

SPIRIT, SOUL AND PASSIONS*

TEODOR DIMA

Abstract. On the occasion of the coming 360-year anniversary of the moment when Descartes publishes the preface-letter to his book “Les Passions de l’âme” (14th August 2009) we take the opportunity to remember and re-evaluate Descartes’ conception of soul and spirit, asking ourselves if Descartes wrote this book as a moralist, or as a psychologist, or as a physiologist.

We analyse the various perspectives on the concept of soul starting from the etymological point of view and passing through the anthropological, theological, metaphysical and scientific, with an emphasis on the Romanian philosopher Florian Nicolau, whose work on soul leads to the conclusion that the relations between philosophy, science and religion cannot be contradictory as far as the characterization of spirit or soul is concerned.

This is also the conclusion of our evaluation of Descartes’ conception on soul, thus revealing the complexity of his orientations: philosophic, ethic, psychological, and anatomico-physiological.

1. On 14th August 2009, we celebrate the 360-year anniversary of the moment when Descartes publishes the preface-letter to his book *Les Passions de l’âme*, where he says: “My plan was not to explain passions as an orator, not even as a theoretician of morality, but merely as a naturalist (*physicien*)”¹. I have quoted this fragment in order for us to underline once again that affects may and must be analyzed from a neuro-biological perspective too, not only from the philosophical, theological, psychological and ethical ones. Actually, the well-known reflections on soul start under the sign of semantic ambivalences.

Thus, the general meaning of *soul* refers to an immaterial principle that governs the conscious life; from an etymological point of view, the word derives from the Latin *anima* (an equivalent of the Greek phrase *psyché*: breath, respiration) and from the Greek etymon *ánemos* (wind), resulting from the same root. The ambivalence is generated by the use of the same term for a living existence and for a non-living existence, which has reflections both in the religious thinking of primitive antique populations and in the philosophical and scientific one.

* What follows is the written version of the communication presented at the Symposium: *Current preoccupations on the neuro-biological sub-layer of psycho-affective manifestations*, a symposium moderated by Academician I. Hăulică, on the occasion of “Iasi Academic Days”, 24th September 2008.

¹ According to Gheorghe Brătescu, note 1 of the Romanian translation of Descartes’ book, made by Dan Răutu, published by Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 1984, p. 173; this Romanian edition includes an ample *Introductory Study* and footnotes written by Gh. Brătescu; moreover, the end of the translation includes several explanatory notes based on various “suggestions” made by those monitoring several French editions of *Passions of the Soul* (P. Mesnard, Fr. Mizrachi and Geneviève Rodis-Lewis).

The ambivalence also refers to the related term of *spirit*, coming from the Latin *spiritus*, which is a translation of the Greek *pneûma*, a word that initially refers to respiration, vital breath. For instance, stoic philosophers use *pneûma* referring to the breath that animates and includes the entire reality, providing it with order and energy. On the other hand, in the *New Testament*, especially in *Paul's Epistles*, the spirit either opposes to the letter of the law (the spirit gives life, the letter kills), or it opposes to flesh (the spirit is identified to the freedom brought by the Messiah, while flesh, on the contrary, encourages the sin)².

This binary system of oppositions is included in Gnostic trends, starting the 2nd century, developing into a ternary scheme, where “the spiritual” (bearers of *pneûma*) are opposed to “the *hyletic* (from *hyle*, matter), who are trapped in the lust of flesh, and to “the *psychic*” (from *psyché*, soul), who are limited to the observance of the law.

2. Anthropologists notice that, although there are peoples who have not used phrases that may be translated as “soul”, almost all of them have evidence regarding certain phrases that might belong to at least one of the general meanings of soul. Thus, their interpretation of death and the performed rituals prove their belief that an immaterial soul dwells in the body, a permanent principle that preexists birth and death survival, as well as a corporal soul, the location of energies coordinating vital functions. The latter, the corporal soul disappears at death, since it is a cause of death itself, because it represents a receptacle of malefic forces, or it could be meant to enter an indefinite waiting state. A third type of soul is also conceived, a non-temporal one, but which is the average between the two types of souls; once this connection has been made, it produces death and the immaterial soul leaves the body³.

Shamanism takes over some characteristics of spirit and soul. The origins of shamanism are found in the Paleolithic civilization of hunters-harvesters; they believe that the spirits of animals persist; they must be tracked and captured in order to reduce them to a skeleton; such hunting relics are drawn on the Shamans' outfit⁴. One of the elaborations of Shamanism is an *imaginary ontology* of *axis mundi*, a tripartite representation (inferno, earth, heaven), which is ordered around a communication symbol (tree, mountain, stairs, river); migrations, cultural contacts and transformations provide such representations with invitations to enter the great religions of the East, Greece and of the Asian continent. This is why Shamanism has been and still is spread on a very wide area: regions from Siberia

² According to Giani Paganini, in Marco Grago, Andrea Boroli (ed. gen.), *Enciclopedie de filosofie și științe umane* (Encyclopedia of Philosophy and Human Sciences), translated from Italian by Anca Dumitru, Editura All Educational, Bucharest, 2007, p. 1044.

³ According to Giacomo Camuri, in *Ibidem*, p. 1066.

⁴ Mircea Eliade, *Nașteri mistice* (Mystic Births), 1958, cf. *ibidem*, p. 1072.

and Central Asia, Japan and Korea, where it still is very active, but also in Lapland, North America and South America⁵.

In Central Asia, in Siberia and in the American Indian territories, the shaman is a *medicine man*, a wise man and a master in the arts that contribute to healing an illness; this has resulted from the fact that evil spirits have stolen the soul or because strange spirits have entered the body. Moreover, the shaman is a foreteller, he reveals secrets of the past, and anticipates certain events; he is a guide of souls, accompanying the souls of the dead towards their new dwelling. In the North-American Indian culture, the shaman is considered to be a civilizing hero, who goes to heaven in order to bring gifts such as fire, laws or knowledge. As shown by I. Sibaldi⁶, the North-American shaman has mysterious knowledge about animals, being able to even share their looks. Moreover, the tradition of animal-shamans, who are characterized by insanity and cruelty, is a source of inspiration for P. Radin in his studies dedicated to the character of the benefic cheater, a personification of disorder, a principle of chaos; in myths and fairytales, in rites and community celebrations, this character becomes the force that eliminates taboos and limits imposed by every-day experience⁷.

Let us finally mention that the ecstasy is the origin and the purpose of a shaman's life. A shaman prepares himself in order to enter ecstasy, once he has proven that he has vocation in a spontaneous manner, and after he has been invested by the clan. The shamanic attitude is characterized by a tendency towards meditation and isolation, hysteric manifestations, hyper-sensitivity, unusual visions and audio phenomena, moods of psycho-physical depression, inclinations towards a contact with the supernatural, which is reached after long periods of apprenticeship in order to learn ecstatic techniques and mythical-esoteric knowledge (histories of the clan, secret languages, traditions and ritual instruments, such as bats and drums, the name and the functions of the spirits). Ecstasy is achieved by a gradual process of detachment from the corporal dimension. The invocation, under the rhythm of the drum sound, guides the spirit dwelling in the body of the shaman, who may be identified to an ancestor or a predecessor, and the assisting spirits who, under the shapes of animals (vulture, reindeer, bear, sturgeon, horse), help him in his journey towards the supernatural, preparing his entry into the first level of trance. The stage of the superficial ecstasy is characterized by the imaginary actions, the journey in the worlds beyond and the stories told by the shaman at the time of his ritual return: the shock and the catalepsy indicate its final stage⁸.

⁵ R. Hamayon, *Asia septentrională* (Septentrional Asia), in *Atlas of Religions*, 1992, apud Marco Drago, Andrea Boroli (ed. gen.), *op. cit.*, p. 1072.

⁶ I. Sibaldi, *Basmele ruso-siberiene ale calului magic* (Russian-Siberian Fairytales of the Magical Horse), 1994, in *Ibidem*.

⁷ C.E. Jung, *Psihologia figurii șamanului* (Psychology of the Shaman), 1954, în *Ibidem*.

⁸ U. Marazzi, *Texte ale șamanismului siberian și central-asiatic* (Texts of the Siberian and central-Asian Shamanism), 1984, în *Ibidem*, p. 1072.

3. Important polemics have been registered in *theology* regarding the superiority of the spirit; a significant moment is represented by the *Calvinism*, a complex of theological, practical-pastoral and ethical-political doctrines, which is inspired by the Genoa reform accomplished by Jean Calvin (1509–1564). The fundamental work of the Calvinist doctrine is *Institutio Christianae Religionis*; the four books of this paper include the fundamental elements of the Christian belief, formulated according to the Gospel; the specific feature of the Calvinist doctrine is represented by the thesis of the “double predestination”: one of those chosen for redemption and one of those sentenced to death. In the 16th and 17th centuries, such a doctrine causes the separation of theologies in supporters of divine predestination, regardless of any consideration on sin, and those, among them the *Armenians*, who attenuate the absolute rigor of the divine decision until claiming that God’s predestination is based on foreseeing one’s faith or lack of faith. Jean Calvin addresses the so-called “spiritual libertines” who teach the superiority of spirit in relation to the observance of the norms and dogma imposed by either the Catholics or the protestants; he denounces this position in *Reply to a certain Dutchman who, claiming to consider all Christians as spiritual, allow them to contaminate their bodies with a certain type of idolatry*. After Jean Calvin’s death, the French moralist, Pierre Charron (1541–1603), is placed in a different context, and he is characterized as a skeptic and intellectualist nonconformist; his study, *The three books of Wisdom (Sagesse)*, 1601, is divided according to the motto taken from Paul’s letters: “The spiritual man judges everything, with no possibility for him to be judged” (*I. Corinteni*, 2, 15).

4. In the 17th century, the *medical tradition* is still maintained, and it identifies spirit with a mobile and subtle material substance, the finest and eternal part of blood. This tradition is transposed in philosophy by Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), the author of a vast philosophic system made of three parts: *De cive* (1642), *De corpore* (1655), *De homine* (1658), which situates Hobbes in materialism and conventionalism; the definition of philosophy at the beginning of *De corpore* agrees to the following characterization: “knowledge of effects and phenomena, defined by a correct reasoning, starting from knowledge of causes or of they have appeared, or perhaps of their possible generation starting from effects.” This is about a sort of materialism that excludes empiric knowledge, but theology too, because God is unborn, therefore outside the causal relation. However, the main object of “prime philosophy” is considered to be the material body laid down, which, as a whole, is regarded as the synonym of the Aristotelian category of “substance”. In this philosophic context, Hobbes considers that there are no immaterial spirits and that the phrase “incorporeal substance” is self-contradictory.

Nevertheless, during the same age, René Descartes (1596–1650) establishes the bases of a modern concept of spirit, which becomes the equivalent of the thinking matter or of conscience. “Therefore, I am nothing but a thinking substance, which

means I am a spirit, an intellect, or a reason....” In an unfinished methodological treatise, from year 1628, entitled *Regulae ad directionem ingenii*, Descartes defines 21 rules which may encourage the development of the “rightful mind” (*bona mens*), in order to acquire “universal knowledge.” Almost 10 years later, Descartes publishes *Method Speech* (1637), which, under the form of an intellectual autobiography, illustrates the considerations and prerogatives of a new philosophic method. He applies his own method in order to develop a *certain metaphysic*, leading to *Metaphysical Meditations* (1641), which shows how one may reach to “certain and apodictic” knowledge. We shall return to this issue later!

In the same modern age, John Locke (1632–1704), David Hume (1711–1776) and George Berkley (1685–1753) use the term *mind* instead of soul and spirit.

In 1671, John Locke elaborates a *project* in view of approaching the issue of knowledge, its possibilities and limits; only twenty years later does he achieve his project by publishing the book *Essay on Human Intellect* (1690) where he examines the “origin, certainty and extent of human knowledge, as well as the foundations and stages of faith, opinion and acceptance”; in other words, the *idea of soul* is replaced by thought, a cognitive instrument which eludes innate ideas, accepted by Cartesians and Platonicians from Cambridge school, in favour of sensation and reflection. Thus, John Locke begins to be considered as the founder of the empiric science of soul; a tradition is inaugurated, continuing without interruption by the works of David Hume (1711–1776), David Hartley (1705–1757), Thomas Reid (1710–1796) and of the Scottish school, in France, and by the works and school of Pierre Paul Royer-Collard (1763–1845) and of Théodore Jeuffroy (1796–1842), in Anglia, including John Stuart Mull (1806–1873), Alexander Bain (1818–1903) and Herbert Spencer (1820–1903); psychology becomes an independent science and the soul represents its favorite study matter⁹.

5. In the Romanian philosophy, Florian Nicolau (1920–1993), who is given currency again by “Revista de filozofie” (*the Philosophy Magazine*), after 1990, elaborates the paper *On spirit*, a paper that is anchored in the science of the 20th century by means of several sharp philosophic convictions. The paper has nine chapters: *Introduction; Psychisms; Conscious States; Conscious Programme; World of Ideas; Ego; The gap between human nature and the world of ideas; Supremacy of the Spirit; Epilogue*¹⁰.

According to Florian Nicolau, every living creature that is endowed with spirit evolves only by its degree of participation in the world of ideas, which provides it with an evolutionary potential. Following Platon’s outlook, the world of ideas is thought to exist objectively; thus, people could no longer evolve infinitely, within

⁹ Janet & Seaille, *Histoire de la philosophie*, 1887, Paris, p. 34.

¹⁰ According to Marin Diaconu, *Un eseu clasic și contemporan* (A classical and contemporary essay), in “Revista de filozofie”, volume XLI, nr. 4, p. 387, Bucharest, 1994.

their own species, and they would have the same experience as the living creatures endowed with “psychisms”: they could no longer evolve and the passage from the individual way to the supernatural one could no longer be performed entirely; therefore, there would no longer be any living creatures endowed with spirit¹¹.

As far as *egos* are concerned, Florian Nicolau claims that conscious programmes are their creation, based on the resemblances between the spirit of living creatures and the world of ideas; although there is an *essential differentiation* between man’s spirit and the world of ideas, the one caused by the fact that it is not peoples’ spirits that make up the world of ideas, but only a part of their activities, or the products of this activity. But the world of ideas also includes the names of famous people, their biographies, beside conscious programmes. They usually say about these people that they have become immortal. In fact, as Florian Nicolau says, the products of their spirit have become immortal, a term referring to the living creature that is endowed with spirit, and dies only in flesh. But the issue whether man’s spiritual being, his ego, is immortal does not belong to the category of solvable issues at the current stage of our knowledge. According to Nicolau, this issue is related to faith and it is solvable only within this field¹².

One should notice the *relation* described by Florian Nicolau *among philosophy, religion and science*. The Romanian analyst admits that the association between rationality and the religious perspective may reveal what should not persist as, in the modern world, the purpose of faith in a divinity is the return to rationality, to fulfilling the finality of human existence. The evolution of human knowledge has included periods when science and religion could not coexist, but the great spirits of humankind were also believers. Thus, at the beginning of the modern age, science seems to weaken religion, and many scientists believe that the principle of objectivity is incompatible with any religious principle or precept. In 1990, Nicolau notices that the principle of objectivity is thought to represent a valuable position, but scientists themselves conclude that mankind needs the support of faith by all means. This leads to the idea that the relations between philosophy, science and religion cannot be contradictory as far as the characterization of spirit or soul is concerned.

Our reference to Florian Nicolau’s paper, *Despre suflet* (On soul), is meant to stir researchers’ interest in such works that no one knew anything about for certain periods of time.

6. Among the thinkers who open the gates of modern age, Descartes (1596–1650) dedicates a part of his time to the passions of soul, which are very common in the 16th and 17th centuries¹³. We must underline from the beginning the

¹¹ Florian Nicolau, *Despre spirit* (fragment), in the quoted magazine, p. 388.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 391.

¹³ The collection “Classics of Universal Philosophy”, attended by Idel Segal, at Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, includes, in 1984, translated by Dan Răutu, the work of René Descartes,

complexity of Descartes' orientations: philosophic, ethic, psychological, and anatomo-physiological, although he confesses that "my plan was not to explain passions as an orator, not even as a theoretician of morality (*philosophe moral*), but merely as a naturalist (*physicien*)"¹⁴. On the other hand, during the Cartesian period, there is a rich literature dedicated to the topic of passions. Gh. Brătescu notes that the Dominical preacher Nicolas Coeffeteau elaborated a *Picture of human passions, of their causes and effects*, which is published in seven editions only within the interval 1620–1632; the write and the physician Marin Cureau de la Chambre published, between 1640 and 1652, a treatise in four volumes, entitled *Characters of passions*, which was very appreciated by his contemporaries; in 1641, the monk and preacher Jean-François Senault revealed a treatise of scholastic orientation, *On the use of passions*, where he fought against certain principles of practical morality adopted by the stoics; the clergyman and the man of letters Jean-Pierre Camus also includes, in his ample apologetic paper *The spirit of all-happy François de Sales, a Treatise on passions*, which oscillates between neo-stoicism and neo-Platonism¹⁵.

It is well-known that Descartes would not show off his erudition, and has, therefore, left the impression that he knew the above-mentioned writings because he was determined "not to study anymore unless for his own instruction, and not to share his thoughts except to those who might talk to in private"¹⁶. In fact, Descartes maintains a "private conversation", by means of letters and not only, with princess Elisabeth of Bohemia. She was born in 1618 (she is 22 years younger than Descartes), at Heidelberg, and she is the third of the 13 children of the Elector Palatine¹⁷ Frederic V, who, soon after Elisabeth's birth, is elected king of Bohemia; history shall remember him as "the one-winter monarch" because, after his defeat at the White Mountain in 1620, he chooses the exile, and settles in Hague, while Elisabeth goes to Germany, at her grand-mother, Louise Juliana, the widow of the Elector Palatine of Nassau. In 1628, the young princess is brought to the Netherlands, together with her parents; but, since her father dies of plague, she remains with her numerous siblings in the care of their mother, Elisabeth Stuart, daughter of King James I of England (Gh. Brătescu, *op. cit.*, p. 8).

The young palatine princess, who has her mother's name, manifests an inclination to study; she learns several languages, acquires basic notions of mathematics physics, and is interested in the philosophic and scientific disputes of her time; her health is rather poor, and she sometimes suffers from melancholy. In

Les Passions de l'âme, with an *Introductory Study*, ample and well documented, and with numerous *Notes*, elaborated by Gheorghe Brătescu. This edition is used hereinafter.

¹⁴ According to note 1 of Gheorghe Brătescu, p. 175.

¹⁵ According to Gh. Brătescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 5–6.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 7; we shall continue to present the pages from the contributions of Gh. Brătescu in our text between parentheses.

¹⁷ A person with the right to be elected king.

1643, encouraged by Regius, one of Descartes' favorite disciples, she comes to see the latter for information on *the issue of the connection between soul and body*. The princess is confused by the fact that flesh lusts and faults are able to darken to the spirit, and that the most elevated and most obvious philosophic perceptions cannot impose peace in a soul that is troubled by the vulgar nuisances of daily life. Descartes responds with utmost goodwill at Elisabeth's questions, gradually becoming a conscience "director" or even a practitioner, making her trust her own skills again and prescribing her drugs and mineral waters (*Ibidem*, p. 9).

After three years of correspondence, on 15 June 1646, Descartes informs Pierre Chanut that he has produced "a small treatise on the nature of soul passions", which represents about two thirds of the text that he is to publish in 1649. Since, in a letter from 21 May 1643, he confesses to Elisabeth that "he loses his temper when he sees her and he is so disturbed that he forgets his thoughts", we may consider that the *Treatise on Passions* "is the fruit of a passion itself, of the exemplary friendship between Descartes and Elisabeth of Bohemia" (p. 11).

Nevertheless, the *Passions of the Soul* must not be regarded as an "occasional work", generated by sentimental feelings; on the contrary, even since 1628, Descartes orients his preoccupations towards knowledge of the most important scientific results, endeavouring to a "complete explanation of the Universe", in a *Treatise on the World*. In a preface-letter to the French translation from 1647 of the *Philosophy Principles*, Descartes provides a general picture of the fields of knowledge and of the exploration technique for these fields, making a statement that has become famous afterwards: "The entire philosophy is like a tree, with metaphysical roots, with physics as its trunk, and all the other sciences as the branches coming out of the trunk, which are reduced to three main ones, medicine, mechanics and ethics"¹⁸. Therefore, the *Passions of the Soul* abounds in descriptions of the physiological processes at the level of the corporal sub-layer of passions, such as blood circulation and the circulation of "animal spirits" through vessels and nerves, the specific activity of the heart, muscular contraction, etc.

In his *Passions of the Soul*, Descartes tries to clarify certain unifying means, in the human being, of the soul with the body, as this is the issue that could materialize his metaphysical conception of God – an uncreated, spiritual and infinite matter. The Creator of the two substances, one, immaterial and thoughtful (*souls*), and the other one, material and stretched (bodies). Synthetically describing Descartes' metaphysics, no essence continuity may be underlined between these two substances, no evidence of one descending from the other, and no possibility for one to be transformed into the other. The soul, participating in the divine spirituality, enjoys self-consciousness, initiative, spontaneity, finality, creativity, based on the free will that the Creator endowed it with. On the other hand, the body

¹⁸ Quoted from Gh. Brătescu, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

is merely characterized by spatiality; the body has no active force of its own, since it moves only as a consequence of exterior impulses or of that quantity of energy that it has been provided with by the divinity. Although he denies the existence of direct connections between body and soul, he admits that a disturbed soul influences the somatic functions and that, on the other hand, certain bodily drawbacks are able to reduce the specific activities of the spirit (these observations are made by Gh. Brătescu).

Descartes shows that man is a “self-sufficient being” and he proves his originality by the unification of soul and body, a unification that cannot be undone as long as he lives because it is performed at the level of essences; “man’s soul is of another nature than the body, but it is connected and united with latter that it seems to be “sewn” to the body¹⁹. As he talks about the close connection between body and soul, Descartes tries to explain why man is a unique creature in the Universe: “*ni ange, ni bête*” (neither an angel, not an animal). Although they are heterogeneous and contradictory entities, their joining is neither apparent nor accidental; the unification of the body with the soul generates “a new, living and tumultuous reality”²⁰.

As previously mentioned, passions are often talked about in the first half of the 16th century, and their definition depends on the vocabulary that it belongs to. Descartes himself takes the term from the scholastic vocabulary, but provides it with another meaning, directing it towards psycho-physiology. Scholastics define passion as opposed to action. As they talk about the passions of the soul, they are generated by *active* factors; in other words, passions are phenomena produced in the psychic due to certain impulses coming from man’s own body or by means of man’s own body. This characterization shows that Descartes includes in the category of passions not only emotions and feelings, but also sensations and perceptions. The commentators of Cartesian works underline that any soul movement that is not caused by the spirit, but is imposed to the spirit by the incitation coming from the outside, incitation originating in the body or transmitted by means of corporal mechanisms, represents a passion.

Etymologically speaking, the term comes from the Latin *passio*, meaning *to suffer, to endure*, as the soul *bears* the action of an exterior cause. In Romanian, *passion* is related to *patima*, suffering, and to *experience*, as forms of living “under the force of the other”. Mircea Vulcănescu writes that *suffering* “in Romanian, does not mean only suffering in the restricted meaning of *pain*, but metaphysical alteration of a being, referring to an experience, endurance of someone else’s work, its registration in the personal being, acceptance”²¹.

¹⁹ P. Mesnard, *Descartes ou le combat pour la vérité*, Paris, 1966, p. 72, *apud ibidem*, p. 18.

²⁰ Marcelle Barjonet-Hurax, *Descartes*, Paris, 1963, p. 69, *apud ibidem*, p. 20.

²¹ Mircea Vulcănescu, *Dimensiunea românească a existenței* (Romanian Dimension of Existence), in “Caiete critice” (Critical Books), 1983, nr. 1–2, p. 178.

As he comments upon the interpretations of F. Alquié²², who believes that the Cartesian passion “does not express the profound and free human personality”, but “a sign of dependency”, Gh. Brătescu adds that this is also the case of “love, lust, fear and anger; the soul feels these as they become an echo or bear the effects of certain material movements produced within one’s own body”²³. Loyal commentator of *Passions of the Soul*, the French moralist Alain (Émile Chartier) – 1868–1951 – claims that “passions only exist in the soul”²⁴, but their origin is in the body. In other words, bodily manifestations relate to the psychic ones by means of passions, which we have previously underlined about Descartes. In her Treatise, she manages to explain the fact that passions are complex phenomena because they result from the connection between the material substance and the spiritual one, and because they frequently combine so that what may seem to represent a unique passion is actually the manifestation of an entire unit of passions.

Gh. Brătescu believes that Descartes also infers the concept of *conditioned reflex*, its underlining being rightfully attributed, as it is well-known, to the Russian philologist Ivan Pavlov (1849–1936). There are, indeed, arguments in *Passions of the Soul*; for instance, *Article C* (“Sadness”) says that “I notice that sadness causes a weak and slow pulse, and we feel our heart is tied by chains and frozen by icicles, transmitting their cold to entire body; nevertheless, we sometimes manifest an accentuated appetite and feel that our stomach never ceases to do its job, except when sadness is mixed with hatred”²⁵. In the note written by Gh. Brătescu²⁶, it is shown that, having read this article, Princess Elisabeth, somehow irritated, writes to Descartes the following: “Sadness always fades my appetite, even if it is not mixed with any kind of hatred, as it is caused by the death of a friend.” In May 1646, the philosopher replies that, as far as he is concerned, he sleeps and eats very well when he is sad, worried or in danger; on the contrary, when he is happy, he neither eats nor sleeps. We believe that this is another piece of evidence that many pages of Descartes’ work are written based on *introspection*; we also refer to *Discours de la méthode pour bien conduire sa raison et chercher la vérité dans les sciences*.

Did Descartes write *Passions of the Soul* as a moralist, or as a psychologist, or as a physiologist? We think that the answer is given by Paul Landormy:

²² F. Alquié, *Le désir d'éternité*, Paris, 1943, p. 19.

²³ Gh. Brătescu, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

²⁴ Alain, *Studii și eseuri* (Studies and Essays), vol. I, translations and chronologic table by Alexandru Băciu and N. Steinhardt, Foreword by Mihail Sebastian (text reproduced from the magazine “Vremea” from 16 February 1936). Preface by Ion Pascadi, Bucharest, Editura Minerva, 1973, p. 144.

²⁵ R. Descartes, *Pasiunile sufletului* (Passions of the Soul), Bucharest, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1984, p. 110.

²⁶ Gh. Brătescu elaborates these observations based on certain suggestions from the commentaries of several French editions of *Passions of the Soul* (P. Mesnard, Fr. Mizrachi and Geneviève Rodis-Lewis).

“Descartes wants to convince the spiritual authorities of his time that he does not aim to enter the territory of ethics, which is severely guarded by the ecclesiastic forums.”²⁷ One may indeed notice argumentative differences between the work and the letters sent to the palatine, to Chanut, or to the Queen of Sweden; in the correspondence which is not meant to be immediately published, the philosopher makes incursions in metaphysics, theology and science (physics, biology, anatomo-physiology). Therefore, Descartes provides passion with a special meaning: a manifestation of the connection between human soul and body; passions appear as indispensable forms of human being manifestation.

²⁷ Paul Landormy, *Descartes*, Paris, 1908, p. 129.

