should not assimilate "emotional

³⁴⁵ Scarantino, 30.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Scarantino, 31.

appraisal" with "intellectual evaluation", which is exemplified in deliberate judgment as we discussed in our review of Aristotle's theory.³⁴⁸ The theory supposes that immediate perception of some "exciting fact" is an immediate "process of appraisal", impenetrable to the system(s) that allow for intellectual evaluation and so can be performed by children and animals.³⁴⁹ I believe both these points to be mistaken.

The theory has been the object of so much discussion and criticism that there is no need to provide my own in depth analysis here. Instead I will outline the basic theory and point to its Cartesian and Humean lineage. I accept the underlying assumption that emotional responses can be immediate but I fundamentally reject the larger thesis. I see it as a 'scientific' version of Hume's own beliefs and the logical conclusion of a long line of visceral theories that developed out of Descartes' dualist but largely physiological account of the emotions. That is, the complete rejection of the mental in the emotions here is the logical outcome of continued devaluation of the mental as a scientific concept in general, dating at least from the time of Descartes.

B. The Theory

In "What is an Emotion"³⁵⁰ James lays out the theory that emotions are nothing but "the ordinary sensorial brain-processes...variously combined".³⁵¹ The standard emotions, those with strong obvious bodily disturbances, are "surprise, curiosity, rapture, fear, anger, lust, greed, and the like".³⁵² Though common sense tells us a mental

³⁴⁸ Scarantino, 32.

³⁴⁹ Scarantino, 33.

³⁵⁰ The locus classicus for the 'combined' theory is James, W. (1884). What is an Emotion? *Mind*, 9, 188-205. See also Lange's *The Emotions*. Baltimore, Williams & Wilkins, 1885/1922.

³⁵¹ James, 188.

³⁵² James, 189.

perception brings about the “mental affection called emotion”, which in turn give rise to their bodily expression, James argues rather that a direct perception of some fact leads immediately to bodily changes and our feeling of them “as they occur IS the emotion”

“the more rational statement is that we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble” (James, 190).

The main reason³⁵³ James is so convinced of this very strongly worded position has to do with a thought experiment. He twice states that if we try to think of what emotions would amount to if we didn't have the bodily states that follow from perception, perception would be “purely cognitive...pale, colourless, destitute of emotional warmth”.³⁵⁴ More to the point, it should be clear to anyone not a dualist that minus the bodily states following from perception there's simply nothing left over to call 'emotion', no “mind-stuff out of which emotion can be constituted”, just cold, neutral intellectual perception.³⁵⁵ So, *rage*, if it existed at all in the absence of its physiological disturbances would be “cold-blooded and dispassionate judicial sentence, confined entirely to the intellectual realm” and so with no causal efficacy.³⁵⁶

A second reason that reinforces the extent to which James really means that the feeling of the physiological change is the emotion is based on the nature of all nervous systems. They all are no more than “predispositions to react in particular ways” to particular stimuli. The olfactory nerves of hounds imply the existence of the scent of deer and the tendency to track the scent because of the “neural machinery” that bridges the “determinate impulses” of the organs of an organism and the world outside. In just the same way, the love between a man and woman, the strong aversion to snakes and

³⁵³ James says this is “the vital point of my whole theory” (193).

³⁵⁴ James, 190.

³⁵⁵ James, 193.

³⁵⁶ James, 194.

the fear of ledges and heights are examples of the same phenomenon: when we pick up on the particular objects in our world, they “fatally call forth” highly particularized reactions, often times directly against “the verdict of our deliberate reason concerning them”.³⁵⁷

The nervous system is a well-designed machine and our emotions are simply the workings of that machine. Suppose, the argument goes, that the cerebral cortex has special centers dedicated to the “perception of changes in each special sense-organ, in each portion of the skin, in each muscle, each joint, and each viscus, and to contain absolutely nothing else”.³⁵⁸ This would be sufficient to explain what happens in an emotion. An object is put before a sense organ and is thus “apperceived” by the appropriate center. Immediately, the signals for the relevant reflex(es) are sent down appropriate paths, thus properly affecting the muscles, skin and viscera. The changes to the body are “apperceived” by the appropriate cortex-centers, just like the original object was. Becoming conscious of the changes turns the original object from something merely apprehended to something emotionally felt. There is no need to supplement the theory with any ad hoc devices, the emotions, supposedly some “mental” phenomena are explained wholly by the “ordinary reflex circuit and the topical centers of the brain”.³⁵⁹ The “mind’ has been made irrelevant for the purposes of explaining the emotions. And as we’ve seen with Hume and will see again below, this also removes the mind from having any ethical import.

³⁵⁷ James, 190.

³⁵⁸ James, 203.

³⁵⁹ Ibid.

C. Taking up a Counterargument

The only objection to the theory we need to examine is proposed by James himself: Is it right to suppose that our nervous system is “connately adapted” to the emotional world of modern man? Isn’t it more likely that our innate adaptations are to the primitive world of hunter-gatherers? And so it can’t explain why we have emotional reactions to actions in violation of the social conventions of the modern world.³⁶⁰ That we do must be considered evidence that when we experience, e.g. shame, we *learned* to find the shameful events shameful and so the bodily changes *must* follow rather than precede the bodily changes. Why shouldn’t *this* be the standard and expected course of events?³⁶¹

His reply is simple; this reasoning misunderstands that evolutionary theory makes it easy to see that once some ability has been bred into a species, it often turns out to be useful in novel ways as the environment differs. In the case of humans, other humans are the crucial aspect of their environment and our awareness of other humans would certainly be expected to “unlock” novel emotional responses based upon systems originally intended to respond to other stimuli.³⁶²

But the important point to take away from this is what it tells us about how James thinks of perception. The perception of particular facts suffices to call forth the emotions, so it is that all women naturally and immediately are delighted by “handsome

³⁶⁰ James, 194.

³⁶¹ James, 195.

³⁶² Ibid.

little babies” and any child who is seeing an elephant for the first time would naturally and immediately be frightened upon seeing it charging towards him.³⁶³

He further explains that the action that elicits an emotion is insignificant, what matters is the perception of *intent* or *hostility*. The simple perception of an agent being motivated to act toward me in one way or another will provoke “as strong bodily convulsions in me...experiencing the treatment of an artificial society, as in any savage prisoner of war”.³⁶⁴ There is simply no need for “judgment” or any other kind of higher cognitive functioning in standard emotions.

This factors greatly in understanding how the theory distinguishes between the standard emotions and the “intellectual” ones. Even in the case of the “moral, intellectual and aesthetic feelings” we are mistaken if we think there is really anything beyond physiology. We are wrong if we insist that the pleasure we seem to automatically get from things such as beautiful music or painting, or even logical argumentation is “genuinely cerebral”. In fact, though it seems the “intellectual” emotions have a different “mode of production” than the standard emotions, there is little to back this up.³⁶⁵

In cases where we enjoy the cleverness of a mechanical design or the well structured piece of music we are doing something *altogether different* than having an emotion, we are making a “judgment of right”.³⁶⁶ This “cognitive act” is one thing, the ‘emotional flush’ is a different thing and it seems a stretch to think the two both belong under the heading “emotion”. In nearly all cases intellectual feeling does not exist

³⁶³ James, 191.

³⁶⁴ James, 196.

³⁶⁵ James, 201.

³⁶⁶ James, 201-202.

unaccompanied, “the bodily sounding-board is at work...far more than we usually suppose”.³⁶⁷

D. Implications for Ethics (and Aesthetics)

To make the point James invites us to think about the difference between how a trained critic and a philistine react to “rightness”, be it in action or artistic creation. Intellectual emotion as it exists in the expert’s mind is “dry...pale...absent of all glow”.³⁶⁸ Consider how a refined art lover reacts to a moving painting, coolly analyzing the representations of humans and attributing them to what intellectual or cognitive states the artist was trying to capture, judging whether it was done “right”.³⁶⁹ On the other hand, the uneducated sees the same painting and is overcome by sentiment. Two things could hardly be more different and the difference between the two is that the “bodily sounding-board” is active in the standard but not the intellectual “emotion”.³⁷⁰ Simply put, cognition and emotion are *parted* and antagonistic. Seeing the beauty in something or the goodness of an act is a matter of the gut for all but the critic or – perhaps – the moral philosopher. That is, in a word, sentimentalism. The James-Lange theory must recommend sentimentalism in ethics. No surprise considering its pedigree in Hume and his predecessors.

³⁶⁷ James, 202.

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ James, 203.

³⁷⁰ James, 202.

6.2 An Overview of Contemporary Visceral Theories

A. Introduction

Generally speaking, it is safe to say that by virtue of bringing physiology to the forefront of research in scientific psychology the James-Lange theory has been the motivation behind nearly all theories of emotion in the 20th century.³⁷¹ K.T. Strongman's³⁷² highly regarded textbook on the psychology of emotions details 150 different theories so it is clearly impossible, even if it were advisable, to give even a serious overview of the different possible positions formulated in response to James-Lange. Instead I will give what I take to be the driving force behind the two major lines of thought. As we are more interested in having a very broad understanding of the main concerns of the two paths, it will be heuristically beneficially to refer to a handful of theorists on each side, to the extent they help highlight the main concerns.

B. Visceral Theories

Visceral theories after James that are still actively pursued today include Neo-Jamesian theories such as that of Jesse Prinz, affect-program theories such as that of Paul Griffiths and neurophysiological theories such as that of Jaak Panksepp. In general they try to solve or otherwise eliminate complaints with the James-Lange approach such as that it appears impossible to differentiate emotions just in terms of autonomic arousal³⁷³,

³⁷¹ Scarantino notes that "Put simply, "much of 20th century emotion theory has been focused on trying to show in how many ways not contemplated by James 'we' can conceive of an emotion" (Scarantino 145).

³⁷² Strongman, K.T. The Psychology of Emotion (5th ed.) Guildford, England, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 2003. In personal correspondence Strongman has informed me that he does not have another reference to this claim, but nor does he reject it.

³⁷³ Scarantino, 150.

that emotions without physiological components are not inconceivable and so it is too strong to say that emotions are purely physiological³⁷⁴, which undercuts the main argument for physiology as the elixir that would repair scientific psychology moving forward.

Strongman identifies three major flaw with all visceral accounts; 1) they haven't been able to state conclusively whether general physiological arousal, or the specific actions of the limbic system, or the peripheral psychophysical response is the emotion itself, "or dependent measures or something else or are they events that lead to other types of change that might be regarded as the emotion" (Strongman 70) because 2) they lack a straightforward way to distinguish emotion and non-emotion states (71) and 3) even though almost all visceral theories since James-Lange try to some degree to have a place for cognition, they generally struggle to say much about "appraisal and consciousness...socio-cultural matters...possible unconscious causes...anything interpersonal (even though it is obvious that emotions, however conceived, occur mainly in interpersonal contexts)".³⁷⁵

i. Prinz

According to Scarantino, Jesse Prinz's 'embodied appraisal theory' aims to keep the core plank of the James-Lange theory, that emotions are physiological changes but address the complaint that it is critically flawed for not having any account of the "aboutness" or intentionality of emotions.³⁷⁶ Prinz's theory is that all sorts of bodily changes should count as "physiological" changes and with that in mind we can be

³⁷⁴ Scarantino, 144-145.

³⁷⁵ Strongman, 71.

³⁷⁶ Scarantino, 33.

confident in claiming that emotions really are perceptions of physiological changes, they are “necessary and sufficient for emotion”.³⁷⁷

The major advancement, however, is that in Prinz’s theory, perceptions appraise and so can account for “aboutness” in emotions.³⁷⁸ I certainly applaud this move but it is not without its difficulties. Basically, emotions represent particular circumstances due to their being created by natural selection or learning to do so - and in this sense appraise whatever it is they are reliably caused by.³⁷⁹ Put more fully, the point is that as James is basically right, but with the important addition that bodily changes are “reliably caused by the instantiation of core relational themes” such that these themes “are what the bodily changes represent”. You can appraise simply by “registering bodily changes”. Whereas James would say fear is “merely the perception of a particular suite of bodily changes” Prinz has it that it is a “perception of a suite of bodily changes set up to be set off by danger”.³⁸⁰

But as cognitivists are quick to point out, there are counterexamples of emotions, which really do not seem to involve bodily changes at all because they are unconscious (e.g., guilt or unconscious fear of failure).³⁸¹

³⁷⁷ Scarantino, 143.

³⁷⁸ Scarantino, 151.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Ibid. Scarantino argues that James has a very conservative definition of what counts as a “bodily change” and uses it to ridicule neo-Jamesian theories. He wants to say that even though James speaks about crying, striking and trembling as bodily manifestations, this is not what he really means (Scarantino 34). Rather, it makes sense that we limit bodily change to “physiological responses of the autonomic variety, namely changes governed by the autonomic nervous system” (Scarantino 34).

³⁸¹ Scarantino, 151-152.

But in the end, I think the major problem for Prinz is that he admires and follows Descartes' "method" so faithfully he gives cognition/judgment the contemporary equivalent of the job Descartes' ended up giving to the soul.

ii. Panksepp

In Strongman's view, Panksepp's theory of the emotions is the best overall visceral theory, and it does have obvious benefits.³⁸² But, he says, it has little to say regarding the nature of appraisals or the role of consciousness in the having of emotions.³⁸³ The essence of Panksepp's theory is that there are four emotion-mediating circuits that pass between the midbrain, limbic system and basal ganglia. "They are labeled according to the extremes of emotion experience they supposedly mediate in humans - expectancy, fear, rage, panic".³⁸⁴ Rage, for example, elicits angry, emotional displays and invigorates irritable or (being) restrained behavior.³⁸⁵ The limited number of circuits causes no problem in explaining the large number of emotions humans experience because the combination of social learning with the mixture of the basic circuits in multiple ways can account for the variety

He further argues the brain can be considered in three ways: 1) "as a generalized arousal state that promotes individual emotion through social learning" or 2) "a system of hardwired representations for every emotional nuance or 3) "a middle course with classes of behavior going together, the basic control of each being the common circuits", which are "genetically based but modulated by experience, perceptions and

³⁸² Strongman, 59, 297.

³⁸³ Strongman, 70-71.

³⁸⁴ Strongman, 60.

³⁸⁵ Strongman, 60.

homeostasis” resulting in many “specific behavioral expressions”. Still, this analysis hits on the deep problems I’ve discussed and is certainly a blueprint worthy of copying.

6.3 A Very Short Synopsis of Contemporary Cognitivism

Generally speaking, the driving intuition behind cognitivist theories is that *judgments*, specifically the kind that allow you to care for or about, or to be attached to a thing, are necessary and sufficient for emotion.³⁸⁶ So, for example, anger is the judgment you have been wronged and “fear is the judgment that something dangerous is at hand, sadness is the judgment that a loss has been suffered.”³⁸⁷

The basic argument is that we really can *conceive* of a mind with no body having emotional reactions to things such as the death of a loved one and that, in fact, some emotions, such as guilt, have no physiological component. As Nussbaum³⁸⁸ puts the point,

Since we are talking about living sentient beings, and since having some feelings of some type is probably a necessary condition of waking mental life for any sentient being, we could assert that any instance of emotion, given that it is a part of waking life of a sentient being, has as its necessary condition the presence of some feeling or other. But we don't have any clear reason to say that these things are parts of the grief itself. We do not seem to have said any more than that a pumping heart is a necessary condition of any episode of emotion; but we would not be inclined to say that a pumping heart is a constituent part of my grief

Unfortunately for cognitivists, empirical evidence and even personal introspection make it hard to accept that emotions are *mere* judgments.³⁸⁹ I personally find little appeal in considering that “disembodied” minds could have emotions, even if it is true that some emotions have no physiological concomitants. And I reject flat-out that the body doesn't have its share of information to give cognition and vice-versa. That is, cognitivism rejects

³⁸⁶ Scarantino, 143, 146.

³⁸⁷ Scarantino, 152.

³⁸⁸ Nussbaum, Martha C. Nussbaum, Upheavals of Thought, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge UP, 2003), 57.

³⁸⁹ Scarantino, 152.

duplex communication as a fact and so physiological messages as important components of emotion for no good reason. I see no reason for cognitively-inclined thinkers to shirk the mounds of evidence regarding the physiological aspect of mental life in general and so of the emotions. And we've already seen in Stoicism and Epicureanism that such an approach leads to nonsensical conclusions in ethics. In chapter 6 I will briefly sketch how the P-A-L account allows for the benefits of cognitive accounts while giving "full rights" to physiological facts.

6.4 Criticisms of Both Programs

As we can see, the cognitivist and Neo-Jamesian lines of thought have definitions of emotion that are mutually exclusive. So at best only one can be correct. But in fact, it is hard to see that either is. As Scarantino points out, there two good reasons for saying you have the correct definition of something are: 1) that your definition is *fruitful*, it “captures what deserves to be called x for the purposes of a theory T, (e.g. neuroscience, biology, experimental psychology, clinical psychology, social theory, etc)” and 2) your definition is perfectly compatible with ordinary language usage, it “captures all and only what competent speakers can rightfully call an emotion in ordinary language”.³⁹⁰ Scarantino argues convincingly that in both cognitivism and visceral theories (Prinz’s, at least) the aim is to prove ordinary language compatibility but to insist that this corresponds to what is fruitful for theoretical purposes.³⁹¹ Given that both paths are generally committed to folk-psychological talk this is sensible to say and would indeed be very fruitful for philosophy of mind and psychological research purposes.

Unfortunately, both approaches are *maddeningly* simplistic, efforts such as Prinz’s’ and Panksepp notwithstanding. It simply makes *no sense* to insist that *either* the cognitive *or* the physiological changes are the “proper vehicle for further study”, the guiding principle for serious research on the emotions. I’m particularly adamant about the weakness of the “either/or” thinking for the purposes of ethical research involving the emotions, but I think it clear enough by now that this sort of reductivism is simply bad philosophy.

³⁹⁰ Scarantino, 143.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

A related criticism, from Scarantino, is that both approaches *dramatically* “liberalize what is meant by respectively judgment and by perception of bodily changes”.³⁹² That is, both research paths make *nakedly ad hoc* changes to the definitions of these concepts. In addition many researchers take it upon themselves to tailor to their needs canonical lists of what emotions should count as emotions.

As Scarantino explains, there has been a generally accepted ‘conservative’ understanding of judgment going back to the Aristotelian and Stoic conception of judgment as a “mental operation of assent or endorsement with respect to some propositional object P” and has led to the more contemporary narrow definition of judgment as a linguistic, reflective ability that requires possession of concepts about P along with the ability to manipulate those concepts as situations demand.³⁹³ There is also a generally accepted conservative treatment of what the perception of bodily changes is, “conscious perceptual experience of autonomic changes”.³⁹⁴

That these are the “traditional” or “conservative” conceptions of judgment and the perception of bodily changes is in itself not that important, particularly if they are not well founded. It is probably true that the definitions are useful, but it is far from clear that they deserve to stand. For instance, it’s easy enough to pick at the conservative definition of perception of bodily changes for the vagueness of the term “conscious” and the contemporary account of judgment seems far more restrictive than the Aristotelian account it may be said to stem from, an account that certainly doesn’t have to be

³⁹² Scarantino, 153.

³⁹³ “The activity of judging that p is the paradigmatic expression of linguistic abilities, it is reflective, it is sensitive to the evidence that p, it requires possession of the conceptions deployed in p, it requires the ability to recombine such concept in the context of other propositional contents...” (Scarantino 153)

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

understood as saying that the assent or endorsement was made fully aware. Still, deviation from these accounts should be for some principled reason, such as those I just mentioned and not *simply* to account for a pesky counter-example to a favored theory. Scarantino presents a fairly compelling case that leading theorists in both contemporary camps do just that.³⁹⁵

A. Ad Hoc Moves Regarding Judgment

Scarantino identifies four ad hoc moves regarding judgment by cognitivists and I find three to be quite important in showing the difficulties cognitivists face and how the theory I outline in Chapter 4 is different. First, because it has been found that infants (and perhaps animals) have emotions but do not have the ability to ‘judge’ on the conservative definition, cognitivists argue that judgment need only mean the ability to “assent to propositional objects” and that even animals can do so.³⁹⁶ Second, though it has been typically assumed that judgments involve “higher cognitive abilities” it seems reasonable to say that basic “emotions can be unconscious and elicited through primitive appraisals”. So cognitivists now argue that “judgment’ can be “instantiated at low levels of cognitive complexity”.³⁹⁷ Third, when it is pointed out that judgments have been long understood to be no more than “ways to make up one’s mind” but that

³⁹⁵ In Chapter 7 I offer an alternate conception of judgment and a relatively liberal conception of what it means to be conscious of autonomic changes, but I will do so starting from a “pre-Cartesian-error” conception of the relation mind and body.

³⁹⁶ Scarantino, 154.

³⁹⁷ As when Robert Solomon says, “sometimes we judge unconsciously, without thinking or reflection” (154).

emotions obviously “sometimes involve physiological changes”, cognitivists say that “judgments comprise changes in the body”.³⁹⁸

B. Ad Hoc Moves Regarding Conscious Perception of Bodily Changes

Scarantino identifies two ad hoc moves by Neo-Jamesians regarding the conscious perception of bodily changes. First, though the James-Lange theory asserts that emotions are perceptions, it is clear to most that some emotions are unconscious and so Neo-Jamesians hold that “perceptions of bodily changes need not be conscious”.³⁹⁹ Second, as mentioned at least some “intellectual emotions” appear to lack autonomic bodily changes but James-Lange claimed that all emotions are nothing but these bodily changes. As such, Neo-Jamesians argue for a more inclusive definition, such as allowing for “neural counterparts of autonomic changes” or even changes such as “facial expression, an increase in heart rate, a secretion of hormones” should count. This appears not to be in accord with the fundamental principle of the James-Lange theory.⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁸ Scarantino, 154. As when Martha Nussbaum says, “I am conceiving of judging as dynamic not static...so why would such a dynamic faculty be unable to house, as well, the disorderly motions of grief?” And when Robert Solomon says “one can, and sometimes must, speak of bodily judgments” (154). I do agree with Solomon, but the question is whether he has a legitimate reason to think so and call himself a “cognitivist”.

³⁹⁹ Scarantino, 155.

⁴⁰⁰ Scarantino sees this liberalization of bodily changes to include ‘instrumental behaviors and expressions’ (156) is “in conflict with the basic tenets” of James-Lange, which was a “physiological theory of emotions” qua “autonomic bodily changes” (156-156).

C. Conclusion

Scarantino makes a compelling case that be it affect program theories, like that of Eckman which claims all emotions are basic emotions and are short-lived episodes reliably linked to particular facial expressions or social constructionist theories like that of Averill's which says all emotions are transitory social roles we interpret to be passions, the typical, pat responses are that the counterexamples don't count because they don't meet the theory's criteria, or change a key definition in the theory so that the counter-examples are subsumed.⁴⁰¹ If making ad hoc arguments such as these or those discussed above is not a virtue, and they are not honest adjustments based on solid data and in line with the spirit of the basic theory the intend to update, then it is likely that we have a fundamental problem.

The solution is neither building more and more complicated structures on these two supports, nor is it to simply give up hope of uniting a cognitive theory with neurophysiological and evolutionary theory insights. If they aren't accurately reflecting what's going on there is simply no benefit to saving the "Jamesian" baseline, which is little more than an update of the Cartesian physiological theory, or to insist on the Stoic theory's unprincipled anti-corporeality. Rather, we must accept that, as I've argued in great detail, there is a fundamental flaw that makes it that these ad hoc moves would have to be made by both cognitivist and visceral theorists. Since at least the time of Descartes there have been fundamental errors made in the way we think about how "the mental" relates to "the body". It is time to go back to the future to fix the problem and

⁴⁰¹ Scarantino, 162.

provide for the basis of a theory of the emotions that will be fruitful for ethical theorizing and in line with – or at least not contradicted by – current neurophysiology. What we need is a theory of emotion that makes a clear distinction between emotion and cognition yet can explain how they are intimately tied and feed off each other.

6.5 Current Neurophysiology

When one looks over of the mountains of literature recently produced in neurobiology and evolutionary biology regarding the physiological basis of the emotions, it is simple to note that the contemporary view holds that the amygdala is the central core of the emotions. As Simón⁴⁰² puts it,

without any doubt, the anatomical structure most clearly related to emotion is, from our current perspective, the amygdala (Simón 102).

So if we are going to have a philosophical theory of the emotions that is not contradicted by the evidence, we too must start by accepting this position. But the amygdala alone is not the whole story. The amygdala is considered to be a part of the larger “limbic system” and directly connected to the hippocampus, which puts it in a position to be something akin to a carburetor, a point I’ll elaborate on below.⁴⁰³ In my estimation the best way to present current thinking on the role of these and other physiological systems that are thought to be involved in emotion is by explaining the basics of the “polyvagal theory of emotion”, to which I now turn, which accounts for the above and as Porges⁴⁰⁴ explains, has the added benefit of clearly linking the autonomic nervous system with visceral feeling, emotional expression and learned social behavior.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰² V. Simón, “Emotional participation in decision making,” *Psychology in Spain*, 2, (1998): 100-107.

⁴⁰³ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁴ S.W. Porges, “The polyvagal theory: phylogenetic contributions to social behavior,” *Physiology & Behavior* 79, (1997): 503-513 ; “Emotion: An evolutionary by-product of the neural regulation of the autonomic nervous system”. *The Integrative Neurobiology of Affiliation*, eds. C.S. Carter et al., (NY: New York Academy of Sciences), 62-77.

⁴⁰⁵ Other useful sources on the topic include: Martin Peper et al., “Functional neuroimaging of emotional learning and autonomic reactions,” *Journal of Physiology – Paris*, 99, (2006): 342-354. And Quirk, G. J. & Beer, J.S., “Prefrontal involvement in the regulation of emotion: convergence of rat and human studies.” *Current Opinion in Neurobiology*, 16, (2006): 723-727.

Simply put the polyvagal theory says that you cannot limit the emotions to being no more than the visceral feelings and so assert that the body affects the conscious brain but that there is no feedback. In fact, there is rapid, continual duplex communication between brain and viscera through the two paths of the vagus nerve, which attaches to most major organs, the brain stem and accesses the higher brain centers.

Returning to the amygdala and the limbic system we can quickly explain how this works to create flexible emotional response that are at least sometimes characterized by judgment and higher order cognition. As Simón explains, we must realize that any creature capable of “diverse behaviors” needs to make decisions, and often of the first importance.⁴⁰⁶ And its plain that the more complicated the brain, the more complicated the responses can be – but up to a point. No matter how complicated the brain, it can’t do more than the underlying nervous system allows.⁴⁰⁷

The emotions an organism is capable of are representative of the very best the organism can do in terms of sophisticated response to its environment. More to the point, the emotions are “the most decisive part [of the mechanism responsible for such responses], in all senses of the word”.⁴⁰⁸ The amygdala is the “quick assessor”, relaying to the brain as a whole when a stimulus is dangerous, beneficial or valuable to the agent. It attributes weight or “significance” to the objects in our world. Some of this weight is almost certainly due to hard-wired responses (e.g. the proverbial bear is dangerous)

⁴⁰⁶ Simón, 100-101.

⁴⁰⁷ “In spite of the complexity and sophistication of the human cerebral cortex, the result of all its considerations ends up having to be approved or rejected by the amygdala or structures with equivalent functions in the limbic system” (Simón, 105).

⁴⁰⁸ Simón, 101

while other weight is *learned* by socialization and experience in general and grafted onto previously neutral objects.⁴⁰⁹

Information from the outside world enters the amygdala through two routes, one skipping and one passing through the cerebral cortex, the seat of higher order thought.⁴¹⁰ When information travels the latter route, the amygdala has at its disposal memory, cognition and foresight, which enables a rich context to situate the sensory information in, so that it can “make a judgment about the desirability or danger of the stimulus”. So, for a simple example, it can distinguish between a bear in a cage or a bear in the forest.⁴¹¹

The route that skips the cerebral cortex allows only a part of the “stimulus information” through and so is significantly faster, which is unsurprising given the reality of time constraints on decision making. The amygdala is capable of this carburetor-like function because of where it gets its information.⁴¹² As I explained above, part of it is “innate” and part is “acquired”, so that “any constellation of stimuli with which we are presented at any given moment possesses a certain affective load, more or less conscious and more or less strong”.⁴¹³ Simón goes as far as to say that it is *impossible* for (a normal adult, at least) to be “totally indifferent to anything in terms of emotions”.⁴¹⁴

⁴⁰⁹ Simón, 102.

⁴¹⁰ Simón, 101-2.

⁴¹¹ (Simón, 102.

⁴¹² Simón, 102.

⁴¹³ Simón, 103.

⁴¹⁴ Simón, 102.

The amygdala has four types of responses it can orchestrate, which we need not discuss here.⁴¹⁵ But the upshot is that they consist in our physiological changes and feelings⁴¹⁶ associated with emotions and these reactions, what James and visceralists in general would define *as* emotion, can go on while we are unaware they are happening.⁴¹⁷ But even when they are unperceived, the *brain* registers them because in fact the brain has “a constant flow of information on the state not only of the internal organs but also of...all the various parts of the organism”.⁴¹⁸ This “return journey of all the signals that the limbic system has emitted” is how the brain “finds out what have been the consequences of the emotional reaction that it has itself triggered”.⁴¹⁹

And to be clear this is *duplex communication* because: 1) the “flow of information on the state of all the parts of the organism is constant and unceasing...a kind of bodily landscape that is always present”⁴²⁰ and 2) the brain itself is “literally flooded by the hormones secreted in response to emotional changes...[and it affects]...the nervous system’s form of response to stimuli. Thus it is that the global affective experience is formed, not only by the processes of assessment of the stimulus...[by]...the central nervous system, and not only by the visceral and corporeal reactions...but also by the way in which the brain perceives these visceral and bodily adjustments”.⁴²¹

Finally, lets clarify in what way emotions are judgments. As Simón explains, the cerebral cortex allows a person to “project” into the past, via memory and into the

⁴¹⁵ Simón, 103.

⁴¹⁶ Simón lists as examples “quickenning heartbeat, increase in muscle tone, reddening or blanching of the face, sweating, etc.” (104).

⁴¹⁷ Simón, 103.

⁴¹⁸ Simón, 102.

⁴¹⁹ Simón, 103.

⁴²⁰ Ibid.

⁴²¹ Simón, 104.

future, (via, e.g. the 'imagination' or 'foresight').⁴²² That is, not only does experience obviously "leave a mark" which influences and perhaps at least sometimes determines future decisions, but we can imagine ourselves taking different course of action in the future, thus "generating images related to how things would be in the event of our taking" a particular path, which in turn allows us to "evoke some idea of the emotional reaction that the real situation would cause in us...including a foretaste of the visceral and somatic modifications linked to the emotions".⁴²³

These "foretastes", what Damasio calls "somatic markers", allow the brain to make "totally personal assessments of the possibilities presented", even in the hastiest circumstance, one in which "rational calculation" is simply too slow a tool.⁴²⁴ In as much as using this method the brain it is able to quickly "discard...action possibilities that have...scored poorly in this brief emotional exam" and keep "positively marked" hypotheticals "open for...the final choice" I am content to refer to these as a *kind of judgment*.⁴²⁵

⁴²² Simón, 105.

⁴²³ Simón, 106.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

6.6 Conclusion

In the end, we need a mixed theory because ‘pure’ accounts have yet to and cannot convincingly capture or explain what emotions are, and because empirical data suggests that a mixed theory is quite promising.⁴²⁶ Further, pure accounts seem to give little reasonable guidance for us by way of what role the emotions play in constructing our moral outlook or a working moral theory as they seem to arrive at either expressivism or an ascetic or individualistic ethics. A mixed theory seems to be able handle empirical data on the emotions and to shed much light on the role of emotions in moral judgment, even accounting for motivation for moral action.

⁴²⁶ For further discussion of the “unrealistic” distinction between the study of emotion and cognition, see Phelps, Elizabeth A. Phelps, “Emotion and Cognition: Insights from Studies of the Human Amygdala,” *Annual Review of Psychology*, (January 2006): Vol 57: 27-53.

Part 4: Back to the Future

Chapter 7

7.1 Daybreak: Richard Lazarus

“In no aspect of the human condition other than that of emotional life is it more obvious that those who investigate should be comfortable with a multidisciplinary approach and with theoretical pluralism. Anything else is too simplistic and would not do sufficient justice to the complexities of a fascinating area.” (Strongman 298)

I have no interest here in “explaining” emotions beyond their fruitfulness for ethics, particularly to show that a strong conception of emotions in no way requires an empirically based philosophy to embrace sentimentalism.

My point is to show that the Plato-Aristotle-Lucretius approach preserves a strong cognitive and emotional component for ethics and is not contradicted by evidence. In fact, it can be shown to ‘fit’ or ‘map’ onto the contemporary theory of the emotions of Richard Lazarus⁴²⁷ which, when understood as a P-A-L theory, can likely handle the problems plaguing ‘pure’ cognitivist and visceralist theories. Most important for our purposes, it also allows me to suggest that the ethical theory basically shared by Plato and Aristotle, is completely in line with the best contemporary work in neurophysiology and emotion theory.

Why Lazarus’ theory? It is largely amenable to the neurophysiological evolutionary psychological research discussed in the previous chapter, is quite adept at handling various problems facing emotion theory (e.g. emotional categories), and is

⁴²⁷, R.S. Lazarus, Emotion and Adaptation, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

well-attuned to the social nature of emotions. Indeed, in Strongman's opinion it is the best theory of the emotions overall.⁴²⁸

The theory is very involved and so it must do to make a simplified presentation of just the major points so that we can then note how the P-A-L line and its ethical theory maps on. The two fundamental premises of the theory are that emotions are processes and that all emotions have distinctive "relational themes". The point being that if emotions are going to be properly understood, they must be considered from the stand point of the individual and her goals but also her environment *and* the relationship between the two as an entity.⁴²⁹

The relationship between an agent and her environment can manifest itself in different ways, depending on the agent's self-identity, her short and long term goals and how the current and long term environment can be seen in relation to those goals.⁴³⁰ This accounts for the differing "relational meanings" of the various emotions. So, for example, threat leads to anxiety, insult leads to anger and enhancement of "ego-identity"⁴³¹ leads to pride. The *appraisal* of, e.g. being threatened or insulted creates a

⁴²⁸ Strongman, 297. He expands on this by noting that Lazarus' theory is "'broad enough to embrace almost anything that one might expect of an emotion theory. It treats emotion from every possible angle, has its applied aspects and is capable of subsuming any new data that one could think of'" (297).

⁴²⁹ Lazarus 90-92.

⁴³⁰ (Lazarus 94-95.

⁴³¹ Lazarus explains that the "ego-identity" is much larger than just oneself visually or physiologically defined; "we become committed to the well being of others whom we care about and feel responsible for, as well as to ideas, values and conditions of life. Because of these commitments, if the well-being of other persons - loved ones - is at stake, or if ideas and values we cherish are endangered, lost or demeaned, we react just as emotionally" as a 'selfish' person might to a direct attack (103).

“relational meaning” based on the aforementioned ‘entity’ or “conjunction of environment and person”.⁴³²

And, Lazarus says, in emotion generation *what* makes the emotion, what we *appraise* is “harms and benefits, actual or potential, real or imagined” and not pleasure and pain, because those actually can only serve a very limited role due to being *just* sensory states.⁴³³ To make his point Lazarus offers the example of an athlete’s appraisal of painful muscle fatigue. By itself, pain is ‘bad’ but it is not an emotion. The athlete who is gearing up for a major competition might see it as ‘weakness leaving the body’ and so be glad of it. On the other hand, if e.g. a boxer is all ‘punched out’ and can’t raise his arms to continue attacking or to defend himself, the pain is a very frustrating thing indeed.⁴³⁴

Beyond appraisal and relational meaning, another key to this theory, as to the P-A-L theory, and to the failure of visceral and cognitivist theories, is the avoidance of the First and Second Cartesian Errors. That is, Lazarus and the P-A-L seem as if built to explain the fundamentally intertwined nature of emotion and cognition while the cognitivist and visceral theories leave these two things “discreet”. This discreteness leaves moral judgment largely impossible or at least ineffectual without ad hoc mechanisms such as Hume’s “calm passions”.

Further, as Lazarus explains, physiological activity and judgment must be considered together in order to have a suitable theory of emotions because it is the

⁴³² Lazarus, 90-101.

⁴³³ Lazarus, 92.

⁴³⁴ Lazarus, 146. He suggests that at best they likely do little more for emotion creation than “teaching a child what is safe and what is noxious” (93). And that “strictly speaking, the qualitative properties of an emotional reaction such as pleasantness or unpleasantness are not dimensions of appraisal but should be considered as descriptive components of the response. The result of appraisal, not the cause of emotion” (146).

“heat” stemming from an individual’s “involvement or stakes in an encounter” that distinguish emotions from other types of behavior (Lazarus 84).⁴³⁵ And this is true even if we don’t always consciously perceive the “heat”. This “involvement” create “action tendencies” and allow us to link judgment and action.⁴³⁶

⁴³⁵ Lazarus, 84.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

7.2 The P-A-L Theory Reconsidered and a General Theory Proposed

A. The P-A-L Line as a True Empiricist, Physicalist Alternative

Emotions play an essential role in moral action as they are *indispensable* in the *formation* of a moral outlook, are judgments of a kind, are felt physiologically, their physiology deeply influences judgments, they and often provide the ‘energy’ or ‘action tendency’ or ‘motivation’ to act or refrain from acting in moral situations. We’ve seen how cognitivist and visceralist theories fail to explain these factors and, as a result the unpalatable ethical theories they engender. What is left to do, in order to bring the best of today’s ‘pluralist’ emotion theory and neurophysiological research into ethics is to show the type of ethical theory they can recommend.

This is why it is so very important to note the incredible similarities between the P-A-L theory explained in the first chapter with contemporary pluralist theory. The P-A-L account was explained to be truly empirical and physicalist and if it maps on to contemporary theory and data well, it offers a real alternative to both the historical cognitive and visceral theories and the ethics they recommend *and* so provide us today with a workable ethical theory completely in line with contemporary research yet *not built out of this research or for the sake of agreeing with it*.

My thesis has been that a pluralistic account of emotions will resolve the difficulty in understanding how moral judgments motivate moral action, and why they sometimes fail, and that the P-A-L line is such a theory. Below I will explain its benefits for ethics when considered as viable empirical theory (*mutatis mutandis*).

At the core of the P-A-L is Plato's insight that for self-understanding, moral reasoning and ethical theory, we are greatly benefited by conceiving of the mind as constituting three elements, the rational, spirited and appetitive 'parts'. This understanding, when grounded empirically allows us to carefully consider just how emotions can be rational, be the core motivator of moral behavior and how both emotions and right and wrong are so much more than pleasure and pain.

I argue that in outline, the *process* by which emotion motivates moral action according to the P-A-L works in something like this manner, which also describes well the process delineated in 5.5 and 6.1 above:

1. We animals have a built in "germ" of what counts as dangerous, helpful, or pleasurable behavior patterns.
2. We mammals have a built in "emotion mechanism" that makes quick "appraisals" or that both lead to and react to visceral and facial signals, etc.
3. Factors in our (adult humans) emotional and experiential past, as well as our socialization impact the basic functioning of the mechanism and can and do override it, allowing for deeper, abstract thinking about the situation, but still aware of the visceral response and "sympathetic" to it;
4. The visceral responses and the cognitive dispositions of the individual form a duplex-communicative loop until action is decided upon.
5. Through the emotional mechanism, the individual responds to the stimuli, either wholly on the basis of the reckoning of the emotion mechanism, or with the addition of *corrections to the reckoning* about the situation based on deeper thought and improved information.

B. The P-A-L Line on Emotions in line with Common Sense

Given some insight into the workings of Plato's tripartition of the mind we can see how it is a common-sensical approach to describing the relation between emotion, cognition and desire. By way of explaining the virtues and how they are the functions of the different parts of the city I will go through the arguments for and explanations of the

tripartite city and make explicit how, *mutatis mutandis*, all the same points apply to the individual “soul”. Being that Plato thinks appeal to the principle of contraries necessitates the mapping of the parts of the city onto the soul, this method should work well.

In discussing the guardians of the Kallipolis, Socrates explains why it is irrelevant that it might seem they would be happier outside the just city, saying that trying to make them especially happy, or happy in the way one would make the general population happy “would make them something other than guardians” and lead to the destruction of the city (*Rep* 420d). What applies to the guardians, we will see, applies to each class of citizen and part of the psyche.⁴³⁷

The first part of explaining and justifying tripartition is that to make any one of the parts of the city or soul happy qua that part it must be “compelled and persuaded” (*Rep* 421b) to do its own work. This will “*leave it to nature* to provide each group with its share of happiness” (421c). But more importantly it will in a sense glue three parts together because in directing everyone to what they are naturally suited for, each person “*will become not many but one*, and the whole city will itself be naturally one and not many” (*Rep* 423d).

In order to win the hearts and minds of the citizens (as well as ours) it must be shown that this compelling can be done. Plato argues that the way to get the spirited and appetitive parts under the sway of reason is by a focus on education and upbringing. The guardians, and the rational part qua guardian of the psyche, must especially guard against any innovation...*that is counter* to the established order” (*Rep*

⁴³⁷ The following discussion is greatly indebted to, though not fully in agreement with, the work of Terence Irwin, particularly chapter 13 of Terence Irwin, *Plato's Ethics*, (New York: Oxford UP, 1995), 203-222.

424b).⁴³⁸ This encourages proper behavior, whereas, being legislatively heavy-handed may easily have the opposite effect and is unnecessary (*Rep* 425e). Education of the youth “determines what follows” (*Rep* 425b-c) and what follows from proper education is a “single newly finished person” (*Rep* 424c). Again, though there are three distinct parts, if the parts are properly formed and if the proper modes of connection are established from the beginning, the parts will form an organic whole.

But how do the parts get properly formed, and how does the proper relationship get established through education? Understanding the nature of wisdom allows us to see how the guardians are attached to their specific task, which is ensuring this proper relationship. Socrates and his interlocutors see that “good judgment” is the defining characteristic of a wise thing (*Rep* 428b). They define ‘good judgment’ as a type of knowledge not having to do with specifics but rather the general concern of maintaining a complicated structure or combination such as an individual mind or city, and how, e.g. a person relates to the outside world.⁴³⁹

This knowledge of maintaining ‘good internal relations’ and good relations with others is named ‘guardianship’ (*Rep* 428c-d). Obviously it is the job of the guardians to provide guardianship for the city. We can understand the analogous task in the psyche as the rational part’s ability to perform rational calculations that allow it to keep the spirit helping it keep the appetites fulfilled.

⁴³⁸ This is strikingly similar to Irwin’s point about identity over time; you have to make the proper connections to what is fine in you in order to make it true that the future you is the same as the current you (Irwin, 306-308, 311-313.)

⁴³⁹ For a deeper discussion about Plato on the idea of “constitutionality”, particularly regarding a mind as a “differentiated unity” see Lear, Jonathan. Open Minded: Working out the Logic of the Soul. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1999. 89-90, 219-246.

Guardianship is wisdom and is the excellence and the work of the guardian class. By virtue of understanding the role and nature of the guardian class in the city we have learned the definition of wisdom, and where in the city it is. By analogy we now know that the rational part of the psyche is that part that has wisdom and for a soul to be just must be the part that is in control overall.

The next part of the explanation and argument for tripartition consists in understanding the nature and location of courage. Socrates thinks it clear that if a city is courageous it is “because of a part of itself that has the power to *preserve through everything its belief* about” what is to be feared (*Rep* 429b). That is, it is courageous because of the part that has the power to ‘remember’ the education it was given as to what the ‘lawgiver’ said was to be feared. This should also help explain how the rational part of the psyche can work with the spirited part to control the appetitive part.

So courage in the psyche is a kind of ‘preservation’ of a belief, a proper connection between a thinker, the object of thought, and her thought or attitude about that object that “has been inculcated by the law through education” (*Rep* 429d). The courageous person, the person with true ‘psychic’ strength, is such that they will preserve the properly established belief even through “pains, pleasures, desires, or fears”.

The third virtue, moderation, is a “consonance and harmony” between the parts (*Rep* 430e) which is “strange” because it is not as if there is some A controlling some B. Rather, the same thing that is controlling, the stronger, is the same thing as the thing that gets controlled, the weaker. It’s *the one self* that is strong enough to control its weakness (e.g. one person using an arm to lift a leg that has fallen asleep.)

Understanding this strange relationship of a thing to itself helps to solidify the argument for why the psyche must be understood as having three parts. What self-control seems to suggest is that in the mind of “that very person”, there is a better part and a worse part. And it makes clear what should have been obvious; Plato expresses the phenomenon of the naturally better part, higher mental functioning, being in control of the worse, basic drives, by saying that the person is self-controlled or master of himself when his emotions and their impulses are aligned with reasoning by what I call ‘hot judgment’.

This leads us to an analysis of the objects that the self is trying to control: desires. We learn there are two types of them; the diverse desires, pleasures and pains of the teeming masses and the desires of the best people, that are “simple, measured, and directed *by calculation in accordance with understanding and correct belief*” (Rep 431b-c.) So we find that the appetitive part in a just person or psyche, is the seat of the ‘necessary’ and varied desires, and to be kept under control, it is subordinated to the desires that are directed by the rational part’s understanding and ability to coordinate the psyche internally and with the outside world (especially the base desires), which cannot be done without the coordinated effort of the spirited part, our passions, with the rational part. So it is that moderation is found “throughout” the “whole” psyche.

And this insight is the key to understanding justice; it is defined by a phrase often repeated, “that everyone must practice one of the occupations in the city for which he is naturally best suited” (Rep 433a). Put in more familiar terms, “justice is doing one’s own work and not meddling with what isn’t one’s own” (Rep 433a-b). The best ‘evidence’ given for this is that justice is the “*power* that makes it possible for [courage and wisdom] and *that preserves* them when they’ve grown” (Rep 433b-c). When the

reasoning ability works in concert with the emotions, a person will behave morally and socially responsibly.

A city and psyche is “thought to be just when each of the three natural classes did its own work, and it was thought to be moderate (when all agreed on the ruler) and courageous (when the “soldiers” remembered their education about what is to be feared) and wise (when the guardians exhibited the wisdom of how to ‘manage the connections’ [maintains good internal and external relations])” (*Rep* 435b). For our purposes and I think for Plato’s, the point is not that there are literal distinction in the body but a conceptual understanding along the lines of “parts” in a unitary psyche is quite relevatory about the nature of the relationship between higher thought and emotion, and the combination of the two and morality.

If Plato can show that we learn with one part, get mad with a second part, and desire pleasures with a third part then the story above is complete. The way he does this is with the *principle of contraries*, which says that “the same thing will not be willing to undergo opposites in the same part of itself, in relation to the same thing, at the same time” (*Rep* 436b-c). From this Plato thinks it follows that it is impossible that we are using our whole psyche in pursuing what the three parts of the city pursue. But to convince us that nothing can make one think that “the same thing can be, do, or undergo opposites, at the same time, in the same respect, and in relation to the same thing” (436e) we must be sure that appetites fall under the scope of his principle. In reality all this does is explain how to conceive of the psyche performing different but necessarily intertwined functions, thus prefiguring current theory.

Taking thirst as an obvious example of an appetite⁴⁴⁰, we're asked when we say someone is thirsty, if we mean they are thirsty simpliciter, or thirsty qua being thirsty for a cold drink, etc? (*Rep* 437d). Plato thinks that having the desire for a cold drink is really having a thirst on a hot day, so that there are two desires; one for something to cool down, and one for something to quench thirst. Thirst simpliciter is never for anything more than "drink itself" while the desire for a specific thing "depends on additions" (437e).

As such, the "soul of a thirsty person, insofar as he is thirsty, doesn't wish anything else but drink, and it wants this and is impelled towards it" (438a-b). In this way if someone is drawn back from pursuing a drink, or anything else, whatever is "drawing it back" is not "the same thing" as whatever was impelling it. It would go against the principle of contraries. This is a logical, not ontological or physiological point. Since as a matter of fact there are things such as "thirsty people who don't wish to drink" (439c), the correct analysis of such a situation would be that something in them is pushing them to get a drink and something else in them is pushing them away from the drink. Since we know from the principle that the same thing can't push towards and pull away from the same thing at the same time, we can take our lesson from the discussion above and say confidently that rational calculation and desiring are separate parts of the psyche yet still maintain there is only one psyche.⁴⁴¹

But this leaves the spirited part to be explained and it seems to have things in common with both the appetitive part and with the rational part. Recalling the

⁴⁴⁰ For an in-depth, though different account of this problem in Plato, see Irwin, pp. 203-207.

⁴⁴¹ Irwin argues that Plato needs to argue for a more substantial distinction, that the differentiation is due to "more than there are different types of mental activities" to prove his larger point about the nature of justice (203).

discussion above will help, and Irwin actually helps clarify my point. He points out that in order to show how the spirited part sometimes “makes war against the appetites” (*Rep* 440a), Plato explains that often “the [distinct] spirited part supports the rational part against appetite” which is shown because “when we are aware of x’s being better than y, and y’s being more pleasant than x, our spirited part is not attracted to y because of the belief that y is more pleasant, despite being worse” (Irwin 212). That the spirited part has the ability to be evaluative (as is evidenced in the discussion of the “shares of knowledge” at *Rep* 428a-429a) in addition to being appetitive (Irwin points to 441b as a good example) helps us “clarify the nature of some emotions” (Irwin, 214). Indeed, while the evaluative part of the spirited part “endorses just punishment” and “restrains the appetitive part from revolting against the painful but just treatment” it also has “non-discriminating aspects” (*Ibid*). Irwin has in mind here how it is often quite advantageous that “some action descriptions...elicit emotions, and the emotions form a powerful desire to act in some specific way...[without requiring]...elaborate reflexion on the situation, yet [do] not simply register...feelings of pleasure or pain” (*Ibid*).

So by understanding the excellences and finding where they are and how they function in just cities, we come to have a fairly concise explanation of the structure of the psyche, and why it must be structured that way to be just. By virtue of the principle of contraries we come to see in what way the psyche has a tripartite nature, what each function is, and how the psyche is yet a functioning whole.

C. The P-A-L Line as Conducive to Ethical Theory

At the heart of the P-A-L morality is that being moral is having a good grasp of the correct measure between extremes of excessive and deficient behavior, even as the

target is moving. The mind is able to grasp this measure; in some cases intuitively or 'innately' and in many more through habituation and training. Plato's tripartite distinction explains these things in straightforward conceptualizations – straightforward once the spirited part is equated with the systems that enable us to have emotions, as described in chapter 6.5 and 7.1.

The spirit qua emotion-mechanism can be well understood by focusing on the emotion anger. Anger is particularly useful because it admits of both cold, long-lasting, slow-burning resent and the hot flash of rage. This allows us to study the interplay between cognition and emotion, between the mind understood as the rational seat of judgment and the mind understood as the nearly mechanically tuned, nearly instantaneous carburetor or transmission of a living, engaged body.

Anger, as was said in our discussion of Aristotle and of Lazarus, is centered around insult and other concerns we can categorize as perceived injustices. It is not merely a happy accident that justice and injustice are at the center of P-A-L ethics and that anger is the emotion that so often deals with it.

Anger as an attuned response to injustice allows one to be mentally healthy by not forcing one to sublimate or subsume the energy that an appraisal of e.g., insult or unabashed greed raises in us, it allows us to fit well in society by making the penalty for such transgressions vivid to those who might consider them, thus helping preserve one's standing and the social order in general, and provide the motivation for seeking one's goals when one feels what is theirs does not yet match what they deserve. All of these things are keys to happiness.

In addition, considering emotion as a result of the deep connection between "psyche" and "thymos" allows morality to be adaptive than consisting in any rigid

rules; a person's emotions are built to respond to both innate preferences and to learned ones, and allows for indefinite revisions to these as situations and relationships evolve and change.

We also see that it is not irrational to be emotional or to have emotions. Rather, it is irrational to seek only the satisfaction of our basic, and often base, *desires*. That is, the opposite of morality isn't being emotional, it is being *counterproductive*. And while emotional behavior *can be counterproductive*, it is far more likely that blindly pursuing sensory pleasure and pain will be counterproductive than even following a very hot emotion. The more ones emotions become enmeshed with the rational 'part' of the mind, the more the disparity between base hedonistic urges and even the hottest emotion becomes.

Thus understood, we can look again at 'psyche' and 'thymos' and fairly understand Plato to mean that the 'part' of the mind that is the *motivator of moral behavior* is the *thymos* – so long as we keep very clear that there is no *literal* detachment or separation between 'thymos' and 'psyche'. Pure 'activation energy' blindly put out into the world may motivate behavior but moral behavior requires the inclusion of some kind of judgment, which we can understand to be the role of the 'psyche'.

The thymos should be equated with the limbic system discussed in 6.5. It allows 'direct access' to moral facts (though not necessarily 'universal' facts) such as 'this is an act threatening my social standing, a violation'. As such it is the core motivator of moral action. *Often* it acts in conjunction with the deliberate reasoning intellect, and even when it doesn't it is always attached, and the feedback loop can be engaged or disengaged by either the thymos or the psyche in most any circumstance. I'd put it this way: for a well functioning adult human, the feedback loop's default is to the intellect's side, but always

pregnant with the possibility of a short circuit if the input from the “visceral side” is strong enough.⁴⁴²

The development of a well considered, cogent moral outlook depends on the well-functioning of the feedback loop to preserve the hotness of the emotion, the impetus to action, and the calculation to judge how best to respond in x situation, not only in the sense of practicality but in the more abstract sense of avoiding things like contradiction, etc. So it is that the pluralist theory of emotion can give you both a cogent moral outlook and the motivation to pursue it. As Aristotle puts it, anger can be defined as an *impulse*. We now have a better grasp, physiologically, cognitively and socially of what that impulse is.

D. Final Thoughts

I started from the conviction, gotten after thinking about the great David Hume’s work on the emotions and morality, that sentimentalism, (and probably non-cognitivism of any kind), doesn’t really provide any moral guidance or answer age-old ethical questions. I hope to have uncovered why and developed the outline of what to do about it.

Only a theory that can explain how emotions are both necessarily both judgments and physiological changes concomitant with them could be correct. And more importantly for the purposes of ethical theory, only such a pluralist theory could help explain moral action and moral failure. Such a theory is workable based on the P-A-

⁴⁴² For further discussion see Ted Beauchaine, Lisa Gatzke-Kopp, Hilary K. Mead, “Polyvagal Theory and developmental psychopathology: emotion dysregulation and conduct problems from preschool to adolescence,” *Biological Psychology* (2007), 74: 174-184. Retrieved from the web at <tbeauchaine.psych.washington.edu/paper/pvt.pdf>.

L line of thought, which avoids the Cartesian Errors that have plagued the work of so many good philosophers. A pluralistic theory acknowledges that emotions are both physiological phenomena and tied to decision making in moral situations. And that morality isn't 'non-cognitive' because of the former, or overly intellectual because of the latter.

The problem was never that physiology - science - stood in the way of mental content. Nor was it that mental content is some silly notion that ought to be eschewed because it can't fit in a reductive materialism. Science has a near impossible task in trying to explain just how cognition and the emotions work. And I don't see how it could ever tell us what the right way to behave is. But we must acknowledge that the best science available ought to be incorporated into good ethical theory and at least it must not be contradicted. I believe I've shown how sentimentalist theories failed to do this, and how we can succeed.

Appendices

APPENDIX I: ILADIC MIND

A. Iladic Nomenclature

Simply put, most often Homer refers to the place where one “thinks one’s thoughts” and “feels one’s emotions” as the *phrenes* and the *thymos*.⁴⁴³ Properly seeing that for the Iladics *phrenes* meant lungs leave the common interpretation of *thymos* as blood-soul obviously wrong because, Onians points out, Homer repeatedly speaks of *thymos* “as moving in, being in or being placed in...the *phrenes*”.⁴⁴⁴ The *thymos* moves in and “is conditioned by” the *phrenes* and it “thinks and feels and prompts to action”.⁴⁴⁵ And usage of *phrenes* makes quite clear that it should not just mean a person’s ‘wits’ but the physical organ, the lungs, which is “the seat of intelligence.”⁴⁴⁶

To get a better handle on what the *thymos* was for the Iladics consider the following descriptions compiled from the many Onians gives: it is ‘vaporous’, a sort of *breath* quitting the body when no blood is spilt⁴⁴⁷; Perception is ‘taken into’ it and all the

⁴⁴³ Onians, 23. By comparison, both Plato and the fifth century Hippocratic schools identified the *phrenes* with the midriff or diaphragm.

⁴⁴⁴ He also rightly reminds us that it is wrong to forget that “a large portion of the commonest words had changed their meaning in the interval between Homer and the Attic age.” And it would be in the earliest extant literature, if anywhere, that we’ll find the tradition of language and thought (24).

⁴⁴⁵ Onians, 29. Onians points to Plato’s usage of *ker* (heart) at *Theaetetus* 194e to point to an internal organ as describing a quality of mind. Relatedly, in contrast to Homer indicating the *phrenes* contain the *thymos*, Plato has it that the *thymos*, which he more often calls *thymoeides* are found in the chest above the diaphragm – an area that contains the lungs and heart (*Tim* 69c, *Phaedrus* 235c, 236c, *Rep* 441) (p. 40).

⁴⁴⁶ Onians, 35.

⁴⁴⁷ Onians, 45.

perceptions in there are correlated by the *phrenes*⁴⁴⁸; desire is the work of it in the *phrenes*.⁴⁴⁹ While there's no doubt the thymos was a 'breath' of sorts in the Homeric conception, Onians argues that their conception of it was richer than ours. First we ought to consider that since they had no idea what the actual functions of breathing are, e.g. to bring in oxygen, all they really could see was that "breath is warm and moist".⁴⁵⁰ And from their view it would have been pretty clear that what warmed the breath was the massive concentration of blood around the heart and lungs. So it was reasonable of them to think of *blood and breath as in a constant interaction*.⁴⁵¹ And so it is that Onians concludes that thymos is "breath related to blood...something vaporous within that blends and interacts with the air without, diminishing if the body is ill-nourished and increased when it is well-nourished."⁴⁵²

Getting back to the point about the state of one's lungs and one's moral character, this understanding of *thymos* as breath related to blood puts in dramatic relief the "relevance of blood to intelligence and moral character", i.e. why we even today speak of being of good or bad blood.⁴⁵³

Before moving on to discuss the *psyche* in Iladic thought, he briefly discusses *noos*, which we know is extremely important in later Greek thought. Onians says two passages in the *Iliad* suggest the *noos* is identified with the heart and that we can be sure

⁴⁴⁸ Onians, 66.

⁴⁴⁹ Onians, 85.

⁴⁵⁰ Onians, 46.

⁴⁵¹ And Onians points out that evidence of such a belief seems to linger in Empedocles doctrine that "slowness of with is due to coldness of the blood around the heart and in the scholion 'thymos is the boiling of the blood around the heart through a desire to retaliate' and lies behind the Platonic explanation, 'thymos from the seething and boiling of the *psyche*'. (47)

⁴⁵² Onians, 48. Plato gives an etymology of *thymos* at *Cratylus* 419e.

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

it was located in the chest. More interestingly *noos* can “express a purpose, an act or the result of an act of consciousness”. Onians takes this as good evidence that the concept did not express a permanent organ but a formation; “it expresses either the particular movement, purpose, or relatively permanent, that which moves, the purposing consciousness”.⁴⁵⁴

The *noos* is not identical with *thymos* but “defines” it in the sense that “current consists of but defines, controls air or water”. *Noos* “makes the difference between uncontrolled and intelligent, purposive, consciousness.” It is like the *phrenes* in that it gets some of the credit for being intelligence or intellect, but *noos* differs from the lungs because it is “not obviously material, tangible, pierced by weapons, etc.” And it is dynamic and emotional like the *thymos*.⁴⁵⁵

The *thymos*, unlike the *psyche*, is constantly “spoken of as feeling and thinking, as active in the lungs or chest of the living person, and as departing in death”.⁴⁵⁶ On the other hand the *psyche* is spoken of in connection with what happens after death. It is *in* the person but rather than in the lungs or chest, it is in the brain (and perhaps, sometimes, the marrow). The *psyche* in Homer does *not* think or feel while a person lives. It is a “‘life-principle’ or soul *not concerned with ordinary consciousness*”.⁴⁵⁷ And Onians conjectures that something of this distinction remains in Sophocles when he says “Man is but a breath and a shadow”.⁴⁵⁸

While the viscera, especially the lungs, are repeatedly said to be the ‘home’ of consciousness and intelligence, the head, the ‘home’ of the *psyche*, the “principle of life”,

⁴⁵⁴ Onians, 82-83.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Onians, 94.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁸ Onians, 95.

is regarded as “precious and holy” for being the place of this ‘life-soul’ (96). Again, the head had nothing to do with ordinary consciousness (perception, thought and feeling being the business of the chest and its organs), but instead was the vehicle of life itself, of that which continues and does not die”.⁴⁵⁹

⁴⁵⁹ Onians, 108.

APPENDIX II: ARISTOTLE

A. Aristotle on Acting Knowingly

Lets consider the story of Aristotle and Phyllis. Aristotle has left his studies at the sight of a beautiful young woman at his window. Perhaps he saw her, looked over at his books and sat there for a few minutes thinking about what "end" he wanted to pursue, his studies or some quality time with a beautiful young woman. He then set his mind to achieving the latter and so turned to engage with her and leave his books behind. This would be decision, but if you put yourself in the situation no doubt you'd think this an artificial account: if a person you find attractive and whom is apparently desirous of your attention literally walked to your window sill (or your cubicle, desk, etc) is that the way it would go? More likely what happens is that you act *knowingly but without prior deliberation* (KWPD).⁴⁶⁰ It is not a simple thing to say if the actions "depended on him" or if he was "forced", and whether he acted "knowingly". For now lets assume we all agree he was not literally *forced* to drop his books and pursue the girl.

Aristotle claims that only an insane person could ever be ignorant of *who* is acting, but one could be ignorant of all the other factors about where action is located. But if you really were in ignorance of any of these then you acted counter-voluntarily.⁴⁶¹ It is likely the case that in the example Aristotle was not *in ignorance* of any of these

⁴⁶⁰ Things done through *temper* and other affections that are inevitable lead to harms done knowingly but w/o prior deliberation (1134b11-36a; 1135b20-21); Things done through *temper* are rightly judged as *not being from premeditation* (11135b26-38); The person acting while angry doesn't act because of ignorance but in ignorance. (1110b21-25, fn. P. 352) Again we are angry or afraid without decision (1104a27-b9),

⁴⁶¹ As is discussed in the section on Aristotle, there is more than one kind of counter-voluntary action.

factors. So he was acting knowingly but without prior deliberation when he pursued the satisfaction of his lust. Therefore he was acting *voluntarily*. But does this make him a bad person? Aristotle says no. Let's say that because of his lust (or love) Aristotle wasn't ready for class the next day. You might argue he harmed his students by neglecting his responsibility. Or if he was married at the time we might argue his actions harmed his wife. If he inflicted harm knowingly but without prior deliberation, it was an unjust *act* (1135b20-23).

Aristotle says things done through temper and other emotions (affections) that are *inevitable or natural for human beings* fit that description: They are rightly judged as "not being from premeditation" (1135b26-28). But at the same time, such emotional "outbursts" are just that - *outbursts* not necessarily part of ones *character*. So (generally) actions done from emotions are *not premeditated*, but they seem to be *voluntary*. Whether they are or aren't is a major issue and he needs to be crystal clear on it. But he is not. In order get clarity we must realize that Aristotle thinks there are two levels of emotion and while "lesser-emotion-inspired" acts are voluntary, at least some emotional acts are counter-voluntary.

To recap, we all agree that people should be praised or blamed for their voluntary acts. But we face a problem in that it is not always cut and dried whether an action is voluntary or counter-voluntary. For example, we might wonder how to describe a harmful unpremeditated act that we knowingly perform, (as from a fit of rage). How is it similar or different from a premeditated harmful act? How is it different from an unknowing harmful one?

B. Aristotle on Two Types of Emotions

The argument that emotions are voluntary relies on 3 definitions in particular:

Definition 1 (voluntary action): out of the things a person does that depend on him, whatever he does knowingly, not in ignorance of any of the relevant factors and not under force, is done voluntarily.⁴⁶²

Definition 2 (counter-voluntary action): what is done without it depending on oneself, in ignorance of the particulars.⁴⁶³

Definition 3 (non-voluntary action): no foresight, no planning and no regret.

From these definitions, the argument proceeds in 3 parts:

Argument Part I. explaining the two types of voluntary action

There are two types of voluntary action – those we do having decided to do and those we do not having decided to do. An action is “decided on” only if it was deliberated beforehand. Ignorance in decision-making does not make something always involuntary, only ignorance of particulars does. When we do harm having deliberated before hand and we feel distress and regret our action was a mistake, but voluntary. When we inflict harm knowingly (understanding the particulars) but without having decided on it (no deliberation) the act is unjust. This often involves things done through temper and other affections that are inevitable for humans.

Argument Part II. Regarding the relation between virtue and voluntary action in children: Argument 1:

1. Assumption (1113b5-15): Virtuous behavior and being good are voluntary, they depend on us
2. If children, who are not (yet) rational cannot perform voluntary actions then they cannot be(come) virtuous
3. But children can and do become virtuous

⁴⁶² There is foresight and planning, and the agent is generally pleased with the outcome.

⁴⁶³ There is no foresight or planning and the agent regrets the outcome.

∴ Children must sometimes act voluntarily

Argument 2

1. Children sometimes act voluntarily
 2. Children only act through affect or appetite.
- ∴ Affect or appetite must be (sometimes) voluntary in children

Argument 3

1. Affect or appetite must be (sometimes) voluntary in children
 2. Appetite is not voluntary □
- ∴ affective behavior is (sometimes) voluntary in children.

Argument Part III. Regarding the relation between virtue and voluntary action in adults:

Argument 1:

1. Common sense and our definitions tell us it makes no sense to say something we (consciously) desire is counter-voluntary
 2. There are some things we should want to be angry about (e.g. public humiliation)
- ∴ If you should get angry at x and you do, common sense and our definitions tell us that this depends on you.

Argument 2:

1. (definition 2): we get no pleasure and feel remorse from counter-voluntary actions
 2. We often get pleasure out of acting on our emotions
- ∴ When we get pleasure out of acting on our emotions we are not acting counter-voluntarily.

It's important to note the previously mentioned move of asserting there are two types of voluntary action, one featuring deliberation and one not. This allows the possibility that though you do not consciously choose an act you are still doing it 'on purpose' as it were. He thus moves the test of voluntary-ness to whether the action was done in knowledge of the particulars of the situation.⁴⁶⁴ So it should follow that an action that was done from emotion can only be counter-voluntary if done unknowingly. And you

⁴⁶⁴ Though I think it makes it all the more difficult to differentiate between knowing a particular and deliberating. Can one really *not deliberate* if they *know* the particulars in the sense of having them at the front of your mind?

may think this series of definitions and arguments pretty decisively shows Aristotle believes emotional action is voluntary. If so you also have the bald statement at NE 1111a21- that “it is not right to say that things done because of temper or appetite are counter-voluntary” as further support.

Yet problems for this reading underlie what’s been said and appear in the same section of the text: 1. Its hard to know how you can not deliberate about something if you know - are aware of - the particulars in any sense but the way in which animals and/or children know. 2. It is exceedingly difficult to imagine what a counter-voluntary act look like in light of the new distinction. 3. Textual considerations strongly suggest Aristotle finds the identification of some emotion-based actions as truly voluntary very difficult. 4. There seems to be an important theoretical distinction in Aristotle’s thinking between ‘temper’ and a specific emotion such as ‘anger’. I’ll take each point in turn.

First, if you are aware of the particulars of the situation in the way an animal is then it seems fair enough to think that we can act knowingly but without prior deliberation. If this is how we act voluntarily when we act from emotions then it truly is a very limited sense of voluntary and one that would certainly deserve much sympathy. But if we are to be aware in the sense that an adult is aware of particulars when deliberating then clearly it makes little sense to say that you can act voluntarily if you act knowingly but without prior deliberation - it won’t happen. And it is not descriptive of emotional actions. If it isn’t descriptive of emotional actions, and people who act from emotions act without prior deliberation, then it seems difficult to say they act knowingly either: the very issue is whether they sometimes don’t ‘have their bearings’ enough to be called ‘aware’ in a strong sense and experience says they sometimes do not. This would suggest that at least sometimes they are not acting voluntarily.

Next, let's consider what a counter-voluntary act would be in light of the distinction made just above. Updating the definition we would say that a voluntary act is an act done that depends on him, done in knowledge of the relevant factors, and deliberation is irrelevant. A simple understanding of this last clause seems to lead to major problems. Consider the case of a child who acts from temper and stabs their sibling to death. In order to excuse them we'd have to be committed to saying that they simply did not know the particulars of the situation, and it seems difficult to pick out just which one they failed to grasp: they had to have known they were acting and with what, so either they didn't know what their action was for or how it was done. In one way this seems plausible, in another it doesn't.

As a child I both unwittingly nearly killed someone and once became so enraged I wanted to kill a classmate. In the former case I was 11 years old at a school 'Field Day' and had a baseball game that night. I was swinging a fairly large log as if it were a baseball bat, in what I thought was an out-of-the-way spot. Unfortunately two of my classmates were running around, one chasing the other. A boy ran right towards me as I was entering my backswing and I hit him on the head hard enough to give him an inch-long crack in his skull. I say I did this unwittingly, but was it involuntarily?

In the latter case I was about 10 years old playing basketball at recess. A particularly un-liked child in my class who was a much better athlete than I was easily outplaying me and his team was winning because of it. I was mad that I had to guard him in the first place as he was rather smelly. I also thought it was because I wasn't that popular or influential that I was stuck with the job, and I couldn't even do the job well, which would not be good for my standing. In one sequence the boy fouled me - or at least I claimed as much - and I lost the ball right at the end of recess, ensuring our

defeat. I snapped and was totally beside myself. I caught sight of a signpost lying nearby that happened to have a nail on the end of it and took it. I proceeded to walk towards the other boy yelling, screaming and crying the whole time. I was aware of nothing but him and I. I'm certain if he hadn't run away that I would have hit him with it. As it was I saw I couldn't catch him and eventually tossed the stick away - only then noting the wide-eyed amazement of the other children.

I don't think that I acted voluntarily in *either* case. In the first case I was voluntarily swinging a large heavy piece of wood in order to practice for the game that night and I was swinging hard on purpose. And I had thought to do the swinging before I began and sought out a quiet spot. So I was in full knowledge of the circumstances. But still I lacked good decision: I shouldn't have been doing it *there, then* and my ignorance in decision making led to a bad (but thankfully not tragic) accident. So according the first definition of voluntary I didn't act voluntarily (since I was a child; had I been an adult it would not have been counter-voluntary but rather evidence of my worthlessness since an adult should *know better* than to risk it). Here the new definition seems not to allow me the same defense unless I can make out the case that my ignorance in decision-making really was ignorance of the particulars - lack of awareness of the particular factors that constitute the location of the action. But I think it was rather a lack of sophistication in weighing the costs and benefits in relation to the probability of an accident. And if it wasn't lack of awareness of the particulars, then it was simply bad decision making and because I regretted it, an accident. But bad decision-making doesn't make it involuntary.

The second case is worse. I simply don't see how I can, on the new definition of voluntary explain that I was not acting voluntarily, except to say that I was a child and

so simply not capable of doing so. But it seems to me the reason we say that children cannot act voluntarily is because they lack experience and reasoning skills. Yet Aristotle above said that children do sometimes act voluntarily (since we chose to become virtuous). And this would seem like a case where I did – unless you think my blind rage made it impossible. And this must be the case for Aristotle. There must still be a way to say that in some instances acting from temper really does mean acting in ignorance, since it can't stem from acting without deliberation. So it seems the best way to read the distinction in voluntary acts is that Aristotle is saying when we acting knowingly but without prior deliberation in some instances we are acting voluntarily, and in some we are acting counter-voluntarily. This needs to be fleshed out but we will find that the basics of it are that things done with a bad disposition in relation to *temper* are voluntary actions while things done out of *affection* – a raw emotion – are (at least sometimes) counter-voluntary.⁴⁶⁵

Third, there are problems in the same section of text, just after the quoted line. There Aristotle asks “what difference there is, in respect of counter-voluntariness, between things we get *wrong through acting in accordance with* rational calculation and those we get wrong through temper?” It is striking enough that the question never gets much of an answer.⁴⁶⁶ But that he asks the question *at all* should sound off that he is ambivalent or worried about the issue. As he actually says: “And regarding adults – does it make sense to think nothing we do because of emotions (e.g. temper) is done voluntarily?” This is a far cry from rejecting the idea that emotions are sometimes

⁴⁶⁵ In this way some of the things done “from temper” are voluntary and some are not.

⁴⁶⁶ There he lists three traits: Both are to be avoided; The non-rational affections seem to be no less typical of human nature; Actions deriving from temper and appetite will belong to humans too

involuntary. Add to this the fact the Aristotle readily admits that things done from *emotions* often involve no premeditation and it must be fairly clear that the arguments given for the voluntariness of emotional actions are not the whole story.⁴⁶⁷

In fact Aristotle says “we are angry or afraid without decision” (1104a27-b9) and “we are by nature capable of being affected” (NE 1105a27-1105b9). That is we *do not choose to be angry* or to *be afraid* qua affections or emotions. Given that he has defined affections as “feelings attended by pleasure or pain” does he mean we *cannot chose to feel what we feel* viscerally⁴⁶⁸ in certain situations? It is unclear but something like this must be true.

There is a relationship between viscerally felt *emotions*, the ‘*temper*’ that is the capacity by which we ‘have’ anger or ‘become’ angry, and the emotional *act* that in a way is responsive to reason. This must be so because people are *praised* for being angry when they *should*. And how can it be we *should* feel a certain way but can’t choose to feel that way? He can’t mean that and must mean that there is the ability in each of us to control how we are disposed when an emotional feeling is registered and to a large extent control how we act on the feeling, and even to get the feeling in line. At the very least, given all that’s been said he cannot mean that we can *never* chose to be angry qua expressing the emotion through action. But it seems highly likely, again, that he is making a distinction between an emotion e.g., anger and the capacity to feel it, viz.,

⁴⁶⁷ Un-premeditated action is done without prior deliberation. And all voluntary action is deliberated. Again we are angry or afraid without decision. When it comes to the affections people say we are moved (NE 1105a27-b9).

⁴⁶⁸ So both (shame, fear) appear in a way to be associated with the body, a feature which seems to belong to an affection rather than to a disposition (NE 1128b15-18). *But* “shame is occasioned by bad actions” and “a sense of shame applies to voluntary actions”. So that we are left to think that the feeling is uncontrollable and yet there is a cognitive element in it, even if it ‘mishears’ reason.

temper. It seems that acting through the capacity is more of a 'meditated' or decided thing and acting in anger is more (or often) immediate - and sometimes impossible to control.⁴⁶⁹

I don't think there is a definitive resolution of the matter. But an important clue that my analysis makes the most sense lies in the claim at 1110b21-25 that the person acting while angry doesn't act because of ignorance (of a particular fact) but *in* ignorance (acting from a distorted perspective, e.g. intoxication or rage).⁴⁷⁰ In this latter case an individual may have command of the aspects but the wrong aspects matter, or in the wrong way. If you put this together with the basic claim that anger *in a way* listens to reason, then acting *in ignorance*, if it means anything, must simply mean that acting without prior deliberation is at least sometimes evidence that you do not act voluntarily even though it is a highly cognitive and not 'merely' a feeling. A person can voluntarily get drunk and so though they acted in ignorance it's not really involuntary since they chose to start the course of actions that followed. But we don't voluntarily get in a *rage* so the same analysis doesn't work. Yes, sometimes we 'let ourselves get mad' over little things but sometimes we are overcome by such things.⁴⁷¹

To decide whether what Aristotle says about the interplay between deliberation and emotion is consistent - or even cogent - we'll have to get very clear on three important considerations: 1) Whether Aristotle ever plainly argues that emotional acts are done out of ignorance of particulars or 2) If Aristotle ever argues that emotional actions are done without deliberation and that some acts done without deliberation are

⁴⁶⁹ And sometimes *shouldn't* be controlled.

⁴⁷⁰ For further discussion cf. Broadie's note on section 1110b24-25 (*NE* p. 313).

⁴⁷¹ So the analysis of Broadie & Rowe (that saying they acted b/c of rage no longer sounds like an excuse.) is impossible to accept.

counter-voluntary then he likely has said at least sometimes emotional actions are non-voluntary. If he ever argues that we have remorse or get pain from the results of our emotional actions, then he must concede that, at least on those occasions, emotional acts are counter-voluntary.⁴⁷² The plain facts are that he does these things. And so it must be admitted that *sometimes* emotional actions are counter-voluntary.

⁴⁷² Definition 2 (counter-voluntary action): what is done without it depending on oneself.
Definition 3 (non-voluntary action): no foresight, no planning and no regret.

APPENDIX III: Descartes

A. Bodily Volition

Everything we ever will to do, our volitions, comes from our souls. This does not count as providing ‘fuel’ – the soul cannot – but rather *deciding* that fuel should be applied: a bit like telling someone who is in a position to do so to open a faucet in order that water may flow and provide power. The reason the body isn’t said to do this by itself, even though animals move, is that it usually does but in the case of animals its not properly conscious willing but more like a self-regulating hydraulic pump. So the real issue is whether to call it *willing* when the human ‘body’ does move *itself* in a task-oriented way.

Descartes argues that our soul *receives* perceptions and knowledge, (passions of the soul, broadly construed, account for all cases of perception or knowledge (A17)), from generally anything outside our souls, including objects within our physical boundaries. But *volition* is in a sense an *action* done by the soul. Because they come directly from our soul” (A17). It is surprising to learn that some perceptions are actually thoughts, thus contradicting the *Meditations* but that is what he says.⁴⁷³ At any rate, these ‘outside’ things disseminate images of themselves that are assembled in the pineal gland and given to the soul to consider. So the objects out there are represented by the perceptions given to our souls.

What’s happened is that Descartes now thinks there are two types of volitions and two types of perceptions (A18-A21). While both types of volitions are actions of the soul, some perceptions are not. Instead, they have the body as their cause. The volitions

⁴⁷³ (Some) perceptions are passions, passions are of the soul, all thinking is the exclusive function of the soul, so some perceptions are thoughts.

can be distinguished by what they are directed to: something in the soul itself or something in our body (A18). The former are non-material things, or can be thought of as employing abstract concepts such as the will to love justice. The latter are more concrete “performings” such as having the will to speak, as during a heated conversation.

But in one of the more obscure sounding yet important passages in the POS, Descartes says that while willing is an action with respect to the soul, the perception by the soul that it is willing something is a passion within the soul (A19.18-20), a thought that ‘happens to’ the soul. The same act done and “self-recognized” by the soul is both an action and a passion – they are a single thing. By the principle of identity the names are interchangeable and so we choose to call the thing in the soul by the name action rather than passion – since actions are in some sense better than passions. This is consistent with the definitions given above but troubling, as I will discuss later.

Descartes also thinks that in order for us to *will* anything, e.g. getting a glass of water, we must perceive the thing by the same thing we will it (A19). This would seem to mean that since we perceive our will to love justice through our soul, we must will to act justly through our soul. And since we perceive a glass of water through our bodies, we must will getting a glass of water through our bodies. Yet bodies aren’t said to *will*, but act. On this line our bodies have nothing to do with leading us to actions that stem from abstract considerations and our mind has nothing to do with leading us to all manner of every day activities – “performings”. Above we described them as perceptions that were not of the soul. Here we understand better why.

But what does it mean that the body perceives? In the *Meditations* it was no more than awareness of the sensory attributes of an object, such as its color or smell, attributes

he said were not really how we came to know things. Now we have two types: bodily perceptions that *depend on the nerves* and perceptions we'll call "*imaginations*" (A19).

Bodily imaginations (e.g., dreams, daydreams) are similar to the abstract thoughts of the soul, but the soul is not employed in their formation, they are not actions of the soul. Actually they are caused by 'poly-agitated' spirits in the brain coming across traces of various previously created impressions as they randomly flow through some pores in the brain and not others (A21).⁴⁷⁴ All imaginations can be called 'passions' in a very broad sense of the term, and even if used in its most particular sense some bodily-based imagination-perceptions can be called passions. So far we've explained perceptions of the soul and perceptions of the body that do not depend on the nerves but on chaotic spirits in the brain. What remains is to explain perceptions of the body that depend on nerves.

These admit of three kinds, 1. those that we refer to objects outside us that strike our senses, 2. those that refer to our body or a part of it, and 3. those that refer to our soul. Let's discuss them in order. As Descartes explains at A23, the first type, those we refer to outside objects are caused by them. They "excite movements in the sensory organs and by mediation of the nerves even some movements in the brain. These movements in the brain, from the nerves, make the soul feel them", which is to say they make the soul feel the presence of the outside objects. – as a string-and-can phone makes us "feel" the voice of the person on the other end of the line. The second type of nerve-based perceptions, those "referring to our body or a part of it are the perception of hunger, thirst and other such natural appetites along with pain, heat and the other

⁴⁷⁴ So we are clear that the impressions created in the brain are physical whereas thoughts are not supposed to be.

affections we feel as in our members and not as outside objects" (A24).⁴⁷⁵ The soul isn't in any way responsible for such perceptions.

The third type of nerve-based perceptions refers to the soul alone (A25). As you might have expected, the passions qua anger, joy, etc will fit here. In order to be consistent, he says these perceptions are felt in the soul itself, not in the brain or any other organ or part of the body. So anger, joy, etc are felt "as in" the soul itself only. And they have "variable" causes; "sometimes they are caused by objects that move our nerves (so no judgment is involved), sometimes by other causes" (A25).⁴⁷⁶

The idea is supposed to be that all the things we perceive are perceived in the mind (A23). They are images in the soul. We don't look out of our eyes up at the stars above, we don't feel the book fall on our bare foot. The stars are perceived as in the sky, but are sending forth into our eyes and exciting the nerves and spirits such that they create faithful images of whatever the stars are sending. The same treatment goes for the pain in your foot. You are feeling the book sending out something, perhaps its "mass", into the nerves at your foot. They proceed to create a representation which is delivered via the nerves and spirits to the brain, and from there into the soul.

We only gather that it is a book because there is a judgment by the brain, at the pineal gland (A32).⁴⁷⁷ As A34 makes very clear, only the brain can act directly upon the mind, through the pineal gland: it is a process made possible by the mediation of the

⁴⁷⁵ This analysis fits well with the concept of "visceral" feelings but also makes impossible duplex communication between the mind and the viscera. As nerve based perceptions in the brain, it would have to be the brain that became aware of and regulated any changes in the feelings.

⁴⁷⁶ Voss says cf. 21, 26, 51, 93, 94 for 'other causes' of the nerve-based passions (*Passions*, fn 26, p. 32).

⁴⁷⁷ See also A23 and Voss' related fn. 24, where he says in part, "the brain movements make the soul feel the objects...the object the soul feels is not the torch or bell itself, but the movements which proceed from (p.31).

spirits, nerves and blood qua carrier of spirits. This mechanism, coupled with the soul working especially well at the pineal gland, allows him to claim as an inference to the best explanation that the soul really is seated there rather than at the heart. Even though the 'force' of the passions is felt at the heart, "the effects of the passions are felt as in the soul".⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁷⁸ I presume the "effects" are the volitions to which the passions dispose the soul. (Cf. *Passions* fn. 36, p. 37).

APPENDIX IV: Hume

A. The Distinction between Ideas and Impressions

The argument for the distinction appears to be something like this:

P1. Thinking is forming an image out of the original image /sense data given to you by experience and manipulating it in your head.

P2. You can characterize the difference between the experiences of sensory perception (e.g. seeing) and forming an image in your head in terms of the immediacy of sensory experience and the comparative lack of immediacy of mental images.

∴ C. Therefore, since thinking is just forming images and manipulating them, the only difference between ideas and sensory impressions must be the degree of immediacy experienced or felt in either case.

But we can see that premise P2 is just the conclusion in a different mood or mode; in P2 it is a conditional or optative statement and in C it is a necessary claim or indicative. The reason for the switch is not forthcoming because it certainly doesn't follow from the assumption that thinking is imaging. Nothing about that fact makes it *have to be the case* that the only difference is the degree of vividness.

With this clarified we can now see that Hume really is arguing:

P1'. Thinking is forming an image and manipulating it in your head.

C. The only difference b/w impressions and ideas that matters is the comparative vividness between them.

While his 'evidence' is:

E1. Actually physically seeing your lover is much more immediate or real or vivid than the picture of her you have in your head.

E2. This difference shows that thinking is dependent on experience

C. This difference is the only property or quality that matters in explaining the difference between experience and thought and so the nature of perception.

B. Impressions, Reflection and Feelings

Ask yourself the most basic question you can ask about this. Does Hume's account describe your experience of what happens in perception of any kind? If it fails to describe your own experience, and Hume hasn't given any good reason to go against what your own experience tells you, why should we accept his theory? We don't need it to save empiricism. To justify belief in sentimentalism? Why do so?

I was on a train to Montreal as I pondered this basic question. During the day I saw cars on the road, a big river, snow on the ground and hundreds of geese presumably returning home from their winter sojourn in the south. I hardly noticed the color of the geese until I suddenly realize there are a couple of hundred black geese that have joined the much larger population of lighter colored geese. This makes me wonder at the role of expectation, of acquaintance, of memory and of *difference* on my perceptions. How is it that a passive act of pointing my eyes at an area could ever account for even the relatively simple things I just catalogued? This is not a work on epistemology so I cannot afford to discuss this at any length, but whether you call these things I was aware of beliefs or knowledge or knowledge that or something else, they have content. Not only that, when I think about them the content changes and my feelings change and my perception of what my role is in relation to them changes.

Propitiously, I had an experience on my train ride that I think quite makes my point as clear as I need to for my purposes: I'm looking at a clump of dead grass sticking out of the snow and notice a few feet to the left *something*. It is beige, it is red and black, and part of it appears to be bobbing up and down in the snow. But what is it? Its *head* is bobbing up and down in the snow and its head has a beak – it's a duck or a goose! Trapped in the snow! Poor animal! (Here my chest began to feel quite warm.) It must

have hurt a wing or something and fallen from the flock. Too bad the poor thing will likely die there. How miserable to travel so far to die in the snow. Wait - it's a newspaper circular, a piece of trash and nothing more. I relax. The warmth dissipates.

I returned to my computer screen convinced that the relationship between sensory experience and thought and action and feeling is much more complicated than Hume's theory can handle. Hume, like Descartes proposes a theory that purports to be thoroughly empiricist and is at the same time reductionist about the mental to the point where serious issues can be swept away. And they both get their assumptions and 'conclusions' from a radical skepticism for which the only cure is their methodology. Unfortunately for both it seems you cannot be a *thoroughgoing* empiricist/physicalist and a *reductionist* about mental items.

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