

# The Passions of the Soul

René Descartes

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[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Every four-point ellipsis . . . . indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. Longer omissions are reported between brackets in normal-sized type.—The division of the work into 212 articles, and their headings, are Descartes's. When an article starts with 'This. . .' or 'Therefore. . .' or the like, it follows on not from its heading but from the end of the preceding article; see for example articles 138–9 and 165–6.—Many articles start with 'It must be observed' or 'Next we should take notice' or the like; these throat-clearings are dropped from the present version.—Part 2 starts on page 17, Part 3 on page 43. The full table of contents is at the end.

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## Glossary

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

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

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

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

(a) x makes y do A

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 51. The primary causes of the passions

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

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

or by

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

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

- objects that stimulate the senses,

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

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

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

solely in this:

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

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

### Orderly List of the Passions

#### 53. Wonder

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

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

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

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

### 55. Veneration and scorn

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

### 56. Love and hatred

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

### 57. Desire

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

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

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

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

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

### 60. Remorse

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

**61. Joy and sadness**

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

**62. Derision, envy, pity**

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

**63. Self-satisfaction and repentance**

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

**64. Approval and gratitude**

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

**65. Indignation and anger**

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

**66. Vainglory and shame**

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

**67. Distaste, regret and lightheartedness**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 73. What astonishment is

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A distinction is commonly made between two sorts of love:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- the desire we have when we are led towards some good is accompanied by love, and then by hope and joy, whereas
- when we are led to get away from the evil opposed to this good that same desire is accompanied by hatred, anxiety and sadness (which causes us to judge the evil inimical to ourselves).

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

**88. The various kinds of desire**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 91. The definition of joy

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

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

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

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

### 92. The definition of sadness

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

### 93. The causes of these two passions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **98. . . . in hatred**

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

#### **99. . . . in joy**

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

#### **100. . . . in sadness**

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

#### **101. . . . in desire**

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

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

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

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

and that

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

This is what the passion of love consists in.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

### 108. . . . in hatred

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

### 109. . . . in joy

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

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

### 110. . . . in sadness

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

### 111. . . . in desire

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

### 112. The external signs of these passions

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

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

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

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

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

**114. Changes in colour**

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

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

**115. How joy makes one flush**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 118. Trembling

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

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

### 119. Listlessness

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

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

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

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

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

**122. Fainting**

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

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

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

**124. Laughter**

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

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

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

**126. The main causes of laughter**

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

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

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

**128. The origin of tears**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**131. How we weep from sadness**

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

**132. The groans that accompany tears**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 135. Sighs

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**140. Hatred**

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

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

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

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

**141. Desire, joy and sadness**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Whether *x* happens depends on fortune'

which means that we are really thinking:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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