Admiration at First Sight:
The Act of Admiring in Seventeenth-Century French Literature

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Abstract

Admiration has variously been discussed as a positive or negative passion for centuries, due in large part to its complex location somewhere between the individual and the social, the active and the contemplative, the neutral and the evaluative. From its Latin roots, the meaning of admiration has changed over time, losing its neutral association with positive or negative awe, and gaining a social, shared connotation of pleasurable desirability. In seventeenth-century France, the understanding of admiration's often incongruous layers were exposed by some of the most well-known authors of the period. René Descartes's *Traité des Passions de l'âme* privileges admiration as the first of the primary passions. Neutral and involuntary, admiration arises from surprise at something new and unexpected, without evaluation. Pierre Corneille incorporates this neutrality of admiration in his plays: greatness arises out of the ability to amaze, which can result from morally positive or negative acts. Blaise Pascal's *Pensées* shows admiration occurring on two levels: wonder for the divine unknown and desire for earthly greatness that generates jealousy and envy. Man desires greater understanding of God's creation, yet admiration for others and the desire to be admired consumes his daily activity. François de La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes* considers admiration in a purely social context, depicting it as a passion that man's *amour-propre* pushes him to seek from others. Admiration confers value upon the admired who cannot control his or her own admirable qualities. As the Princesse de Clèves learns in Lafayette's novel by the same name, admiration at court is a

dangerous, uncontrollable and unavoidable passion, capable of reshaping the desires of even the most virtuous.

This study considers admiration's associations with God, the Court, and heroism, and its crucial place in seventeenth-century literature and philosophy. This period of undeniable categorization and systematization of human emotions and passions arises not only from a philosophical desire to control, but from a need to understand the physical inner workings of the body. Viewing the period through a "Cartesian gaze," this study privileges admiration as a key term in discussing man's understanding of his own relationship to the exterior world. For the modern reader of these early-modern texts, admiration's multiplicity leads to several key questions: Who, if anyone, controls and determines admiration? What causes admiration and is it desirable? And most importantly, what does admiration "do" for the author, the reader, and the text? Beginning with Descartes and continuing throughout the early-modern period, admiration is invariably linked to notions of surprise, wonder, newness, contemplation, and knowledge. The authors considered in this study, however, incorporate these ideas to impressively disparate ends, showing the adaptability that makes admiration such a fascinating term in seventeenth-century France.

Table of Contents

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Introduction

According to the *Trésor de la langue française*, the primary definition of admiration is a "Sentiment complexe d'étonnement, le plus souvent mêlé de plaisir exalté et d'approbation devant ce qui est estimé supérieurement beau, bon ou grand."[1] Admiration has variously been discussed as a positive or negative passion for centuries, due in large part to its complex location somewhere between the individual and the social, the active and the contemplative, the neutral and the evaluative. The word "admiration" comes from the Latin "admirari": *ad*, meaning "à" and *mirari*, meaning "s'étonner."[2] From its Latin roots, however, the meaning of admiration has changed over time, losing its neutral association with positive or negative awe, and gaining a social, shared connotation of pleasurable desirability. In seventeenth-century France, the understanding of admiration spanned all of these definitions as admiration's often incongruous layers were exposed by some of the most well-known authors of the period. René Descartes's *Traité des Passions de l'âme* privileges admiration as the first of the primary passions. Neutral and involuntary, admiration arises from surprise at something new and unexpected, without evaluating whether it is good or bad for the individual. Pierre Corneille incorporates this

[1] "Admiration," *Le Trésor de La Langue Française Informatisé*, accessed January 7, 2014, http://atilf.atilf.fr/.
[2] Alain Rey, "Admiration," *Dictionnaire Historique de La Langue Française : Contenant Les Mots Français En Usage et Quelques Autres Délaissés, Avec Leur Origine Proche et Lointaine* (Paris: Dictionnaires le Robert, 2000), 23.

neutrality of admiration in his plays: greatness arises out of the ability to amaze, which can result from morally positive or negative acts. Blaise Pascal's *Pensées* shows admiration ocurring on two levels: wonder for the divine unknown and desire for earthly greatness that generates jealousy and envy. Man desires greater understanding of God's creation, yet admiration for others and the desire to be admired consumes his daily activity as the passion begins to lose its quality as a sudden, passing surprise. Unable to recognize the limits to his own understanding, man becomes focused on the social, comparative aspects of "admiration." François de La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes* considers admiration in a purely social context, depicting it as a passion that man's *amour-propre* unavoidably desires to inspire in others. Admiration thus becomes a social currency that, when exchanged at court, increases or decreases an individual's relative "value."[3] As an evaluative passion, admiration confers value upon the admired who cannot control his or her own admirable qualities. As the Princesse de Clèves learns in Lafayette's novel by the same name, admiration is a dangerous, uncontrollable and unavoidable passion, capable of reshaping the desires of even the most virtuous.

This study considers admiration's associations with God, the Court, and heroism, and its crucial place in seventeenth-century literature and philosophy. In the introduction to her book *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, Susan James explains the seventeenth-century turn toward understanding human emotion as

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[3] For a detailed examination of the "currency" of passions as court, see Philippe Desan, "The Economy of Love in La Princesse de Clèves," in *An Inimitable Example: The Case for the Princesse de Clèves*, ed. Patrick Henry and John D. Lyons (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 104–24.

participating in, "a broader preoccupation in early-modern European culture with the relations between knowledge and control, whether of the self or others."[4] Yet, this period of undeniable categorization and systematization of human emotions and passions arises not only from a philosophical desire to control, but from a need to understand the physical inner workings of the body. The seventeenth century is traditionally thought of as a period that severed man neatly into two separately functioning parts: mind and body, inside and outside. James shows, however, that philosophers such as Descartes complicated the human body in new ways that emphasized cooperation over separation.[5] Erec Koch's comprehensive 2008 study of the early-modern concept of the body, *The Aesthetic Body: Passion, Sensibility, and Corporality in Seventeenth-Century France*, examines "the radical reshaping of the understanding of the body, of its interaction with the world, and of the production of sensibility and passion that occurred in France during the seventeenth century." [6] Complicating the common understanding of the Cartesian mind-body duality, Koch says that passions are in fact inextricably linked – both in their origin and in their effect – to the senses, the organs, and the circulatory system. In these studies that emphasize man's attempt to understand and control his own passions and emotions, admiration is touched on only tangentially. Viewing the period through a

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[4] Susan James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 2.

[5] Ibid., 159–182. James devotes the better part of her insightful chapter "Passion and Error" to *admiration* and its derivative passions, esteem and contempt.(Ibid.)

[6] Erec R. Koch, *The Aesthetic Body: Passion, Sensibility, and Corporeality in Seventeenth-Century France* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2008), 12. Koch examines the five senses as they appear in a multitude of authors and genres throughout the period, and touches only in passing on admiration as an intermediary that allows human beings to interact with the world around them.

"Cartesian gaze," this study privileges admiration as a key term in discussing man's understanding of his own relationship to the exterior world.

For the modern reader of these early-modern texts, admiration's multiplicity leads to several questions: Who, if anyone, controls and determines admiration? What causes admiration and is it desirable? And most importantly, what does admiration "do" for the author, the reader, and the text? This study argues that admiration remained a crucial term for writers throughout the second half of the seventeenth century in France. Beginning with Descartes and continuing throughout the early-modern period, admiration is invariably linked to notions of surprise, wonder, newness, contemplation, and knowledge. The authors considered in this study, however, incorporate these ideas to impressively disparate ends, showing the adaptability that makes admiration such a fascinating term in seventeenth-century France.

Contextualizing Admiration

The authors considered in this study reveal the open potential of *admiration* as they use the term to incorporate a range of nuanced definitions. John Lyons's study of the literary instances of "chance" throughout the seventeenth century notes,

> like any concept conveyed in a series of words over several millennia and in multiple languages, the study of 'chance' requires, at the least, incessant attention to at least three moments: that of the authors of antiquity whose ideas became the basis, or the pretext, for much writing in the early-modern period, that of the writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries themselves, and our own moment with its concerns through which we attempt to understand the past.[7]

[7] John D. Lyons, *The Phantom of Chance: From Fortune to Randomness in Seventeenth-Century French Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012) viii.

As Lyons suggests, what will interest us is not the precise definition of "admiration" at any given moment in time, but rather the twists and turns admiration takes across the period. It is therefore imperative to understand the cultural, historical, and definitional context in which Descartes, Corneille, Pascal, La Rochefoucauld, and Lafayette would have understood admiration. This brief overview of "admiration's past" is intended to open the discussion of admiration, but is in no way intended as an exhaustive inventory of the philosophical theories or literary instances of admiration.

Admiration's place in the seventeenth century is unique due to its frequent inclusion as one of the primary human passions, its renewed association with wonder early in the period, and its increasing association with beauty, desire and social standing at the close of the century. Prior to the seventeenth-century, admiration was used in wildly various ways. In the *Dictionnaire du moyen français (DMF)*, "admiration" is associated solely with surprise:

> "Sentiment d'émerveillement, d'étonnement"
> 1. "Émerveillement causé par qqc. ou qqn de supérieurement beau, bon, grand..."
> 2. "Étonnement, surprise causée par qqc. d'inattendu"
> 3. "Violente émotion, crainte causée par qqc. d'extraordinaire"
> B. -P. méton.
> 1. "Objet de la surprise, chose étonnante"
> 2. "Manifestation de l'étonnement, expression d'une vive emotion."[8]

The *DMF* definition of "admirer," however, reveals some of the complexities of the term that came to a head in the seventeenth century:

> I. - Empl. trans.

[8] "Admiration," *Dictionnaire Du Moyen Français* (Université de Lorraine), ATILF CNRS, accessed February 18, 2014, http://www.atilf.fr/dmf.

A. - "Regarder, considérer avec étonnement"
B. - [Souvent en cont. nég. ou restrictif à propos d'un adversaire] Admirer qqn. "Avoir une haute idée de qqn, faire cas de, estimer"
C. – "Craindre, redouter"
II. - Empl. intrans. ou pronom. "Se demander avec étonnement, s'étonner."[9]

As these definitions show, admiration and its associated terms had a variety of meanings in the medieval period, which led to a varied usage in the early part of the seventeenth century that informed Descartes definitive categorization and the manipulations that will be considered in this study.

Some of today's most well-known texts of the medieval period contain no mention of the term "admiration": *La chanson de Roland* (1090)[10] and Christine de Pizan's *Le Livre de la cité des dames* (1405),[11] for example. The *Roman de la Rose*, by Guillaume de Lorris (1230) et Jean de Meun (1275), on the other hand, contains multiple instances of both "admiration" and "admirer." Admiration so transfixes the lover as he sees the rose for the first time, that he is unable and unwilling to turn away from its source, as a series of other passions follow upon his initial admiring gaze: happiness, envy, pleasure, and desire.[13]

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[9] "Admirer," *Dictionnaire Du Moyen Français*, 2012, ATILF - CNRS & Université de Lorraine, http://www.atilf.fr/dmf.
[10] Based on a word search of the transcribed *liasses* available through the Bibliotheca Augustana: Raoul Mortier, ed., *La Chanson de Roland*, Oxford Manuscript (1090) (Paris, 1940), http://www.hs-augsburg.de/~harsch/gallica/Chronologie/11siecle/Roland/rol_ch00.html. Incidentally, the text contains only one instance of "estonat".
[11] Based on a word search of the transcribed text available through the Gutenberg Project: Christine de Pisan, *Le Trésor de La Cité Des Dames de Degré En Degré et de Tous Estatz*, 1405, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/26608/26608-h/26608-h.htm. Incidentally, the text contains only one instance of "surpregne".
[13] Jean de Meun and Guillaume de Lorris, *Le Roman de La Rose*, trans. Pierre Marteau, vol. 1, 3 vols. (Paris, 1878), http://www.gutenberg.org/files/16816/16816-h/16816-h.htm.

Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron*[14] includes a series of "contes" told by stranded travelers with the express intention of impressing the other members of the group. One would thus expect the text to contain multiple instances of "admiration" attributed to the various tales. Yet, the *Heptaméron* includes some form of "admiration" only seven times, and only three of those instances use the substantive. A brief examination of those three instances reveals that admiration is associated, respectively, with surprise, neutrality, and contemplation:

> "[m]es dames, je suis d'avis que vous mestiez vos jambons parmy nos andouilles, vous ferez belle aumosne!" Puis, en continuant son sermon, il feit venir le scandale à propos, et en discourant assez brusquement par dessus, avec quelques exemples, il se meit en grande admiration, disant: "Eh dea, messieurs et mesdames de Sainct-Martin, je m'estonne fort de vous, qui vous scandalisez pour moins que rien, et sans propos, et tenez vos comptes de moy partout, en disant: 'C'est un grand cas! mais qui l'eust cuydé, que le beau pere eust engrossy la fille de son hostesse? Vrayement, dist-il, voilà bien de quoy s'esbahir qu'un moyne ait engrossy une fille!' Mais venez ça, belles dames: ne devriez-vous pas bien vous estonner davantage, si la fille avoit engrossy le moyne?"[15]
>
> Chacun avoit ses vertuz [d'Elisor] en admiration, mais encores plus son estrangeté, car l'on ne congneut jamais qu'il aimast ne print aucune dame.[16]
>
> A l'heure, Simontault commencea: "Ce n'est chose si nouvelle, mes dames, d'oyr dire de vous quelque acte vertueulx qui me semble ne debvoir estre celé, mais

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[14] The *Heptaméron* seems an important text to consider as an early example of the intercalated tales written in the salon milieu, the subject of the fourth chapter of this study. In addition, it is worth noting that Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* makes explicit reference to the *Heptaméron*, as noted by Jean-Michel Delacomptée: "Il s'agit d'un récit aux allures de conte, du moins au début, mais d'un conte aussi provisoire qu'illusoire, d'un conte cruel. Coïncidence peut-être, au milieu des dames qui l'entourent, dont Mme de Clèves, la reine dauphine fait référence à Marguerite de Navarre, la sœur de François 1er, 'dont vous avez vu les contes.' Elle pense à l'*Heptaméron*, recueil paru à l'époque où se situe l'action du roman."
Jean-Michel Delacomptée, *Passions: La Princesse de Clèves* (Paris: Arléa, 2012), 41.

[15] Marguerite de Navarre, *L'heptaméron; Contes de La Reine de Navarre*, vol. 3 (Paris: Auguste Eudes, 1880), 248–249.

[16] Marguerite de Navarre, *L'heptaméron; Contes de La Reine de Navarre*, vol. 2 (Paris: Auguste Eudes, 1880), 209.

> plus tost escript en lettres d'or, afin de servir aux femmes d'exemple et aux hommes d'admiration."[17]

The sparseness of Marguerite de Navarre's explicit incorporation of admiration suggests a very deliberate word choice in these three examples. Further, their range of register shows admiration's varied uses across the early-modern period. In the first example above, Nomerfide tells the story of the "facetious Cordelier from Tours" whose sexual innuendos shock his congregation. Responding to their surprise at his behavior, he displays "grande admiration," and quips that they should not be "estonn[és]" or "esbahi[s]" that he should have impregnated a girl, for the opposite would be all the more shocking. The interplay between "admiration," "estonner," and "esbahir" in an already shocking context underscores the neutrality of this term for early-modern authors. The second quote from the *Heptaméron* shows that admiration is as easily applied to amazing virtue as it is to strangeness. The people who meet Elisor and witness his beauty and virtue each find his celibacy incomprehensible, which initiates their individual admiration. Similarly, the story of female virtue in the final quote will serve as an example for women and a source of "admiration" for men who presumably cannot follow the same example. These men wonder at the virtue of the women they see, unable to fully understand it. If they do not move beyond admiration to greater knowledge, they will remain stuck in contemplation, a state Descartes later terms "étonnement".

In Montaigne's 1580 *Essais*, some form of "admiration" appears 81 times, with the substantive form itself appearing 21 times.[18] The marked increase in the appearance of

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[17] Navarre, *L'heptaméron; Contes de La Reine de Navarre*, 1880, 3:248–249.

"admiration" in the *Essais* when compared to the *Heptaméron* and many earlier texts points to the philosophical preoccupation with admiration that continued to influence French literary texts throughout the seventeenth century. "Admiration" is either explicitly or implicitly linked with "estonnement" throughout the *Essais*, yet Montaigne clearly distinguishes between the two: "Toutesfois és ames moins genereuses,[19] l'estonnement et l'admiration peuvent faire naistre un pareil effect."[20] As Descartes defines it in the *Passions de l'âme*, "étonnement" is the inability to progess beyond a state of admiration. Whether Montaigne shares this definition or not, he includes both admiration and "étonnement", connecting them with the conjunction "et." This suggests that the terms are distinct, but closely related. Further, the two terms *may* generate a similar effect, implying that they are independent passions that may ultimately come to the same end in "less noble" souls.[22] In "Des boyteux," Montaigne elaborates: "L'admiration est

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[18] See "The Montaigne Project". ARTFL, University of Chicago. <http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/ARTFL/projects/montaigne/> Tue Jan 8, 2013

[19] For a developed definition of "généreuse" as relating to a noble ancestry see Nicolas Paige, "The Complexities of the French Classical Lexicon," in *Teaching and Eighteenth-Century French Women Writers*, ed. Faith Beasley (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2011), 17–24..

[20] Michel de Montaigne, "Par Divers Moyens On Arrive À Pareille Fin," in *Essais*, ed. Verdun L. Saulnier and Pierre Villey, vol. 1 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1978), 8, http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.0:2:1.montaigne.

[22] *Le Trésor de la langue française* defines "et" as "Conj. copulative servant à coordonner des termes, des groupes de termes et des phrases, et exprimant une addition, une jonction, un rapprochement."("Et," *Le Trésor de La Langue Française Informatisé*, accessed January 12, 2014, http://atilf.atilf.fr.)My argument is not that "admiration" and "étonnement" are unrelated, but rather that they are not synonymous. They are enumerated because they are distinct and function differently within Montaigne's text. As I argue elsewhere in this study, the listing of admiration alongside similar terms distinguishes it from its derivative passions.

fondement de toute philosophie, l'inquisition, le progrez, l'ignorance, le bout."[23]

Admiration constitutes a starting point, a curiosity, a questioning from which to progress toward the quest for further understanding, even if Montaigne views the end of this quest with skepticism. As the following quotes from "Apologie de Raimond Sebond" demonstrate, Montaigne repeatedly associates admiration with newness:

> Ce lyon, l'ayant apperçeu de loing, s'arresta premierement tout court, comme estant entré en admiration, et puis s'aprocha tout doucement, d'une façon molle et paisible, comme pour entrer en reconnoissance avec luy.[24]
>
> [Le soleil] est la piece de cette machine que nous descouvrons la plus esloignée de nous, et, par ce moyen, si peu connue, qu'ils estoient pardonnables d'en entrer en admiration et reverence.[25]
>
> Nous admirons et poisons mieux les choses estrangeres que les ordinaires; et, sans cela, je ne me fusse pas amusé à ce long registre: car, selon mon opinion, qui controllera de pres ce que nous voyons ordinairement des animaux qui vivent parmy nous, il y a dequoy y trouver des effects autant admirables que ceux qu'on va recueillant és pays et siecles estrangers.[26]

In the first quote, the lion's curiosity and surprise at seeing this new creature before him jolts him out of his habitual nature, "as if in a state of admiration." The lion then moves, quite literally, to a position of greater understanding. One of the questions each of the authors in this study will address is what man can do to emerge from, or rather move through, the awe-struck state of admiration. One clear answer for Montaigne, and later

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[23] Michel de Montaigne, "Des Boyteux," in *Essais*, ed. Pierre Villey and Verdun L. Saulnier, vol. 3 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1978), 1030, http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.0:3:0.montaigne.

[24] Michel de Montaigne, Pierre Villey, and Verdun L. Saulnier, "Apologie de Raimond Sebond," in *Essais*, vol. 2 (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1978), 477, http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.0:2:1.montaigne.

[25] Ibid., 514.

[26] Ibid., 467.

for Descartes, seems to be the quest for understanding: gaining familiarity with an object allows man to progress through admiration. Thus, the impossibility of experiencing the sun in the second quote leads man to a pardonable state of "admiration and reverence." As discussed earlier in the introduction, the coupling of admiration with another passion, "reverence," distinguishes the two terms even as it relates them and places them in close proximity: admiration is not reverence, since to state both would otherwise be redundant, but the breakdown of understanding leads the sun's observer from a state of admiration to a subsequent state of reverence. The double use of admiration in the final quote in fact offers two related but distinct interpretations of the term. In the first instance, Montaigne pairs "nous admirons" with "poisons," a sequence of actions implying that the observer would first admire the newness of something "estrangere" and then move to "weigh," or consider, it in more depth. The second instance, however ("il y a dequoy y trouver des effects autant admirables que ceux qu'on va recueillant és pays et siecles estrangers") emphasizes the "admirable" qualities of even the most mundane of animals surrounding us. Montaigne says that one can admire by looking at something familiar in a new way, just as the next section of this study will do with admiration itself.

Defining Admiration

"Admiration" has its roots in the Latin *admiror* and *miror* meaning "to wonder"

or "to be surprised."[27] Yet, when traced etymologically through medieval and renaissance France, it is no surprise that admiration remains a multi-faceted palimpsest of surprise, awe and veneration. The *Dictionnaire du moyen français* contains multiple references to "admirer" as synonymous with "craindre" or "redouter" throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.[28] According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the etymological origins of seventeenth-century admiration include:

> < Middle French *admiracion*, *admiration* (French *admiration*) astonishment, surprise (late 12th cent. in Old French as *ammiration*), cause of astonishment (second half of the 13th cent.), expression of astonishment (*c*1340) < classical Latin *admīrātiōn-* , *admīrātiō* wonder, astonishment, surprise, expression of astonishment or surprise, veneration, regard, remarkable circumstance or feature, marvel < *admīrāt-* , past participial stem of *admīrārī*.[29]

Long before Descartes's *Passions de l'âme*, therefore "admiration" was associated with "wonder" and "astonishment." This study will show that the term became more complex as its nuances began to shift throughout the seventeenth century. The *Trésor de la langue française* shows a similar connection between admiration and surprise throughout the medieval period:

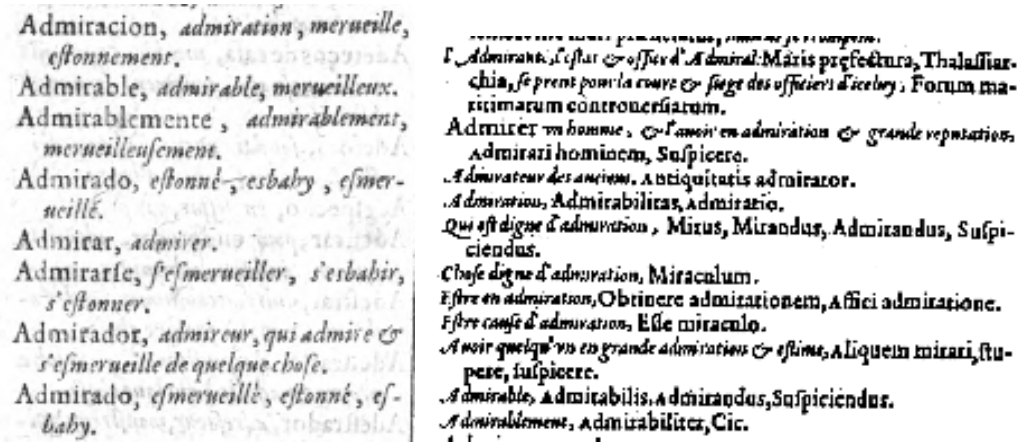
> **Étymol. ET HIST. — 1.** Dans trad., mil. XII[e] s. « sentiment de ravissement suscité par les hautes qualités d'une pers. » (*Dialogue Grégoire lo pape,* éd. Förster, 16-17 : Li saintismes hom Equices par nom, es parties de la contreie Valeire, par lo merite de sa uie ahier tres toz ilokes astoit euz de grand **ammiration.** [... pro vitae suae merito apud omnes illic magnae admirationis habebatur]); **2. a)** 1209 « sentiment de stupeur, d'effroi » (RENCLUS DE MOILIENS, *Miserere,* éd. van Hamel, 60, 4 ds T.-L. : Tout son cuer li a esmëu

[27] Charleton T. Lewis, "'Miror', 'Mirari',," *An Elementary Latin Dictionary* (New York: American Book Company, 1890), Numen: The Latin Lexicon, http://latinlexicon.org/definition.php?p1=1009967.
[28] "Admirer," 2012.
[29] "Admiration," *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/2566?p=emailAk4hAIxkB4IfE&d=2566.

> De pëur, d'**amiration,** Quant est en recordation Ke il a si grant faim ëu Dou bel fruit ke il a vëu); **b)** 1319-40 « action de s'étonner » (WATRIQUET DE COUVIN, *Dits,* éd. Scheler, 258, 862, *ibid. :* Ce fu droite **amiracion** De resgarder celle merveille).[30]

Associating admiration with "Ravissement," "stupeur," "effroi," and "action de s'étonner," the texts quoted by the *Trésor de la langue française* reflect an understanding of admiration that surpasses the surprise later attributed to it by Descartes. According to this definition, Montaigne and Descartes in fact soften "admiration" by separating it from "étonnement" and, in the case of Descartes, positioning it as the neutral initiator of any of these subsequent passions.

While Antoine Furretière's *Dictionnaire universel* and the first edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* did not become available until the end of the seventeenth century, two early "trésors de la langue" offer a useful summary of the common definitions and translations associated with the term in the early part of the century. Translating between French and Latin, and French and Spanish, both dictionaries link admiration to notions of wonder, surprise, and miracle:



Admiracion, *admiration, merueille, eſtonnement.*
Admirable, *admirable, merueilleux.*
Admirablemente, *admirablement, merueilleuſement.*
Admirado, *eſtonné, esbahy, eſmerueillé.*
Admirar, *admirer.*
Admirarſe, *ſ'eſmerueiller, s'esbahir, s'eſtonner.*
Admirador, *admireur, qui admire & s'eſmerueille de quelque choſe.*
Admirado, *eſmerueillé, eſtonné, eſbahy.*

L'Admirante, l'eſtat & office d'Admiral: Māris præfectura, Thalaſſiarchia, *ſe prent pour la court & ſiege des officiers d'iceluy:* Forum maritimarum controuerſiarum.
Admirer *vn homme, & l'auoir en admiration & grande reputation,* Admirari hominem, Suſpicere.
Admirateur des anciens. Antiquitatis admirator.
Admiration, Admirabilitas, Admiratio.
Qui eſt digne d'admiration, Mirus, Mirandus, Admirandus, Suſpiciendus.
Choſe digne d'admiration, Miraculum.
Eſtre en admiration, Obtinere admirationem, Affici admiratione.
Eſtre cauſe d'admiration, Eſſe miraculo.
Auoir quelqu'vn en grande admiration & eſtime, Aliquem mirari, ſtupere, ſuſpicere.
Admirable, Admirabilis, Admirandus, Suſpiciendus.
Admirablement, Admirabiliter, Cic.

[30] "Admiration."

The first image is an excerpt from Cesar Oudin's 1616 Tesoro de las dos lenguas *francesa y española = Tresor des deux langues françoise et espagnolle : auquel est contenue l'explication de toutes les deux respectiuement l'une par l'autre : divisé en deux parties*.[31] The second image is an excerpt from Jean Nicot's 1584 *Dictionnaire françois-latin*.[32] Both the Latin and Spanish synonyms emphasize notions of surprise: "merveille, estonnement, s'esmerveiller, s'esbahir" in the *Tesoro* and "suspiciendus" and even "miraculum" in the *Dictionnaire françois-latin*. Later in the *Tésoro*, Oudin uses admiration as part of his translation for both "arquear las cejas: froncer les sourcils par admiration" and "suspenso: suspens, doubteux, incertain: ravi en admiration." These definitions associate surprise with admiration, even as they suggest several derivative actions that may arise from a state of admiration. The definition seems to shift slightly when applied to a man: "Admirer *un homme, et l'avoir en admiration et grande reputation,* Admirari hominem, Suspicere… *Avoir quelqu'un en grande admiration et estime*, Aliqué mirari, stupere, suspicere." The link between "admiration" and "reputation" or "estime" is unclear in this definition. While the terms could be read synonymously, and thus point to the socially driven admiration apparent in the *Princesse de Clèves*, they

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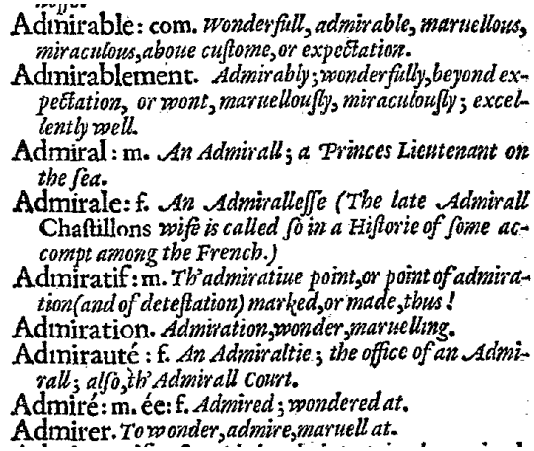
[31] Cesar Oudin, "Admiration," *Tesoro de Las Dos Lenguas Francesa Y Española = Tresor Des Deux Langues Françoise et Espagnolle : Auquel Est Contenue L'explication de Toutes Les Deux Respectiuement L'une Par L'autre : Divisé En Deux Parties* (Paris: Editions Marc Orry and Julián Lorente, 1616).

[32] Jean Nicot, "Admiration," *Dictionnaire François-Latin, Augmenté Outre Les Précédentes Impressions D'infinies Dictions Françoises, Principalement Des Mots de Marine, Vénerie et Faulconnerie, Recueilli Des Observations de Plusieurs Hommes Doctes, Entre Autres de M. Nicot,... et Réduit À La Forme et Perfection Des Dictionnaires Grecs et Latins* (Paris: J. Du Puys, 1584), http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6153020h/f30.image.

could also have a causal relationship: admiration followed by approbation. In other words, the objective, neutral movement of admiration could be considered as prior to and distinct from the judgments of *estime* and *grande reputation*. Cotgrave's 1611 *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues*[33] also shows early signs of associating "admirable" and "admirablement" with expectations and judgment:



Admirable: com. *Wonderfull, admirable, maruellous, miraculous, aboue cuſtome, or expectation.*
Admirablement. *Admirably; wonderfully, beyond expectation, or wont, maruellouſly, miraculouſly; excellently well.*
Admiral: m. *An Admirall; a Princes Lieutenant on the ſea.*
Admirale: f. *An Admiralleſſe (The late Admirall* Chaſtillons *wife is called ſo in a Hiſtorie of ſome accompt among the French.)*
Admiratif: m. *Th'admiratiue point, or point of admiration (and of deteſtation) marked, or made, thus!*
Admiration. *Admiration, wonder, maruelling.*
Admirauté: f. *An Admiraltie; the office of an Admirall; alſo, th'Admirall Court.*
Admiré: m. ée: f. *Admired; wondered at.*
Admirer. *To wonder, admire, maruell at.*

While the substantive and verbal forms remain objectively associated with marvel and wonder, Cotgrave's definitions of the adjective and the adverb suggest reception and interpretation of a new object by a thinking, judging subject who evaluates admiration. This turn toward the evaluative foreshadows the social use of admiration incorporated by Pascal, La Rochefoucauld, and Lafayette.[35]

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[33] Randle Cotgrave, "Admiration," *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (London: Adam Islip, 1611), http://www.pbm.com/~lindahl/cotgrave/search/025r.html.
[35] See also Sebastián de Covarrubias Horozco, "Admiracion," *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española* (Madrid, 1611), Universidad de Sevilla: Fondo Antiguo, http://fondosdigitales.us.es/fondos/libros/765/69/tesoro-de-la-lengua-castellana-o-espanola/. Covarrubias Horozco defines "admiracion" as an impetus to begin "questioning, scrutinizing, and discovering" more about what has been perceived in order to "know the truth."

While no new dictionaries were published in the middle of the century, the two dictionaries published at the end of the century – Antoine Furetière's Dictionary, published in 1690[36] and the 1694 *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* – were in fact composed throughout the second half of the seventeenth century, making them ideally suited to testify to the use of admiration throughout the period. Furetière's dictionary defines *admiration* as:

> Action par laquelle on regarde avec estonnement quelque chose de grand et de surprenant. *L'admiration* est la fille de l'ignorance. Ce qui s'entend à l'égard des ouvrages des hommes. Car à l'égard de ceux de Dieu, plus on les connoist, et plus ils donnent d'*admiration*.[37]

Furetière provides a clear distinction between the "works of man" and those of God. Admiration is an "act of looking with surprise," and can occur only with ignorance: once we have knowledge of something, admiration disappears. Therefore, resulting from an instantaneous, involuntary reaction, admiration comes directly from observation rather than from judgment. Further, Furetière's definition of admiration as the "fille de l'ignorance" implies that it can only occur in the absence of knowledge and understanding. As soon as ignorance is removed, man can no longer experience admiration. This concept is central to Descartes's incorporation of "admiration," and likely informed both Furetière's dictionary as well as that of the *Académie*. It is also worth noting that Furetière's definition incorporates the possibility of a negative external

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[36] Furetière published "essais," or "attempts" at a dictionnaire universel as early as 1684. See the BNF digitized book at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k506130>.

[37] Antoine Furretière, "Admiration," *Dictionnaire Universel, Contenant Généralement Tous Les Mots François Tant Vieux Que Modernes, et Les Termes de Toutes Les Sciences et Des Arts* (La Haye: A. et R. Leers, 1690).

source: the "great and surprising" thing that provokes admiration need not be desirable but merely surprising. Furetière provides for one important exception: the more man knows God and his works, the more he admires him. The closer man gets to understanding God, the greater and more surprising He seems. The implication is that God can never be fully known, a concept that will be central to the reading of Pascal's *Pensées* proposed in Chapter 3 of this study: man should inherently want to understand God but, being unable to do so, turns instead to admiring and seeking greater knowledge of his fellow man. Furetière's definition for "admirer" further links the admiration for God to an impossibility to understand:

> Regarder avec estonnement quelque chose de surprenant, ou dont on ignore les causes. *Admirer* les mysteres divins, *admirer* la magnificence d'un Prince, j'*admire* la vertu de cet homme-là, et l'avarice de celuy-cy, on ne peut trop *admirer* la grandeur du ciel, la petitesse des atomes.[38]

Man can admire virtue, avarice, greatness and divine mysteries. In other words, he admires that which escapes his current comprehension. The implication, however, is that he will strive to gain a greater understanding of that which he admires. The final clause of Furetière's definition bears a striking resemblance to Pascal's discussion of the infinitely large and the infinitely small in the "Disproportion de l'homme":

> Car enfin qu'est-ce qu'un homme dans la nature: Un néant à l'égard de l'infini, un tout à l'égard du néant, un milieu entre rien et tout, infiniment éloigné de comprendre les extrêmes.[39]

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[38] Antoine Furretière, "Admirer," *Dictionnaire Universel, Contenant Généralement Tous Les Mots François Tant Vieux Que Modernes, et Les Termes de Toutes Les Sciences et Des Arts* (La Haye: A. et R. Leers, 1690), http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k50614b/f43.image.

[39] Fragment 199 in the Lafuma edition, Sellier 230, Brunschvicg 72. Henceforth, the *Pensées* will be cited parenthetically. In the course of working on Pascal, I have consulted many editions. Pascal's *Pensées* will be cited from the Lafuma, Sellier and Brunschvicg Editions and, in some

Pascal goes on to say that it is man's inability to understand the extremes and his discomfort with being in a state of admiration and his desire to move beyond it to a state of understanding, that drives his contemplation away from God and toward his fellow man. Admiration thus defined also underscores the surprising, the new, and the incomprehensible, elements that in the Cartesian conception of the passions opens the possibility for all other passions to follow as the brain engages with the unknown object.

The 1694 *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* defines *admiration* as: "Action par laquelle on admire. *Quand il voit un beau tableau il est en admiration, il est ravi en admiration*."[40] Action is the very first word in the definition, suggesting that admiration provokes movement and change. This movement, however, seems to act upon a passive admirer who is "en admiration." Thus, from the first sentence of the *Académie's* definition, the state of admiration happens actively and involuntarily within the admirer. The reader cannot even begin to make sense of this definition without first examining the *Académie*'s definition of "*admirer*":

> Considérer avec surprise, avec estonnement une chose qui est extraordinaire en quelque manière que ce soit. *Admirer les oeuvres de Dieu, la grandeur du ciel. admirer une beauté parfaite. admirer la sagesse, la valeur, la magnificence d'un Prince. j'admire la folie des hommes*.[41]

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instances from the Le Guern edition (Blaise Pascal and Michel Le Guern, *Pensées* (Paris: Folio, 2004). For a good concordance to the *Pensées* see the Sellier edition in the anthology *Moralistes du XVIIe siècle* (Blaise Pascal, "Pensées," in *Moralistes Du XVIIe Siècle*, ed. Philippe Sellier (Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont, 1992), 284–604.)

[40] "Admiration," *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (Paris: Académie française, 1694), ARTFL Dictionnaires d'autrefois, http://artflx.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=admiration.

[41] "Admirer," *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (Paris: Académie française, 1694), ARTFL Dictionnaires d'autrefois, http://artflx.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=admiration.

Whereas Furretière's definition pairs the mundane with the divine and the virtuous with the sinful, only to return again to the divine in the final example, the *Académie's* definition proceeds hierarchically from God's works to man's virtues, to his "folie." The negative, while implied in the definition, "en quelque manière que ce soit," has very little place in this definition. By the fourth edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*, published in 1762, the definition of "admiration" reads:

> Sentiment de celui qui regarde une chose comme merveilleuse dans son genre. *Quand il voit un beau tableau, il est en admiration, Il est ravi en admiration. Avoir de l'admiration... Donner de l'admiration. S'attirer l'admiration de tout le monde. Mouvement d'admiration. ... C'est un sujet d'admiration. C'est une chose digne d'admiration.*[42]

Several important shifts occur between these two definitions. First, except for the "beau tableau," which is carried over from the first-edition definition of admiration and remains until the 8th edition in 1932, the causes of admiration disappear and the definition focuses instead on the subject's feeling of admiration. There is thus a shift away from the involuntary origins of admiration centered on the external object that we see in the earlier definitions. This shift is also indicated by the appearance of the word "digne" in the final part of the definition, focusing the reader on the subject's internal evaluation of a new "chose." Secondly, the word "action" has disappeared from the beginning of the definition, suggesting that the action of the passion within the body is no longer independent from the admirer. Thirdly, we are no longer directed to "admirer" to obtain a

[42] "Admiration," 1694. At this point, the definition of *admiration* resembles our modern definition and seems to arise less from a sudden surprise, and more from a specific knowledge of desirable qualities in a person or object.

complete definition of the word. By not performing this secondary search, we are missing the action by which "admiration" is produced – "considérer avec surprise, avec estonnement." Admiration goes from being an "*action*" to being a "*sentiment*." The 1694 *Dictionnaire de l'Académie* defines "sentiment" as:

> l'impression que font les objets sur les sens. *Sentiment picquant, aigu. douloureux, agreable, exquis, delicat*….
>
> Il se dit aussi, Des affections, des passions, & de tous les mouvemens de l'ame. *Sentiment noble, élevé, genereux, bas, lasche. sentiment d'amour, de tendresse. sentiment de haine, d'aversion, de colere, de vengeance. sentiment de joye, de plaisir. sentiment de douleur. sentiment de reconnoissance. sentimens d'estime, de respect. sentimens de repentir. il est mort dans les meilleurs sentimens du monde, dans de trés-bons sentimens de pieté, de religion*. …
>
> Il signifie aussi, l'Opinion qu'on a de quelque chose, ce qu'on en pense, ce qu'on en juge. *Bon sentiment, mauvais sentiment. il est dans de bons sentimens. il a de mauvais sentimens de la foy. il n'est pas dans des sentimens bien orthodoxes. je ne suis pas de son sentiment. je suivray tousjours vos sentimens. selon mon sentiment. je voudrois bien sçavoir quel est son sentiment sur cela*.[43]

Sentiment can thus be a physical impression, an affect or passion of the soul, or an individual's thoughts, opinions, or judgments. In other words, *sentiment* has the potential to encompass all of the senses and all of the faculties. *Sentiment* also lacks the movement associated with admiration and instead places emphasis on the overall effect of movement within the soul, rather than on the direct movement of the animal spirits. This distinction between action and sentiment underscores the extent to which the earlier seventeenth-century definitions of *admiration* were rooted in Cartesian notions of movement within the body in response to outside stimuli, and thereafter shifted to a more

[43] "Sentiment," *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, 1694, ARTFL Dictionnaires d'autrefois, http://artflsrv01.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=sentiment.

socially-oriented, mutually exchanged notion of "*sentiment*."[44] It is this last shift that will be considered in the fourth chapter on Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves* and La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes*.

Philosophizing Admiration

Two additional philosophers working on admiration bear discussion before considering the primary authors in this study: Thomas Hobbes and David Hume. First, their contemporary in both time and space, Thomas Hobbes's incorporation of admiration situates him somewhere between Descartes and Pascal. Just as Descartes categorizes admiration as the first of his primary passions, Hobbes considers "curiosity and admiration" as the origin of all philosophy:

> from this beginning is derived all philosophy: as astronomy from the admiration of the course of heaven; natural philosophy from the strange effects of the elements and other bodies.[45]

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[44] Also noteworthy in this definition is the introduction of the word "merveilleuse". While outside the scope of this study, this word positions the evolution of admiration alongside that of "the sublime". In *Sublime Worlds: Early Modern French Literature* Emma Gilby shows that Longinus' *Traité du sublime* might very well have been available in France prior to Boileau's 1674 translation, and examines its potential impact on many of the authors in this study. While she does not directly discuss admiration, Gilby's analysis offers insight into the general notions of greatness that permeated works by Corneille and Pascal. In the introduction, Gilby quotes Louis Marin's "Le Sublime dans les années 1670: un je ne sais quoi?" arguing that the "je ne sais quoi" in Boileau's translation of Longinus' *Traité du sublime*, which is "emblematic of sublime experience," must be read in its literal sense: "that which cannot be known or guaranteed." The similarity to Descartes' definition of admiration is striking, and in this logic, the sublime would be akin to the "étonnement" produced when admiration fails to proceed to greater knowledge. (See Emma Gilby, *Sublime Worlds: Early Modern French Literature* (London, UK: Legenda, 2006), 7. See also Louis Marin, "Le Sublime Dans Les Annés 1670: Un Je Ne Sais Quoi?," *Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature*, no. 25 (1986): 186.)

[45] Thomas Hobbes, *The Elements of Law Natural and Politic*, 1640, Chapter 9, Section 18, http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/hobbes/elelaw.html.

Yet, Hobbes also sees glory as man's primary passion and motivator, bringing him closer to Pascal and La Rochefoucauld. In Chapter 10 of *Elements of Law Natural and Politic*, "Of the Difference Between Men In These Discerning Faculty and the Cause," written in 1640 and first published in 1650, Hobbes "locates different faculties in different parts of the body,"[46] but insists upon the primacy of movement for their communication:

> the imagination of men proceedeth from the action of external objects upon the brain, or some internal substance of the head; and that the passions proceed from the alteration there made, and continu[e] to the heart:[47]

The basic interior motions in Hobbes's theories of the body are thus very similar to Descartes's understanding of the motion of the animal spirits. Hobbes's admiration, however, is a secondary passion to man's primary drive toward glory, which is followed by either appetite or fear, then deliberation and action:

> external objects cause conceptions, and conceptions appetite and fear, which are the first unperceived beginnings of our actions: for either the action immediately followeth the first appetite, as when we do any thing upon a sudden; or else to our first appetite there succeedeth some conception of evil to happen unto us by such actions, which is fear, and withholdeth us from proceeding. And to that fear may succeed a new appetite, and to that appetite another fear, alternately, till the action be either done, or some accident come between, to make it impossible; and so this alternate appetite and fear ceaseth. This alternate succession of appetite and fear, during all the time the action is in our power to do, or not to do, is that we call DELIBERATION.[48]

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[46] Amy Schmitter, "Hobbes on the Emotions: Supplement to 17th and 18th Century Theories of Emotions," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2010, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/emotions-17th18th/LD3Hobbes.html.
[47] Hobbes, *The Elements of Law Natural and Politic*, Chapter 10: Of the Difference Between Men In These Discerning Faculty and the Cause.
[48] Ibid., Chapter 12: How by Deliberation From Passions Proceed Men's Actions.

The period of alternating appetite and fear is the period of deliberation and can only be interrupted by action. Thus, for Hobbes, glory, fear, action, and inaction are man's primary motivators, and admiration and curiosity feed their "apetites."

In Chapter 9 of *Elements of Law Natural and Politic*, "Of the Passions of the Mind," Hobbes equates admiration to the "hope or expectation of knowledge":

> Forasmuch as all knowledge beginneth from experience, therefore also new experience is the beginning of new knowledge, and the increase of experience the beginning of the increase of knowledge; whatsoever therefore happeneth new to a man, giveth him hope and matter of knowing somewhat that he knew not before. And this hope and expectation of future knowledge from anything that happeneth new and strange, is that passion which we commonly call ADMIRATION; and the same considered as appetite, is called curiosity, which is appetite of knowledge.[49]

According to Hobbes, this hope for knowledge (admiration) and appetite for knowledge (curiosity) differentiates man from beast: man desires to know more and to name, to look for the "cause and beginning of everything that ariseth new unto him."[50] Hobbes explicitly associates "admiration and curiosity" as the passion and apetite at the origin of all philosophy: "as astronomy from the admiration of the course of heaven; natural philosophy from the strange effects of the elements and other bodies."[51] Whereas Descartes privileges admiration as the first "sudden surprise of the soul,"[52] Hobbes places admiration and curiosity in the same moment and locates them in the same movement. Admiration *is* hope for knowledge arising from experience and resulting from man's

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[49] Ibid., Chapter 9: Of the Passions of the Mind.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] René Descartes, "Les Passions de L'âme," in *Œuvres de Descartes*, ed. Victor Cousin, vol. 4 (Paris: F.G. Levrault, 1824), 85–162.

desire for glory, rather than the primary Cartesian passion that initiates a subsequent desire for greater knowledge.

In *De Corpore*, published in 1654, Hobbes further elaborates that passion is motion: "In all action the beginning and cause are taken for the same thing. But every one of the intermediate parts are both action and passion, and cause and effect."[53] Like Pascal, Hobbes writes about man's admiration for the mundane things that surround him. However, whereas Pascal focuses on man's inability to ever fully understand God or his creations, Hobbes says that man can only escape his admiration for worldly objects and subsequently admire their Creator through the "meditation and contemplation" that will grant him greater knowledge of the world.[54] Admiration is hope for knowledge and, for Hobbes, this knowledge is fully attainable.

David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*, published 1739-1740, offers one of the earliest examples of the turn to admiration as "appreciation" that began to characterize eighteenth- and nineteenth-century definitions of "admiration":

> When a person of merit falls into what is vulgarly esteem'd a great misfortune, we form a notion of his condition; and carrying our fancy from the cause to the usual effect, first conceive a lively idea of his sorrow, and then feel an impression of it, entirely over-looking that greatness of mind, which elevates him above such emotions, or only considering it so far as to encrease our admiration, love and tenderness for him.[55]

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[53] Thomas Hobbes, *Concerning Body (De Corpore)*, trans. William Molesworth, vol. 1, The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury (London: John Bohn, 1839), 124, http://books.google.com/books?id=Gr8LAAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q=passion%20and%20motion&f=false.
[54] Ibid., 1:447.
[55] David Hume, "Of Compassion," in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), 370, https://archive.org/details/atreatisehumann00selbgoog.

While Hume elsewhere uses admiration in the sense of surprise, the listing of admiration with love and tenderness represents a dramatic socializing and sentimentalizing of the term when compared with the Cartesian passion of involuntary, sudden surprise. The final chapters of this study will examine the beginnings of this association between admiration and love in Pascal's *Pensées* and Madame de Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves*.

Chapter 1 – "Une subite surprise de l'âme": The movement of admiration in Descartes's *Traité des Passions de l'âme*

The first chapter of this study shows that in his 1649 *Traité des passions de l'âme*, Descartes privileges admiration as the first of his six primary passions and thus emphasizes it as man's first point of contact with the world around him. For Descartes, admiration is individual and uncontrollable. In fact, Descartes's understanding of admiration seems to translate into a more "philosophical" context the sacred connotions of "ravissement" presented in De Sales's 1615 *Traité de l'amour de Dieu*. In Chapters four through six of the seventh book, *De l'union de l'âme avec son dieu qui se parfait en l'orayson*, De Sales describes the "rapture of the soul":

> Quant aux extases sacrees, elles sont de trois sortes: l'une est de l'entendement, l'autre de l'affection, et la troisiesme de l'action; l'une est en la splendeur, l'autre en la ferveur, et la troisiesme en l'œuvre; l'une se fait par l'admiration, l'autre par la devotion, et la troisiesme par l'operation. L'admiration se fait en nous par le rencontre d'une verité nouvelle que nous ne connaissons pas ni n'attendions pas

> de connoistre; et si a la nouvelle verité que nous rencontrons est jointe la beauté et bonté, l'admiration qui en provient est grandement delicieuse.[56]

In the following chapter, on the rapture of love, De Sales elaborates that "the ecstasy of admiration" alone does not better us. It must be combined in equal parts with "the ecstasy of knowledge" and then moved to "volonté" and "œuvre": "L'amour fait facilement admirer, et l'admiration facilement aymer."[57] The influence of De Sales in Descartes's systematization and categorization of the passions is evident. The association of admiration with a new, surprising, and unknown object that must subsequently move the individual to action underlies Descartes's theory of the passions.

Acting as a "subite surprise de l'âme," admiration's impression upon the soul provokes a movement within the body that engenders all other passions. This notion of movement is critical to Descartes's definition of all six of the primary passions. Yet, once perceived, the passions function by moving through the body, which creates physical changes, resulting in bodily actions. As Amy M. Schmitter summarizes in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*:

> Each genuine passion is characterized by an account of its motivational force… paired with a description of how it "represents" its object, which under normal conditions is also the cause of the series of bodily changes resulting in the passion. Passions are not judgments, since judgments require an act of the will to affirm or deny. But they do have complex, "propositional" contents … It is

[56] François De Sales, "Traité de L'amour de Dieu, Chapitre IV et V," in *Oeuvres de Saint François de Sales* (Annecy: Sœurs de la Visitation, 1849), 238, http://www.franz-von-sales.de/icss_de/online/francais/theotimus_fr.pdf.
[57] Ibid., 240.

> because these contents are evaluative that the passions will be motivating in ways that are normally functional.[58]

For Descartes, movement is central to both the creation of and response to the passions: they result from physiological responses – changes in the blood and the heart –that subsequently prompt man to act. Admiration is man's gateway to the passions: external surprise creates involuntary movement within the body that subsequently engages and promotes the passions.

The first sentence of Descartes's 1649 definition of admiration in *Les Passions de l'âme* bears a striking, though not surprising, similarity to that of the 1694 edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie*: "L'admiration est une subite surprise de l'âme, qui fait qu'elle se porte à considérer avec attention les objets qui lui semblent rares et extraordinaires" (505, Article 70). Thus, admiration happens suddenly due to the surprise caused by a "rare and extraordinary" object. The language itself in the first sentence implies movement as the soul "*se porte*" (carries itself) to consider rare and extraordinary objects. Admiration happens first in the brain – in the pineal gland where Descartes locates the soul – then is carried by the animal spirits into the muscles. Yet, as Schmitter says, admiration "moves" in a different way:

> Perhaps the most distinctive of the passions that Descartes identifies, however is the one that involves no evaluation of its object: wonder [*admiration*] merely presents its object as something novel or unusual. As such, wonder produces no change in the heart or the blood, which would prepare the body for movement.

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[58] Amy M. Schmitter, "Descartes on the Emotions," ed. Edward N. Zalta, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Supplement to 17th and 18h Century Theories of Emotions, 2010, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/emotions-17th18th/LD2Descartes.html.

> But it does involve the motions of the animal spirits through the brain and into the muscles, thereby fixing an 'impression' of the object in the brain.[59]

In other words, even where blood and heart are not involved, movement is essential for the brain to retain an impression of the object it has "admired."

Descartes clearly states that admiration's primary function is not judgment, but knowledge of the "object of our admiration":

> … N'ayant pas le bien ni le mal pour objet, mais seulement la connaissance de la chose qu'on admire, [l'admiration] n'a point de rapport avec le cœur et le sang, desquels dépend tout le bien du corps, mais seulement avec le cerveau, où sont les organes des sens qui servent à cette connaissance.[60]

The passion that starts all other passions is thus based entirely in the brain and engages man's desire to know more about the object. For Luce Irigaray, this "cerebral" operation generates a desire for greater knowledge, an "appétit":

> It would not change anything in the heart or the blood, which are tied to good and evil, to positive or negative determinations of the thing. It would remain a purely cerebral impression and a stake in knowledge, purely a question and a striving toward the answer to the question of *who* or *what* is the object of wonder. Before even knowing whether this object corresponds or not to my body's good – which would be a matter for the heart and the blood – wonder is the appetite for knowledge of who or what awakens our appetite.[61]

The impression of admiration upon the brain initiates its desire to understand and engages its faculty of reason, albeit on a subconscious level, which subsequently opens the door for the physical phenomena of the other five primary passions to potentially begin: joy,

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[59] Ibid.
[60] René Descartes, *Les Passions de l'âme* (Paris: H. Legras, 1649) < http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k50614b/f43.image.> Article 71, 96.
[61] Luce Irigaray, "Wonder: A Reading of Descartes, The Passions of the Soul," in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian Gill (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 78.

sadness, love, hatred, and desire. If greater knowledge cannot be obtained, however, the result is "étonnement," a paralysis that prevents the other passions from following upon admiration's initial movement of surprise. Cartesian admiration, therefore, is meant to be a temporary, motivational passion that involuntarily directs individual attention toward objects that are worthy of greater consideration. This view of admiration, understanding, and the circulation of the passions within the body will inform the reading proposed of the other authors considered in this study, as they variously incorporate, challenge and re-examine Cartesian admiration.

Chapter 2 - Admiration's Neutrality in the Theater of Pierre Corneille

The second chapter explores instances of Cartesian "admiration" in the plays of Pierre Corneille and considers how Corneille uses notions of involuntary surprise in his portrayal of heroism. The link between Corneille and Descartes is undeniable, despite the lack of evidence that they ever met and the chronological impossibility of such an influence on many of Corneille's works. In "Descartes and Corneille: A Re-examination," Amy Henshaw summarizes the extensive research that has linked the two authors:

> Interesting points of similarity between some Articles in Descartes's Traité des Passions and the psychology of Corneille's heroes have been adduced, denied, 'explained,' for over a century. The puzzle posed by the similarities, given the chronology of the relevant works, was first put forward by Gustave Lanson and he finally ascribed them, for want of a more precise source, to a 'communauté d'inspiration' based on seventeenth century man of the generation of Louis

> XIII.'[63] His views were subsequently disputed or confirmed by a succession of critics over the next hundred years.[64] Two of the earliest, Serrurier and Droz, ascribed the similarities to more precise sources, Serrurier to the common influence of St François de Sales,[65] and Droz to that of Honoré d'Urfé's l'Astrée.[66] Rivaille, however, suggested that the fact that Descartes, Corneille, St François de Sales and d'Urfé all went to Jesuit schools might explain the similarities in their thinking.[67]

As previously cited in this "Introduction," the similarities between De Sales's *Traité de l'amour de Dieu* and Descartes's *Passions de l'âme* support this theory of common educational background. Admiration offers another important point of contact between Descartes and Corneille as man's capacity to surprise and be surprised distinguishes him from the rest of God's creation and, more specifically, from his fellow man.

In his 1660 *Examen* of *Nicomède*, first performed in 1651, Corneille articulates the importance of soliciting admiration from his viewers: "Dans l'admiration qu'on a pour sa [Nicomède's] vertu, je trouve une manière de purger les passions, dont n'a point parlé Aristote, et qui est peut-être plus sûre que celle qu'il prescrit à la tragédie par le moyen de la pitié et de la crainte."[68] In his essay, "Catharsis through Admiration: Corneille, Le Moyne, and the Social Uses of Emotion," Bradley Rubidge notes

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[63] Gustave Lanson, "Le Héros Cornélien et Le 'Généreux' Selon Descartes," in *Hommes et Livres*, 1895, 397–411.
[64] For a list of the contributors to this debate, see Amy Henshaw, "Descartes and Corneille: A Re-Examination," *Neophilologus* 86, no. 1 (2002): 45, 55.
[65] C. Serrurier, "Saint François de Sales, Descartes, Corneille," *Neophilologus* 3 (1918): 89–99.
[66] E. Droz, "Corneille et L'Astrée," *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de La France* avril-juin, juillet-septembre (1921): 161–203, 361–87.
[67] Louis Rivaille, *Les Débuts de Corneille* (Paris: Slatkine Reprints, 1936), 461–469. Cited in Henshaw, "Descartes and Corneille: A Re-Examination," 45.
[68] Pierre Corneille, "Nicomède," in *Œuvres Complètes de P. Corneille, Suivies Des Œuvres Choisies de Th. Corneille*, vol. 1 (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères Librairies, 1843), 675, http://books.google.com/books?id=s9UWAAAAQAAJ&dq=Nicomède+avec+examen&source=gbs_navlinks_s.

Corneille's use of admiration in both a Cartesian sense of sudden surprise and in a "moral emotional" sense:

> One can… read Cornelian admiration as a response to the suspense, action, and reversals that characterize Corneille's drama. We can nevertheless show that in the *examen* admiration is construed as a moral emotion, one that produces beneficial emulation among noble or great-souled members of the audience.[69]

Based on the *examen* in *Nicomède*, Rubidge views admiration as participating in the entire historical, affective context of emotions and his study of admiration moves quickly from the "surprise" generated in and by the text to the effect of that surprise on the audience. While this affective view is certainly in keeping with Corneille's own critical examinations of his plays, this study proposes to take a step back from the emotional reception of the play to consider admiration within the texts of Corneille's corpus. Even in instances where admiration acts as an initiator of emulation for the audience, it begins with a moment of surprise in the text, not with a call to emulate the behavior of the hero. The characters' admiration is pure wonder at the hero's great actions, in either a positive or negative evaluative sense. In the "Discours de l'utilité et des parties du poème dramatique," Corneille explains the importance of "surprise" in *Cinna*:

> Il a été besoin d'en donner l'idée dès le premier acte, où Auguste mande Cinna et Maxime. On n'en sait pas la cause; mais enfin il les mande, et cela suffit pour faire une surprise très agréable, de le voir délibérer s'il quittera l'empire ou non, avec deux hommes qui ont conspiré contre lui. Cette surprise aurait perdu la

[69] Bradley Rubidge, "Catharsis Through Admiration: Corneille, Le Moyne, and the Social Uses of Emotion," *Modern Philology: A Journal Devoted to Research in Medieval and Modern Literature* 95, no. 3 (1998): 325.

> moitié de ses grâces s'il ne les eût point mandés dès le premier acte, ou si on n'y eût point connu Maxime pour un des chefs de ce grand dessein.[70]

As in the Cartesian model, this moment of surprise is the entry point allowing access to the other passions. As Rubidge suggests, the audience may ultimately be moved to emulate the rare and extraordinary heroics of Auguste or Horace, but they are first encountered with a moment of surprise that initiates admiration and thus allows for desire leading to emulation. This study thus separates involuntary admiration in Cornelian theater from the subsequent desire to emulate, a clearly evaluative passion.

The second half of the chapter on Corneille includes a close reading of *Horace*, first performed in 1640. Corneille incorporates two distinct moments of surprise in the play: first Horace's enthusiasm at being chosen to kill his brother-in-law, Curiace, and secondly, Horace's murder of his sister, Camille, as she refuses to acknowledge the honor that he has brought to Rome by killing her betrothed. Curiace uses admiration to communicate his surprise at Horace's enthusiasm for their upcoming battle:

> Je vous connais encore, et c'est ce qui me tue ;
> Mais cette âpre vertu ne m'était pas connue ;
> Comme notre malheur elle est au plus haut point :
> Souffrez que je l'admire et ne l'imite point. (Act II, Scene 4)

Curiace stands in admiration – in surprised awe and wonder – not only of Horace's actions, but also of his own ignorance of this "fierce virtue". In this one, powerful exchange, Curiace divides his dear friend and brother, Horace, into two incongruous

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[70] Pierre Corneille, "Discours de L'utilité et Des Parties Du Poème Dramatique," in *Œuvres de P. Corneille*, ed. Charles Joseph Marty-Laveaux, vol. 1 (Paris: Libraire de L. Hachette et Cie., 1862), 44, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/31628/31628-h/31628-h.htm.

entities: the physical, apparently spectral Horace that he still knows, and the "harshly virtuous" man that lurked underneath.

Inherent in the Cartesian definition of admiration is the notion of newness; similarly, Curiace's surprised horror arises from the unfamiliarity of this "new" Horace before him. Further, his reaction explicitly separates "admiration" and "imitation": whether Corneille intends for the audience to emulate Horace's heroic commitment to honor and victory at all costs is not the central concern of this study. Rather, it explores the explicit and implicit notions of "admiration" as "surprise" in the text and consider whether, in fact, this reading of the text might allow us to see Cornelian admiration in a more neutral light.

Chapter 3 – Truth and Admiration in Pascal's *Pensées*

The final half of this study explores departures from individual Cartesian admiration, as admiration is placed in a social context in the final decades of the seventeenth century. The third chapter considers social admiration as a potentially dangerous distraction from God's fundamental truths in Pascal's *Pensées*. Pascal, like Descartes, describes man's inherent need to seek out the truth. For Pascal, however, that truth is available only through God. Man's separation from God prevents him from ever being able to attain the certain truth that he desires.[71] Being unable to attain the

[71] For an explanation of man's quest for truth as it relates to Original Sin in the *Pensées*, see Sarah Melzer, *Discourses of the Fall* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).

fundamental truths known only to God, man directs his admiration toward his fellow man in a comparative gesture born of "envie" and a desire for glory.

The chapter begins by examining which forms of the term "admiration" are used in the *Pensées*. Whereas Descartes's *Traité des Passions* uses primarily the substantive, the *Pensées* contains only three instances of "admiration," but 19 instances of "admirer" and 26 instances of "admirable." This signals a shift toward a more evaluative, comparative form of admiration that is also evident in La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes* and Lafayette's *Princesse de Clèves* (see Chapter 4). Admiration in the *Pensées* thus contains increased connotations of socially comparative "esteem" and "envy":

> La gloire. L'admiration gâte tout dès l'enfance. O que cela est bien dit! Ô qu'il a bien fait, qu'il est sage. Les enfants de P.R. auxquels on ne donne point cet aiguillon d'envie et de gloire tombent dans la nonchalance. (Laf. 63, Br. 151, S. 97)

In many of the places that Pascal explicitly mentions "admiration," it is negatively associated with a quest for personal glory. Admiration functions as a corollary to "la gloire": the children of Port-Royal receive its "sting," and grow to seek admiration from others. Further, within this understanding of admiration, those who do *not* receive its sting become indifferent. Pascal here equates admiration and the desire for personal glory in a social context. Admiration appears, for Pascal, to be a learned ambition that evolves over time and depends upon the opinion of others. Understood in this context, admiration requires evaluative, socially-constructed judgment that takes the place of the quest for fundamental truth.

Admiration in the *Pensées* must be placed in the context of the much-studied Pascalian division between *le cœur* and *la raison*. While admiration interacts primarily with reason, the heart contains the truths toward which man's admiration *should* direct his quest for greater understanding. These two centers of understanding, however, compete for man's attention, drawing him away from acknowledgment of his own miserable state:

> Cette guerre intérieure de la raison contre les passions a fait que ceux qui ont voulu avoir la paix se sont partagés en deux sectes. Les uns ont voulu renoncer aux passions et devenir dieux, les autres ont voulu renoncer à la raison et devenir bête brute. Des Barreaux.[72] Mais ils ne l'ont pu ni les uns ni les autres, et la raison demeure toujours qui accuse la bassesse et l'injustice des passions et qui trouble le repos de ceux qui s'y abandonnent. Et les passions sont toujours vivantes dans ceux qui y veulent renoncer. (Laf. 410, Br. 413, S. 29)

Despite being "at war" with one another, Pascalian reason and passion are part of the unavoidable human condition and, in a sense, create a sort of "divertissement" that distracts man from his true miserable state. For Pascal, the *coeur* is clearly distinguished from *l'imagination* and *la raison*. There is no communication between reason and heart: "Instinct et raison, marques de deux natures" (L.G. 103, Laf. 112, Br. 344, S. 144). These two different natures, however, work together to distract man from acknowledging the truth of his own misery. Thus, man cannot trust his senses or any "Cartesian" admiration that results from them. Similarly, man's passions direct him to act in ways that are contrary to his wellbeing. In the absence of certain truth, man seeks greater understanding through comparison with his fellow man. This comparison engenders a shift in the role of

[72] Pascal references Jacques Vallée, Sieur Des Barreaux, who was known for his poetry and his physical relationship with several prominent libertine authors, including Théophile de Viau.

admiration as it appears in the *Pensées*. No longer sudden and non-evaluative, admiration becomes a source of pride and accomplishment for the individual who now places himself in the context of society:

> Orgueil.
> Curiosité n'est que vanité. Le plus souvent on ne veut savoir que pour en parler, autrement on ne voyagerait pas sur la mer pour ne jamais en rien dire et pour le seul plaisir de voir, sans espérance d'en jamais communiquer. (Laf. 77, Br. 152, S. 112)

Knowledge for knowledge's sake does not exist in a context where the goal is to impress one's fellow man.

The final sections of the chapter consider the relationship between curiosity, glory, and admiration, particularly in the context of the "Disproportion de l'homme":

> La plus grande bassesse de l'homme est la recherche de la gloire, mais c'est cela même qui est la plus grande marque de son excellence; car, quelque possession qu'il ait sur la terre, quelque santé et commodité essentielle qu'il ait, il n'est pas satisfait, s'il n'est dans l'estime des hommes. Il estime si grande la raison de l'homme que, quelque avantage qu'il ait sur la terre, s'il n'est placé avantageusement aussi dans la raison de l'homme, il n'est pas content. C'est la plus belle place du monde, rien ne le peut détourner de ce désir, et c'est la qualité la plus ineffaçable du cœur de l'homme. (Laf. 470, Br. 404, S. 707)

Man's desire for glory is both his greatest strength and his biggest weakness. More importantly, this fragment shows that man exists first and foremost in a social context within the *Pensées*. Whereas the Cartesian man admires, thinks, and acts in isolation, the Pascalian man does so relative to his fellow man, out of a desire for socially determined glory. This quest for glory arises from a more fundamental desire for happiness:

> C'est le motif de toutes les actions de tous les hommes, jusqu'à ceux qui vont se pendre. … Les uns le cherchent dans l'autorité, les autres dans les curiosités et dans les sciences, les autres dans les voluptés. (Laf. 148, Br. 425, S. 181)

Admiration allows man to determine that which will make him happy on earth. Yet, this happiness is in fact illusory since, according to Pascal, true happiness can only be found with a God who has hidden himself: "*Deus absconditus*" (Laf. 427, Br. 194, S. 681).

Unable to find the happiness he seeks, because true happiness lies in a truth that man cannot access from an invisible God, he turns to "divertissement." This distraction allows man to think that he is approaching the happiness that he desires. But "divertissement" creates "tumult" and leads man away from the "repos" that he "secretly" desires:

> Ils ont un instinct secret qui les porte à chercher le divertissement et l'occupation au-dehors, qui vient du ressentiment de leurs misères continuelles. Et ils ont un autre instinct secret qui reste de la grandeur de notre première nature, qui leur fait connaître que le bonheur n'est en effet que dans le repos et non pas dans le tumulte. (Le divertissement. Laf. 136, Br. 139, S. 168)

"Divertissement" thus has a complex place in Pascal's project: man must look outside of himself to find truth, but he must also recognize that this truth is limited and not an end in itself. This, for Pascal, is the problem with Descartes's understanding of admiration: as it prompts man to seek greater knowledge of newly encountered objects, Cartesian admiration allows man to become consumed with his own pursuit of knowledge without recognizing God as the only source of truth. The notion of "repos" is also considered in relationship to the Princesse de Clèves's final decision to ensure her "repos" by refusing to marry the duc de Nemours (see Chapter 4).

In the "Disproportion de l'homme," Pascal emphasizes man's insignificance when compared both with the infinite and minute elements of nature: man is incapable of truly

understanding either since he can never understand their origin. Physically unequal to the minute and infinite; and limited in his ability to understand, man is caught in an "earthly" limbo. Pascal directs man to consider the one thing that he can *hope* to understand: his fellow man. The final section of the chapter considers self-admiration in the *Pensées*. Man's double nature as simultaneously great and insignificant humbles him:

> Le christianisme est étrange. Il ordonne à l'homme de reconnaître qu'il est vil et même abominable, et lui ordonne de vouloir être semblable à Dieu. Sans un tel contrepoids, cette élévation le rendrait horriblement vain, ou cet abaissement le rendrait horriblement abject. (fr. L.G. 332, Br. 537, Laf. 351, S. 383)

But man is unable to accept the truth of his misery or the limits of his knowledge. His "vanité" pushes him forward as he attempts to achieve superior earthly understanding. Man thus forgets his own ignorance, desiring only to know more than his fellow man:

> nous haïssons la vérité, on nous la cache; nous voulons être flattés, on nous flatte; nous aimons à être trompés, on nous trompe… [l'homme] ne veut donc pas qu'on lui dise la vérité. Il évite de la dire aux autres. (Laf. 978, Br. 100, S. 743)

Man inherently desires fundamental truths, the truths of the heart. But he flees the relative, social truths implied in this fragment. Admiration thus transforms into self-admiration as man turns to that which he (erroneously) presumes to understand: himself.

Admiration in the *Pensées* begins to shift away from the sudden, non-evaluative surprise inherent in Cartesian interactions with the world. As this chapter examines the subtle distinctions within the *Pensées* between "admiration" as participating in the heart's innate recognition of life's fundamental truths, and "admiration" as a dangerous social sentiment, it becomes clear that in both instances, admiration remains an uncontrollable,

involuntary passion. Pascal clearly advocates the control of admiration in the social sense, but this "aiguillon d'envie" reveals itself to be fundamentally out of man's control.

Chapter 4 – Admiration's Involuntary Incarnations in La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes* and Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves*

The final chapter considers admiration as a socially-exchanged, courtly passion in La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes* and Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves*. Both authors inscribe in their texts the importance of "being admired" at court. While admiration maintains its association with involuntary surprise for something rare or extraordinary, in the court milieu represented by Lafayette and La Rochefoucauld, admiration becomes an ongoing, sought-after passion that confers value. With the exception of the Princess, the individuals described in these texts deliberately seek the admiration of others. The Princess, on the other hand, avoids admiration as much as possible: she never explicitly expresses admiration for another character and routinely removes herself from situations that might attract the attention of her fellow courtiers. Yet involuntary admiration follows the Princess until she finally removes herself from society entirely.

Related to *amour-propre* in its involuntary, self-serving nature, La Rochefoucauldian admiration acts independently, and often contrary to the best interest of the admirer. La Rochefoucauld transposes Cartesian admiration for some*thing* unknown to the human context of the court:

> Ce qui nous fait aimer les nouvelles connaissances n'est pas tant la lassitude que nous avons des vieilles ou le plaisir de changer, que le dégoût de n'être pas assez

> admirés de ceux qui nous connaissent trop, et l'espérance de l'être davantage de ceux qui ne nous connaissent pas tant.[73]

Newness causes admiration. But newness is now a two-way street: whereas Cartesian admiration focuses on the effect within the admirer of the object being perceived, the La Rochefoucauldian man is simultaneously perceiver and perceived, desiring the admiration of others even as he admires *them*. According to the *Maximes*, since admiration increases an individual's value in society, the circulation at court that allows for new acquaintances and increased visibility is essential.[74] La Rochefoucauld takes admiration's role one step further, suggesting that admiration in fact alters man's perception of a newly encountered object in order to serve his *amour-propre*: admiration in the *Maximes*, is a judgment arising from *amour-propre*'s ability to "change[r] l'état et la nature des choses soudainement."[75] In other words, La Rochefoucauldian admiration stems not from the rarity of the external object, but from the *amour-propre* that directs the attention of the observer to consider objects – or individuals – that may in fact serve the self-interest of the individual.

In Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves*, the entire court is presented from the outset as "admirable" in their physical appearance and, in the case of the men, in their exploits. From the outset of the novel, admiration is visual, evaluative, and socially desirable. The

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[73] François La Rochefoucauld, "Réflexions Ou Sentences et Maximes Morales," in *Moralistes Du XVIIe Siècle*, ed. André-Alain Morello (Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont, 1992), 150: Maxime 178. Hereafter, the *Maximes* from this edition will be cited parenthetically.

[74] Elias Norbert, *The Court Society*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, Revised (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2006).

[75] Quoted in Françoise Jaouën, *De L'art de L'aire En Petits Morceaux. Pascal, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère*, Essais et Savoirs (Saint-Denis: PUV, 1996), 95.

involuntary nature of admiration is underscored in the novel by repeated superlatives, such as this initial description of Nemours: "ce prince était un chef-d'œuvre de la nature; *ce qu'il avait de moins admirable était d'être l'homme du monde le mieux fait et le plus beau*."[76] Thus, it is all the more surprising that when Mademoiselle de Chartres, the future Princesse de Clèves, appears at court, she eclipses the admiration previously attributed to the other courtiers through her beauty and visible "mérite."

Lafayette positions admiration as a precursor to love throughout the novel. The narration of M. de Clèves's first sighting of Mlle de Chartres contains multiple expressions of surprise and admiration:

> Il fut tellement *surpris* de sa beauté, qu'il ne put cacher sa *surprise*; et mademoiselle de Chartres ne put s'empêcher de rougir en voyant *l'étonnement* qu'elle lui avait donné. Elle se remit néanmoins, sans témoigner d'autre attention aux actions de ce prince que celle que la civilité lui devait donner pour un homme tel qu'il paraissait. *Monsieur de Clèves la regardait avec admiration, et il ne pouvait comprendre qui était cette belle personne qu'il ne connaissait point.* (97-98, emphasis added)

While M. de Clèves moves from *surprise* to *admiration* to *étonnement* that prevents him from speaking, Mlle de Chartres feels only embarrassment. This lack of admiration on the part of the Princess will continue throughout the novel. While the reader may speculate that the Princess admires the duc de Nemours, given her eventual profession of love, she never expresses "admiration" for him or for any other character. Similarly, when the Duc de Nemours sees the now married Princesse de Clèves for the first time, his reaction contains both "surprise" and "admiration," but not the "étonnement"

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[76] Marie-Madeleine Pioche de la Vergne, Comtesse de Lafayette, *La Princesse de Clèves*, ed. Jean Mesnard (Paris: Imprimerie nationale éditions, 1980), 88. Hereafter, the text will be cited parenthetically.

attributed to M. de Clèves: “Monsieur de Nemours fut tellement surpris de sa beauté, lorsqu’il fût proche d’elle, et qu’elle lui fit la reverence, il ne put s’empêcher de donner des marques de son admiration” (115). The Princess does not demonstrate the same indifferent embarrassment upon meeting Nemours as when she first met M. de Clèves: “Ce prince était fait d’une sorte, qu’il était difficile de n’être pas surprise de le voir quand on ne l’avait jamais vu, surtout ce soir-là, où le soin qu’il avait pris de se parer augmentait encore l’air brillant qui était dans sa personne” (115). The narrator implies that the Princess, with great difficulty, overcame her surprise. Regardless of whether the Princess was in fact surprised, the narrator does not associate admiration with her surprise. If the Princess feels involuntary admiration, and it is reasonable to assume that she must, it remains unspoken in the text.

Beginning with the main characters’ first encounters, the chapter traces the evolution of admiration in their relationships through the novel. It considers the ongoing evaluative quality of admiration, and the difference between Nemours’s and Clèves’s admiration for the Princess. At the end of the text, the Princess reveals her “sentiments” for the duc de Nemours – without revealing his identity – in hopes that her husband will allow her to flee the admiration that follows her at court. Through the character of the Princesse de Clèves, Lafayette inscribes resistance to admiration’s inescapability, as well as its link to *amour-propre*. As La Rochefoucauld contends, even the most virtuous actions are in fact vices in disguise since every action, even those that would apparently go against an individual’s *amour-propre* itself, is somehow motivated by *amour-propre*.

The Princess attempts to find a way out of this bind by removing herself entirely from the space of socially-shared, self-serving admiration.

Based on her mother's teachings, the Princess believes in the very Cartesian notion that, while she cannot control the physiological aspects of her *passions* or stop them from occurring,[77] she can control her response to them. As the text concludes, both the narrator and the Princess herself repeatedly describe her actions as "inimitable":

> Elle trouva qu'elle s'étoit ôté elle-même le cœur et l'estime de son mari, et qu'elle s'étoit creusé un abîme dont elle ne sortiroit jamais. Elle se demandoit pourquoi elle avoit fait une chose si hasardeuse, et elle trouvoit qu'elle s'y étoit engagée sans en avoir presque eu le dessein. La singularité d'un pareil aveu, dont elle ne trouvoit point d'exemple, lui en faisoit voir tout le péril. (226)

> Ah! Monsieur, reprit-elle, il n'y a pas dans le monde une autre aventure pareille à la mienne; il n'y a point une autre femme capable de la même chose. Le hasard ne peut l'avoir fait inventer; on ne l'a jamais imaginée, et cette pensée n'est jamais tombée dans un autre esprit que le mien. (242)

> Je ne sais… si vous avez eu tort de juger favorablement d'un procédé aussi extraordinaire que le mien. (263)

These repeated references to the Princess's rarity underscore the fact that she will never be free of the admiration that surrounds her at court. Donna Kuizenga describes the Princess's retreat as "cut[ting] through the very bases on which courtly society is founded":

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[77] As Serge Doubrovsky summarizes in his article, "La Princesse de Clèves: une interpretation existentielle,": "le sage cartésien sait que, dans la passion, il y a toujours un element de passivité, car, à l'origine, la passion est une affection corporelle, purement determinée par le flux des esprits animaux. L'homme n'a donc aucun contrôle sur cet aspect physique de sa nature. Mais, grâce à un dressage rigoureux et systématique de ce que les psychologues modernes appelleraient nos réflexes conditionnés, 'il n'y a point d'âme si faible qu'elle ne puisse, étant bien conduite, acquérir un pouvoir absolu sur ses passions' (Article 50)."(Serge Doubrovsky, *Corneille et La Dialectique Du Héros* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1963), 40.).

> In this sense, Mme de Clèves's examples of virtue are inimitable. But they are also inimitable because the discourse of patriarchy has no words for its own undoing. More powerful than the confession, this action is one without a maxim.[78]

This chapter will conclude with an examination of the Princess's motives for removing herself from the admiring gaze of the court and whether this final act of "virtue" is itself, as La Rochefoucauld would contend, motivated by *amour-propre*.

La Princesse de Clèves differs from the other texts in this study in its inscription of "admiration" within a social, evaluative context. Like the other texts, however, *La Princesse de Clèves* includes admiration at key moments that convey its importance in the early-modern period. Beginning now with Descartes's *Traité des passions de l'âme*, this study will consider the evolving centrality of "admiration at first sight" in seventeenth-century French literature.

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[78] Donna Kuizenga, "The Princesse de Clèves: An Inimitable Model?," in *An Inimitable Example: The Case for the Princesse de Clèves*, ed. Henry Phillips (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 83.

Chapter 1 – "Une subite surprise de l'âme": The movement of admiration in Descartes's *Traités des Passions de l'âme*

Modern definitions of the term admiration, such as that found in the *Random House Dictionary*, all suggest a positive judgment of an object being considered:

1. A feeling of pleasure, wonder, and approval. See Synonyms at "regard."
2. An object of wonder and esteem; a marvel.
3. *Archaic* Wonder.[1]

This definition repeats the word "wonder" in each example, yet explicitly categorizes "wonder" as being an "archaic" definition. Even if the modern definition of "admiration" expresses some degree of the "wonder" that Descartes attributed to it, it is intimately linked with terms of judgment. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* combines admiration with terms such as "esteem," "respect," and "approbation":

1. a feeling of great respect and approval
2. *archaic* : wonder
3. an object of esteem
4. delighted or astonished approbation.[2]

Descartes's definition, based in involuntary wonder for a newly discovered object, deliberately lacks the notion of "high regard," "esteem," or "desirability" that we today associate with the term. Admiration was the first passion stimulated by man's discovery of the world around him. Cartesian metaphysics inaugurated a new way of understanding

[1] "Admiration," *Random House Dictionary* (Random House, Inc., 2013), Dictionary.com, http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/admiration?s=b.
[2] "Admiration," *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, accessed February 16, 2014, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/admiration.

man's interaction with the natural world, as it established the importance of man's "thinking soul." As Victor Delbos's comparative philosophical study *Descartes Pascal*, first published posthumously in 1919, begins "Si l'on admet un commencement défini de la philosophie moderne, ce ne peut être que la philosophie de Descartes."[3]

Following upon Aristotle's classification of the passions in *Rhetoric* and *The Nicomachean Ethics* and Cicero's re-structuring of the passions, Descartes sees the rational control of the passions as a path to truth and morality. In *French Moralists*, Anthony Levi traces the history of passion and reason through the stoics and into the seventeenth century:

> For the stoics the wise man, he in whom the logos rules, has three 'eupatheiai' or feelings which are consonant with right reason. These rational affections are 'boulesis' or wish, corresponding to desire, 'kara' or joy, corresponding to pleasure, and 'eulabeia' or caution, corresponding to fear. Since present evil is only in the imagination and nothing which happens can be a source of rational grief in the wise man, there is no rational state corresponding to pain. Through Cicero and, depending on Cicero, Augustine, the stoic doctrine of the four passions and the three rational states of affectivity was transmitted to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.[4]

Levi goes on to discuss Augustine's rejection of the stoic ideal of "apathy":

> In the sense of an absence of all affections, apathy is to be rejected. In the sense of an absence of those affections only which are contrary to reason 'mentem que perturbant,' it is an ideal which cannot be realized in this life… In Augustine, for perhaps the first time, the ethics of passion are linked to a developed theory of the will.[5]

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[3] Victor Delbos, *Descartes Pascal*, Le Philosophe (Paris: Manucius, 1919), 11.
[4] Anthony Levi, *French Moralists: The Theory of the Passions, 1585 to 1649* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 13.
[5] Ibid., 15...17.

Descartes's exploration of the interactions between the body and the soul, the mind and the heart, in the *Passions de l'âme* reveals man's ability to reason his place in the world, and thereby to understand his passion and control his will, as his most inalienable skill. Delbos elaborates:

> l'esprit n'est pas seulement un moyen pour connaître, subordonné par là à la nature plus ou moins mystérieuse de ce qu'il cherche à atteindre; il est ce qui connaît et ce par quoi doit s'expliquer tout ce qui est connu. Il n'a pas non plus pour connaître à employer des instruments façonnés et éprouvés du dehors: ses instruments sont dans son action.[6]

Yet man's reason finds its limits in the passions, which occur involuntarily and must be understood to be controlled. As Susan James says in, "Internal and External in the Work of Descartes": "Descartes marked the beginning of a transition to the view that the route to virtue lies within, in the correct use of our internal capacity to reason."[7] This control was a matter of salvation, but also a scientific and interpersonal imperative. In order to gain understanding of the people and things that surround him, man must use the passions to his advantage, beginning with the first of Descartes's primary passions: admiration.

Created by something new and unfamiliar, admiration initiates the passions and the subsequent actions that proceed through the body with the help of the animal spirits. Just as Cartesian metaphysics changed seventeenth-century philosophical discussions of man's interaction with the natural and metaphysical world, Descartes's privileging of admiration as the first of the primary passions gave it a prominent position in all

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[6] Delbos, *Descartes Pascal*, 16.
[7] Susan James, "Internal and External in the Work of Descartes," in *Philosophy in an Age of Pluralism: The Philosophy of Charles Taylor in Question*, ed. James Tully, Charles Taylor, and Daniel M. Weinstock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 7.

subsequent explorations of the human passions. This chapter is intended neither as a philosophical or scientific study of admiration, but rather as an exploration of Descartes's role in establishing the literary importance of admiration throughout the period.

Descartes's *Traité des passions de l'âme* was published only one year prior to his death in 1650 and was the last of his published works. It is a formal response to his ongoing communications with Elisabeth de Bohême who asked many questions on happiness, the passions, and the "discipline of virtue." This was not the first time that Descartes wrote on the passions or, more specifically, on admiration, but as Carole Hugon-Talon says in her book *Descartes ou les passions rêvées par la raison*,

> Pour que Descartes en fasse un objet d'étude spécifique, et entreprenne de la penser sur de nouveaux frais, il fallut une rencontre, celle de la princesse Elisabeth de Bohême en 1642, et la correspondance qui s'ensuivit de mai 1643 à février 1649….Ces lettres sont donc du plus grand intérêt : sans elles, le *Traité des passions* n'aurait pas vu le jour, non seulement parce que c'est à la demande expresse de la princesse, qu'il fut écrit, mais surtout parce que la nature de cet échange fut l'occasion pour Descartes d'éprouver la fragilité des doctrines des anciens, et l'insuffisance de ses propres dires sur le sujet. Le *Traité* naquit ainsi d'une insatisfaction, et du sentiment qu'il fallait penser à neuf le sujet, et rejeter pour cela toute forme de legs du passé sur la question : 'je serai obligé d'écrire ici en même façon que si je traitais d'une matière que jamais personne avant moi n'eût touchée,'[8] déclare-t-il dans le premier article de son dernier ouvrage.[9]

Descartes's goal in writing the *Passions* was thus to break with what had been done before, and to consider the role of the passions in motivating man's thoughts and actions. Laurence Renault's *Descartes ou la félicité volontaire* explains that Descartes's primary

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[8] René Descartes, *Les Passions de L'âme* (Paris: H. Legras, 1649), Art. 1, http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8601505n/f146.image. Hereafter the *Passions de l'âme* will be cited parenthetically.

[9] Carole Talon-Hugon, "Introduction," in *Descartes Ou Les Passions Rêvées Par La Raison: Essai Sur La Théorie Des Passions de Descartes et de Quelques-Uns de Ses Contemporains* (Paris: Vrin, 2002), 16–17.

motivation in writing about the passions, and particularly about admiration, was to separate them from knowledge.[10] While admiration may initially motivate new knowledge, its role must end there for objective truth to be acquired.

Descartes divides his *Passions* into three sections: "des passions en général," "du nombre et de l'ordre des passions, et l'explication des six primitives," and "des passions particulières." As Amy Schmitter describes the *Passions of the Soul* in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*,

> The *Passions of the Soul* may not be a completely satisfactory explanation of mind-body union, but it does provide the definition Elisabeth asked for, an intricate taxonomy of the passions, a description of their bodily causes, effects and function, and an account of the "discipline of virtue" that addresses the means and extent to which we can regulate the passions.[11]

This organization emphasizes first the functioning of the Cartesian soul within the human body, and secondly the specific passions that act upon it. The exploration of admiration in this study will follow a similar organization, for as Descartes has shown, any discussion of the individual passions occurs in a vacuum if their overall influence upon the human body is not accurately understood. Thus, the first section will examine the functioning of the passions before considering the physical and philosophical functioning of admiration in conjunction with the other passions, and finally the link between admiration, man's *libre arbitre*, and God's Providence.

Laying the Groundwork for Admiration: Soul-Body Interactions

[10] Laurence Renault, *Descartes Ou La Félicité Volontaire* (Paris, France: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000), 21–32.
[11] Schmitter, "Descartes on the Emotions."

Descartes identifies six primary passions, each of which has at least one secondary passion that may follow: wonder – which is the first of all the passions – love, hatred, desire, joy and sadness. It is important to recognize that Descartes locates the passions within the physical body and, more specifically, within the soul. Perception allows the pineal gland to be moved by the animal spirits, which excites the soul and provokes further movement within the human body.[12] The soul is thus in constant communication with the pineal gland and the body via the animal spirits. This relationship is potentially problematic for Descartes since the body can present a danger for the soul. It is therefore essential to understand the independent functioning of both body and soul in order to understand their interactions with one another and the actions that they each generate:

> Puis aussi je considère que nous ne remarquons point qu'il y ait aucun sujet qui agisse plus immédiatement contre notre âme que le corps auquel elle est jointe, et que par conséquent nous devons penser que ce qui est en elle une passion est communément en lui une action; en sorte qu'il n'y a point de meilleur chemin pour venir à la connaissance de nos passions que d'examiner la différence qui est entre l'âme et le corps, afin de connaître auquel des deux on doit attribuer chacune des fonctions qui sont en nous.[13] (Première partie, Article 2)

This intimate connection between body and soul is of critical importance to Descartes as a metaphysician, but also as a moralist. As Eric Cassirer suggests in his comparative study *Descartes, Corneille, Christine de Suède*, Descartes's revolutionary invention in

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Descartes, *Les Passions de L'âme*, 1649, Première Partie, Article 2. Hereafter, the Articles of the *Traité des passions de l'âme* will be cited parenthetically.

formulating *Les Passions de l'âme*, was not his description of the passions themselves, but his privileging of human reason as the ultimate path to truth and morality:

> on voit immédiatement la raison pour laquelle Descartes contredit l'exigence stoïcienne de l'apathie. Selon lui, la morale ne peut nous enseigner comment échapper aux passions; mais elle peut nous enseigner comment les utiliser, comment les régler, les diriger, pour les mettre au service des buts de la raison morale… Ainsi, la pensée raisonnable a le pouvoir de transformer les passions, d'adversaires de l'âme en ses armes.[14]

According to Cassirer, the Cartesian link between reason and the passions is fundamentally moral in nature: rather than receive external stimulations with passive, stoic indifference, Descartes's theory of the passions suggests that man's reason can control his passions and bend them to aid in the salvation of his soul. In the conclusion to her book *Passion and Action*, James summarizes the "changing relations between volitions and desires" across the seventeenth-century:

> As we have seen, Descartes describes the division between the voluntary and the involuntary in a way that leaves space for an account of internal struggle and secures two important goals – the unification of the soul and an account of conflict and change. There are always some actions we can perform voluntarily, but the soul's capacity to observe, reflect on, and experiment with its bodily passions enables it to increase the range of actions it can bring about at will.[15]

Descartes's introduction of the "will" unifies the soul as it allows for conflicting reactions to the passions, and thus also solidifies man's superiority over the rest of nature.[16] As Descartes moves through his categorization and elaboration of the passions, it becomes clear that the thoughts, impulses, and actions of the body can come from a multitude of

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[14] Ernst Cassirer, *Descartes, Corneille, Christine de Suede*, trans. Madeline Francés and Paul Schrecker (Paris, France: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1997), 93.
[15] James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, 281.
[16] Ibid., 276.

sources, both external and internal, and that they occur through a series of complex interactions between reason, the soul, and the body.

For Descartes, because thoughts do not involve physical action and are not observable in inanimate objects, they happen not in the body, but in the soul. Movement, however, belongs to the body (Article 4) and happens through a complex network of nerves:

> Enfin on sait que tous ces mouvements des muscles, comme aussi tous les sens, dépendent des nerfs, qui sont comme de petits filets ou comme de petits tuyaux qui viennent tous du cerveau, et contiennent ainsi que lui un certain air ou vent très subtil qu'on nomme les esprits animaux. (Article 7)

But the problem remains of determining what causes the movement of these animal spirits through the nervous system. To start, there is a certain "chaleur continuelle" (Article 8) in the heart that the veins feed and that underlies all bodily movement. The heart sends blood directly to the brain, but because only a limited amount of blood can enter into its small, narrow passageways, only the most refined parts of the blood succeed. These refined particles constitute the animal spirits:

> Ce que je nomme ici des esprits ne sont que des corps, et ils n'ont point d'autre propriété sinon que ce sont des corps très petits et qui se meuvent très vite…En sorte qu'ils ne s'arrêtent en aucun lieu, et qu'à mesure qu'il en entre quelques-uns dans les cavités du cerveau, il en sort aussi quelques autres par les pores qui sont en sa substance, lesquels pores les conduisent dans les nerfs, et de là dans les muscles, au moyen de quoi ils meuvent le corps en toutes les diverses façons qu'il peut être mû. (Article 10)

When these animal spirits arrive in the muscles, they communicate movement to the animal spirits already contained within the muscle.

But why would the animal spirits tend to move one muscle over another? What prompts their initial movement toward a particular muscle? For Descartes, the passions and their action upon the soul constitute only one of three potential causes for the movement of the animal spirits. The other two come from external influences, and function as two ends of the same cord: first, the eyes perceive external visual stimulus, which passes through the brain and communicates through the animal spirits to create movement; secondly the physical stimuli that touch the extremities cause movements from outside of the body, which subsequently communicates through the animal spirits to create an impression upon the brain. Hence, movements can be produced in the body via the impact of the passions on the soul and its subsequent action on the animal spirits, or movement can occur mechanically and bypass the soul entirely in the case of physical reactions engendered from external stimuli. As the eyes perceive something external to the body, that something moves the optical nerves which affects the areas of the brain connected to those nerves:

> tous les objets de la vue ne se communiquent à nous que par cela seul qu'ils meuvent localement, par l'entremise des corps transparents qui sont entre eux et nous, les petits filets des nerfs optiques qui sont au fond de nos yeux, et ensuite les endroits du cerveau d'où viennent ces nerfs; qu'ils les meuvent, dis-je, en autant de diverses façons qu'ils nous font voir de diversités dans les choses, et que ce ne sont pas immédiatement les mouvements qui se font en l'œil, mais ceux qui se font dans le cerveau, qui représentent à l'âme ces objets. A l'exemple de quoi il est aisé de concevoir que les sons, les odeurs, les saveurs, la chaleur, la douleur, la faim, la soif, et généralement tous les objets, tant de nos autres sens extérieurs que de nos appétits intérieurs, excitent aussi quelque mouvement en nos nerfs, qui passe par leur moyen jusqu'au cerveau. Et outre que ces divers mouvements du cerveau font avoir à notre âme divers sentiments, ils peuvent aussi faire sans elle que les esprits prennent leur cours vers certains muscles plutôt que vers d'autres, et ainsi qu'ils meuvent nos membres. (Article 13)

In the case of a sudden desire to protect oneself in the face of a perceived threat, for example, the brain will act upon the animal spirits to provoke a bodily movement that bypasses the soul to act directly upon the muscles. In the case of daily, involuntary motions, such as walking, breathing and eating, the animal spirits react to the slightest alterations in the nervous system to animate the muscles directly, with no involvement of the soul. Yet, it is also these movements within the body that can create the opportunity for man to experience the passions through the senses, beginning with admiration.

Descartes moves systematically through his explanations of bodily movements in order to eliminate that which does not belong to the soul from the remainder of his discussion. Descartes's process relies on a philosophical approach to explaining bodily functions and their relationship to one another. As Cassirer summarizes, Descartes has no interest in physical experimentation because such comparisons with the natural world are outside of the scope of man's conscience, his unique and defining attribute:

> Rien d'analogue n'y correspond chez aucun autre être de la nature, et nous ne pouvons pénétrer plus loin dans sa connaissance par la voie d'une observation objective ou d'une induction comparative. Aucune "expérience," si loin qu'elle soit poussée, ne nous apprendra ce qu'est l'âme, non dans ses simples effets ou relations extrinsèques, mais en elle-même; seule en décidera une analyse conceptuelle.[17]

Since nothing outside of man can further allow him to understand his own inner workings, his only recourse is to perform a "conceptual analysis" of his own soul. In this sense, reason gives man access to the actions and passions of his soul.

[17] Cassirer, *Descartes, Corneille, Christine de Suede*, 8.

Descartes begins with a systemic explanation of what does *not* reside within the soul:

> Enfin il faut remarquer que la machine de notre corps est tellement composée que… tous les mouvements que nous faisons sans que notre volonté y contribue (comme il arrive souvent que nous respirons, que nous marchons, que nous mangeons, et enfin que nous faisons toutes les actions qui nous sont communes avec les bêtes) ne dépendent que de la conformation de nos membres et du cours que les esprits, excités par la chaleur du cœur, suivent naturellement dans le cerveau, dans les nerfs et dans les muscles, en même façon que le mouvement d'une montre est produit par la seule force de son ressort et la figure de ses roues. (Article 16)

In other words, the human body is a machine that can move independently of the passions that animate the soul. The body's automatic, involuntary actions require no "volonté" and thus require no involvement of the soul. Descartes eliminates these automatic actions that he presumes to exist outside of the soul in order to arrive at what *must* reside within it:

> il est aisé de connaître qu'il ne reste rien en nous que nous devions attribuer à notre âme, sinon nos pensées, lesquelles sont principalement de deux genres, à savoir: les unes sont les actions de l'âme, les autres sont ses passions. Celles que je nomme ses actions sont toutes nos volontés, à cause que nous expérimentons qu'elles viennent directement de notre âme, et semblent ne dépendre que d'elle. Comme, au contraire, on peut généralement nommer ses passions toutes les sortes de perceptions ou connaissances qui se trouvent en nous. (Article 17)

Descartes distinguishes between the soul's actions, which are synonymous with man's "volontés" – his will and desires – and his passions, which are defined as internal perceptions or knowledge. Further, "volontés" are "experienced" whereas passions are "perceived" and "known." In *Passion and Action*, James explains:

> Volitions are actions of the soul because they seem to depend on it alone or, to put it another way, because the soul possesses the power not just to experience volitions, but to initiate them. According to this account, we are capable of

> starting to will whenever we want. By contrast, some other thoughts are passions because they have to be caused in the soul by something else.[18]

In other words, while passions require some sort of independent, preceding stimulus – either from a newly encountered object, or an internal movement resulting from a previous passion – volitions originate in the soul and take one of two forms:

> Derechef nos volontés sont de deux sortes. Car les unes sont des actions de l'âme qui se terminent en l'âme même, comme lorsque nous voulons aimer Dieu ou généralement appliquer notre pensée à quelque objet qui n'est point matériel. Les autres sont des actions qui se terminent en notre corps, comme lorsque de cela seul que nous avons la volonté de nous promener, il suit que nos jambes se remuent et que nous marchons. (Article 18)

The actions of our soul that begin and end in the soul itself – our "volontés" – can lead to either bodily action or cerebral contemplation.

Descartes thus defines the passions by process of elimination: they are not bodily actions, nor the actions originating in the soul itself, but rather "des perceptions ou des sentiments, ou des émotions de l'âme, qu'on rapporte particulièrement à elle, et qui sont causées, entretenues et fortifiées par quelque mouvement des esprits" (Article 27). The soul's experience with the passions is very much akin to that of the senses with the outside world:

> On les [les perceptions] peut aussi nommer des sentiments, à cause qu'elles sont reçues en l'âme en même façon que les objets des sens extérieurs, et ne sont pas autrement connues par elle. Mais on peut encore mieux les nommer des émotions de l'âme, non seulement à cause que ce nom peut être attribué à tous les changements qui arrivent en elle, c'est-à-dire à toutes les diverses pensées qui lui viennent, mais particulièrement parce que, de toutes les sortes de pensées qu'elle peut avoir, il n'y en a point d'autre qui l'agitent et l'ébranlent si fort que font ces passions. (Article 28)

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[18] James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, 91–92.

"Sentiments" refers to the body's interaction with outside stimuli. According to the 1694 *Dictionnaire de l'académie française*, "sentiment" is defined as, "Impression que font les objets sur les sens."[19] The soul "receives" the passions just as the senses receive "sentiments" of external objects. The passions then produce "émotions" in the soul that are stronger than any other "thoughts" that "come to it," with *emotions* referring to the physical changes produced by the passions. In Article 29, Descartes further distinguishes the "volontés" from the passions. While the passions are "caused, maintained, and fortified" by the animal spirits, the "volontés" come directly from the soul itself, and do not rely on an external stimulus or any other matter to keep them moving:

> J'ajoute aussi qu'elles [les passions] sont causées, entretenues et fortifiées par quelque mouvement des esprits, afin de les distinguer de nos volontés, qu'on peut nommer des émotions de l'âme qui se rapportent à elle, mais qui sont causées par elle-même, et aussi afin d'expliquer leur dernière et plus prochaine cause, qui les distingue derechef des autres sentiments. (Article 29)

Passions have a recent cause, while "volontés" do not. This distinction between passion and action/emotion will be of paramount importance in the discussion of the first of Descartes's passions, admiration. For this reason, it is worth spending a moment to unpack the vocabulary used in this article. According to Jean Nicot's 1606 dictionary *Le Thresor de la langue francoyse*, "esmotion" as Descartes uses it *is* an action: "Animi concitatio, Agitatio spiritus, Coagitatio, Permotio, Commotio."[20] Similarly in the 1694 edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'académie française*, "esmotion" is defined as "Alteration,

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[19] "Sentiment."

[20] "Irritation of the mind, agitation of the spirit, thought, emotion, The yearning of." (Jean Nicot, "Esmotion," *Le Thresor de La Langue Francoyse*, 1606, ARTFL Dictionnaires d'autrefois, http://artflsrv01.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos//pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=esmotion.)

mouvement excité dans les humeurs, dans les esprits, dans l'âme."[21] Thus the "émotions de l'âme" were not a subtly distinguishable, different kind of "passion," but rather a description of movement taking place within the body. Whereas passions stimulate the movement of the animal spirits, "volontés" *are* the actions – the *esmotions* – of the soul that are relative to it *and* initiated by it. In other words, the soul contains a multitude of actions and emotions, but the "volontés" are generated by and for the soul alone. Article 19 says that perceptions can also have internal or external sources: "Nos perceptions sont aussi de deux sortes, et les unes ont l'âme pour cause, les autres les corps. Celles qui ont l'âme pour cause sont les perceptions de nos volontés et de toutes les imaginations ou autres pensées qui en dépendent" (Article 19). Perceptions coming directly from the soul are therefore perceptions of our own wills, imaginations and thoughts. "Imagination," it is important to remember, was a concrete representation of an object within the thoughts and soul of man: "La faculté de l'âme qui imagine. Pensée, conception."[22] While our soul considers all perceptions to be a potential source of passion, Descartes will limit his consideration of the "passions de l'âme" to those passions that are directly associated with the soul because, "on sent les effets comme en l'âme même" (Article 25).

While action (*volontés*) and passion (*perceptions* and *connaissances*) function fundamentally differently within the soul, they both fall under the overarching category

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[21] "Esmotion," *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (L'Académie française, 1694), ARTFL Dictionnaires d'autrefois, http://artflsrv01.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos//pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=esmotion.

[22] "Imagination," *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, 1694, ARTFL Dictionnaires d'autrefois, http://artflsrv01.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=imagination.

of "pensées," the distinguishing feature of man and his soul. According to James, this is Descartes's most radical departure from the Aristotelian notion that all animate beings possess a soul:

> Whilst Aristotle and his successors had held that any animate thing capable of nutrition and reproduction must have a soul of sorts, Descartes opts for a narrower definition, arguing that the division between creatures with and without souls lies along the line between those that can and cannot think. Thinking, according to this view, is the essence of the soul. It is not an attribute that may be present or absent; rather it is the power that constitutes the soul... [Descartes] takes the view that our thoughts are limited to states of which we are conscious.[23]

If admiration is the first of the primary passions, and the initiator of subsequent passions, then it is in fact man's first conscious thought about an object that the senses have perceived. Further, as Renault points out, admiration's role in the Cartesian understanding of the soul is deliberately *limited* to initiating further thought, examination, and passion. This is essential to the neutrality of the soul's thinking function, and the central point at which Descartes parts ways with Aristotle, for whom,

> l'étonnement est… le moteur permanent de la recherche philosophique, il se déplace, en même temps que s'accroît le savoir, sur ce qui demeure ignoré, et il accompagne la recherche philosophique jusqu'à sa terme, la sagesse, laquelle reside dans la contemplation du divin… L'étonnement, qui manifeste notre ignorance, ne peut donc disparaître qu'avec la connaissance de Dieu. Il est donc la dynamique du savoir philosophique, c'est-à-dire à la fois le moteur de toute recherche philosophique et ce qui en oriente le développement vers la contemplation du divin.[24]

This concept of ongoing admiration, however, eliminates any possibility of ever arriving at truth or firm knowledge of anything, which is clearly at odds with Cartesian doubt and the belief in man's ability to reason truth from the ground up. In *Discours de la méthode*,

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[23] James, *Passion and Action: The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, 87.
[24] Renault, *Descartes Ou La Félicité Volontaire*, 22–23.

Descartes defines man's ability to think as the one inalienable truth underlying man's existence:

> et remarquant que cette vérité, *je pense, donc je suis*, était si ferme et si assurée, que toutes les plus extravagantes suppositions des sceptiques n'étaient pas capables de l'ébranler, je jugeai que je pouvais la recevoir sans scrupule pour le premier principe de la philosophie que je cherchais.[25]

Therefore it should come as no surprise that Descartes categorizes thought as the all-important purview of the soul that distinguishes and differentiates man from other animate creatures. Further, as Cassirer says, the centrality of "la pensée" to the soul confirms that thought is in fact the only pathway to understanding the soul's true essence:

> L'âme ne peut être qu'une, aussi sûrement que la conscience est une. Cette unité inconditionnée et inaliénable de la conscience se manifeste à nous dans l'acte de la pensée pure. Il s'ensuit qu'il ne saurait y avoir de détermination de l'essence de l'âme que par cet acte. Tout le reste est fortuit ou extérieur; la pensée seule est ce qui fait la vraie nature de l'âme et constitue sa forme spécifique.[26]

Cassirer highlights an unprovable self-fulfilling nature to Descartes's understanding of man's soul: man's soul can only be understood through thought which, itself, proves the existence of man's soul. This is, of course, the essence of Descartes's famous *cogito ergo sum*.

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[25] René Descartes, *Discours de La Méthode* (Nancy: Les Petits Classiques Bordas, 1965), Quatrième partie.
[26] Cassirer, *Descartes, Corneille, Christine de Suede*, 8.

After firmly establishing that the passions are located in the soul and that the soul is located in a gland attached to the brain,[27] and not in the heart, Descartes explains the role and importance of the passions in the body:

> le principal effet de toutes les passions dans les hommes est qu'elles incitent et disposent leur âme à vouloir les choses auxquelles elles préparent leur corps; en sorte que le sentiment de la peur l'incite à vouloir fuir, celui de la hardiesse à vouloir combattre, et ainsi des autres. (Article 40)

But what control does the soul have over its own passions and desires? For Descartes, *volonté* cannot be controlled by the body, but only by the soul itself:

> Mais la volonté est tellement libre de sa nature, qu'elle ne peut jamais être contrainte; et des deux sortes de pensées que j'ai distinguées en l'âme, dont les unes sont ses actions, à savoir, ses volontés, les autres ses passions,… les premières sont absolument en son pouvoir et ne peuvent qu'indirectement être changées par le corps, comme au contraire les dernières dépendent absolument des actions qui les produisent, et elles ne peuvent qu'indirectement être changées par l'âme, excepté lorsqu'elle est elle-même leur cause. (Article 41)

The soul has complete control over its *volontés*, and the body cannot control the actions of the soul. Conversely, the passions – and more generally, the perceptions – are *not* controlled by the soul, but produced entirely by actions that are outside of the soul, presumably arising from external stimuli and the movement of the animal spirits. It is striking that Descartes should use the same word to describe two very differently located actions. The "volontés" can be controlled by the actions of the soul, while passions cannot, leaving unanswered the important question of *how* man *can* control them. Placing these parameters on the soul's capacity to control its passions, thoughts, and actions leads

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[27] In Article 189 of the fourth part of the *Principes de première philosophie*, Descartes states, "Notre âme est étroitement jointe et unie au cerveau." <http://philosophie.ac-creteil.fr/IMG/pdf/Principes_I.pdf >

Descartes to define the involuntary nature of the passions, which are to be understood as independent from man's actions and desires: the soul can control its actions, the *volontés* that it communicates to the body; but it cannot hope to control the passions that strike it. Man's only hope for "controlling" his passions is to continually expose himself to those experiences and objects that tend to inspire the passions he desires to reproduce:

> Nos passions ne peuvent pas aussi directement être excitées ni ôtées par l'action de notre volonté, mais elles peuvent l'être indirectement par la représentation des choses qui ont coutume d'être jointes avec les passions que nous voulons avoir, et qui sont contraires à celles que nous voulons rejeter. (Article 45)

The *Traité des Passions* clearly establishes that the passions are an unavoidable element of the human condition. For Cassirer, this belief constitutes a clean break from the Stoic disdain for the passions:

> [Descartes] examine les passions, non seulement à la manière du moraliste, mais surtout avec l'attitude du savant. Elles sont pour lui de simples phénomènes naturels et soumis, comme tels, à la loi de la nécessité mécanique. Elles naissent de l'union de l'âme et du corps; aussi doivent-elles… être considérées comme immuables quant à leur existence de fait.… Les passions sont des mouvements déterminés, produits dans le corps, et qui sont conduits par les nerfs à cette partie du cerveau en laquelle l'âme a son siège. Vouloir s'opposer à ces mouvements, ne serait pas plus raisonnable, selon Descartes, que s'opposer à la respiration, au battement du cœur, à la circulation du sang. … Les passions sont des phénomènes de la vie, et leur répression équivaudrait à l'extinction même de la vie.[28]

Further, it is only upon our full acceptance of the inevitability and necessity of the passions that we can hope to control their effects. Thus, certain passions become desirable once we have acknowledged and understood their functioning. By choosing to surround ourselves with experiences that we know to cause a certain passion in the soul, we can control not the passions themselves, but the outside stimuli acting upon our

[28] Cassirer, *Descartes, Corneille, Christine de Suede*, 92–93.

passions, and the *volontés* and *émotions* that may arise from them. Thus, admiration becomes the most dangerous and unpredictable passion precisely because it arises from the newness and surprise of an unknown experience: without locking himself away from the world, man cannot hope to control his exposure to admiration.

The soul can control its impulse to act (its *volonté*) but not the passion that creates such an impulse because of the involuntary processes that follow upon such a passion: as the heart, the blood, and the animal spirits react to the passion's effect, they travel through the body, and the passion cannot be contained until their movement has ceased. As the soul is struck by these passions, its perceptions and subsequent passions arise in uncontrollable fashion:

> [Les passions] sont presque toutes accompagnées de quelque émotion qui se fait dans le cœur, et par conséquent aussi en tout le sang et les esprits, en sorte que, jusqu'à ce que cette émotion ait cessé, elles demeurent présentes à notre pensée en même façon que les objets sensibles y sont présents pendant qu'ils agissent contre les organes de nos sens… Le plus que la volonté puisse faire pendant que cette émotion est en sa vigueur, c'est de ne pas consentir à ses effets et de retenir plusieurs des mouvements auxquels elle dispose le corps. (Article 46)

The passions create an *émotion*, an involuntary agitation and movement, within the heart that differs from the movement within the soul, which is caused instead by the *volontés*, and can be controlled. The soul's ability to control its actions, in spite of the passions acting involuntarily upon it, constitutes the central theme of Corneille's plays, as this study will show in Chapter 2. In Corneille's celebrated play, *Horace*, Horace and Curiace, upon being chosen to fight on behalf of their countries, simultaneously fear death, shame, dishonor and conflicting obligations, even as they relish the opportunity to attain glory and honor. This case study of passion versus *volonté* suggests that Descartes

and Corneille are ultimately examining the same complex interactions between passion and action:

> Car ceux en qui naturellement la volonté peut le plus aisément vaincre les passions et arrêter les mouvements du corps qui les accompagnent ont sans doute les âmes les plus fortes… Et les âmes les plus faibles de toutes sont celles dont la volonté ne se détermine point ainsi à suivre certains jugements, mais se laisse continuellement emporter aux passions présentes, lesquelles, étant souvent contraires les unes aux autres, la tirent tour à tour à leur parti et, l'employant à combattre contre elle-même, mettent l'âme au plus déplorable état qu'elle puisse être. (Article 48)

The strongest souls control their *volontés* to resist the movements of the passion circulating throughout the body. The weakest souls, however, do not employ such "jugement." These souls allow themselves to be influenced by the contradictory passions moving through the body. Descartes's use of "tirer" and "combattre" gives a vivid depiction of a soul pulled in multiple directions and even turning on itself. This is not a battle of good and evil, but a battle for control of the soul. It is for this reason that admiration represents a particular danger to the soul: as the first passion, arising from external stimuli, admiration is impossible to avoid and difficult to control, unless it is clearly defined and understood.

Cartesian Admiration

Descartes's formal definition of the term admiration reiterates the importance of movement in the functioning of the passions, and particularly in the functioning of admiration: "L'admiration est une subite surprise de l'âme, qui fait qu'elle se porte à considérer avec attention les objets qui lui semblent rares et extraordinaires" (Article 70).

As Amy M. Schmitter outlines in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, admiration "moves" in a different way from the other passions:

> Perhaps the most distinctive of the passions that Descartes identifies… is the one that involves no evaluation of its object: wonder [*admiration*] merely presents its object as something novel or unusual. As such, wonder produces no change in the heart or the blood, which would prepare the body for movement. But it does involve the motions of the animal spirits through the brain and into the muscles, thereby fixing an 'impression' of the object in the brain.[29]

Thus, admiration happens suddenly due to the surprise caused by a "rare and extraordinary" object. The language itself implies movement, as the soul "*se porte*," to consider rare and extraordinary objects.

Admiration is the first of Descartes's primary passions precisely because it is the necessary starting point for all newly encountered objects, and moreover, the pinnacle of the soul's lack of "control." In the case of admiration, the soul is literally "awestruck" with admiration for something that it has not previously encountered:

> Lorsque la première rencontre de quelque objet nous surprend, et que nous le jugeons être nouveau, ou fort différent de ce que nous connaissions auparavant ou bien de ce que nous supposions qu'il devait être, cela fait que nous l'admirons et en sommes étonnés. (Article 53)

The equation of admiration with surprise and ignorance is key to the understanding of this passion, for it is only by being struck with surprise upon seeing something unknown and noteworthy that the soul can be "moved" to passion for newly encountered objects:[30]

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[29] Amy M. Schmitter, "The Context of Early Modern Theories of the Passions," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 17th and 18th Century Theories of Emotions (2010), accessed February 16, 2014, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/emotions-17th18th/#ConEarModThePas.

[30] Descartes's explanation of the physical manifestations of admiration suggests that admiration is in fact synonymous with surprise:

> Et parce que cela peut arriver avant que nous connaissions aucunement si cet objet nous est convenable ou s'il ne l'est pas, il me semble que l'admiration est la première de toutes les passions. Et elle n'a point de contraire, à cause que, si l'objet qui se présente n'a rien en soi qui nous surprenne, nous n'en sommes aucunement émus et nous le considérons sans passion. (Article 53)

Descartes's definition establishes admiration as stemming only from what is unknown. Once the soul has experience with an object, it *cannot* be *admired* because one of two things will already have occurred: either the soul's *volontés* will have been moved to act because a judgment will have been made, or the object will have been determined to be unworthy of man's passions, and will receive no further notice. Thus, admiration's primary function is not judgment but simply understanding what was previously unknown:

> … N'ayant pas le bien ni le mal pour objet, mais seulement la connaissance de la chose qu'on admire, [l'admiration] n'a point de rapport avec le cœur et le sang, desquels dépend tout le bien du corps, mais seulement avec le cerveau, où sont les organes des sens qui servent à cette connaissance. (Article 71)

Admiration in the *Traité des passions de l'âme* precedes understanding, which precedes judgment, which requires the activation of other subsequent passions. Admiration affects only the brain whose "sense organs" allow for greater knowledge.

For Descartes, surprise signals the presence of admiration, even if the brain has already begun to experience other passions:

> Et je ne puis remarquer que deux causes qui fassent ainsi subitement enfler le poumon. La première est la surprise de l'admiration, laquelle, étant jointe à la joie, peut ouvrir si promptement les orifices du cœur, qu'une grande abondance de sang, entrant tout à coup en son côté droit par la veine cave, s'y raréfie, et passant de là par la veine artérieuse, enfle le poumon. (Article 126)

The "surprise de l'admiration" provokes a physical reaction within the body that causes laughter.

> Ce qui n'empêche pas que [l'admiration] n'ait beaucoup de force à cause de la surprise, c'est-à-dire de l'arrivement subit et inopiné de l'impression qui change le mouvement des esprits, laquelle surprise est propre et particulière à cette passion; … Et sa force dépend de deux choses, à savoir, de la nouveauté, et de ce que le mouvement qu'elle cause a dès sont commencement toute sa force. (Article 72)

"Surprise," "sudden," "newness": the repetition of these words confirms Descartes's commitment not only to the involuntary nature of the passions in general, but to the capital importance of admiration as the passion that presents to the soul that which is unknown. Descartes thus establishes admiration as a two-part process: the soul must first be involuntarily "struck" with admiration in order to subsequently experience the actions or *volontés* that might lead one to feel pleasure, approval, desire or esteem.

Admiration can serve a purpose in the subsequent retention and evaluation of new objects as it signals to the brain to retain the memory of something rare and extraordinary:

> Et on peut dire en particulier de l'admiration qu'elle est utile en ce qu'elle fait que nous apprenons et retenons en notre mémoire les choses que nous avons auparavant ignorées. Car nous n'admirons que ce qui nous paraît rare et extraordinaire ; et rien ne nous peut paraître tel que parce que nous l'avons ignoré, ou même aussi parce qu'il est différent des choses que nous avons sues; car c'est cette différence qui fait qu'on le nomme extraordinaire. (Article 75)

While the other passions and even the brain's desire to understand may intervene to impress an object upon the memory, only admiration can alert the brain to that which is exceptional:

> Or, encore qu'une chose qui nous était inconnue se présente de nouveau à notre entendement ou à nos sens, nous ne la retenons point pour cela en notre mémoire, si ce n'est que l'idée que nous en avons soit fortifiée en notre cerveau par quelque passion, ou bien aussi par l'application de notre entendement, que notre volonté détermine à une attention et réflexion particulière. Et les autres passions peuvent

> servir pour faire qu'on remarque les choses qui paraissent bonnes ou mauvaises, mais nous n'avons que l'admiration pour celles qui paraissent seulement rares. (Article 75)

As the senses perceive something new, the brain only retains an impression of the new object because the passions "fortify" its presence, and man's *volonté* "determines" his "understanding" to direct "particular attention and reflection" toward thc object. Descartes is very careful to limit admiration's role to rarity: "nous n'avons *que* l'admiration pour celles qui paraissent *seulement* rares." This double limitation – "que" and "seulement" – emphasizes the neutrality of admiration, since other passions assess the whether a new object is "good" or "bad." But it also limits admiration's role when encountering something new. In *Descartes ou la félicité volontaire*, Renault explains the importance of admiration's initiating *and* limited role for Descartes's entire understanding of the quest for knowledge:

> [L'admiration] est donc l'aiguillon qui incite à la connaissance des choses jusque-là inconnues. Elle joue un rôle moteur à l'égard de l'acquisition de la connaissance, dans la mesure où elle assure la mémorisation des connaissances auxquelles elle incite. L'admiration joue donc un rôle important pour la connaissance humaine, puisqu'elle est la passion qui incite l'homme à la connaissance et qui semble en permettre le développement… Mais l'admiration peut aussi nuire à la connaissance, dans la mesure où c'est une passion qui verse souvent dans l'excès.[31]

The limitations of admiration are essential when we consider Descartes's privileging of admiration as "the first of the primary passions." It is first in its capacity to identify what is rare and extraordinary, but its role is then to "step aside" for other, evaluative passions.

[31] Renault, *Descartes Ou La Félicité Volontaire*, 24.

If admiration is not correctly understood, limited, and overcome, it can lead to "étonnement," an excess of admiration that prevents man from moving forward to knowledge and evaluation of the new object:

> Et cette surprise a tant de pouvoir pour faire que les esprits qui sont dans les cavités du cerveau y prennent leur cours vers le lieu où est l'impression de l'objet qu'on admire, qu'elle les y pousse quelquefois tous, et fait qu'ils sont tellement occupés à conserver cette impression, qu'il n'y en a aucuns qui passent de là dans les muscles, ni même qui se détournent en aucune façon des premières traces qu'ils ont suivies dans le cerveau: ce qui fait que tout le corps demeure immobile comme une statue, et qu'on ne peut apercevoir de l'objet que la première face qui s'est présentée, ni par conséquent en acquérir une plus particulière connaissance. c'est cela qu'on appelle communément être étonné; et l'étonnement est un excès d'admiration qui ne peut jamais être que mauvais. (Article 73)

This breakdown of the natural movement of the animal spirits interrupts the process by which the soul should move from admiration to the other passions, to the *volontés*, and to action. When man experiences "étonnement," he is literally dumbstruck, unable to move beyond the initial impression received from the object being admired. In chapter 4, this study will consider Madame de Lafayette's incorporation of excessive admiration in *La Princesse de Clèves*: what happens when the human soul remains so struck by admiration that it cannot move beyond it's first impression – a literal impression in the Cartesian understanding of the passions – of the perceived object? For Descartes, man's natural tendency is precisely to admire excessively, which can have dire consequences for "l'usage de la raison":

> C'est pourquoi, encore qu'il soit bon d'être né avec quelque inclination à cette passion, parce que cela nous dispose à l'acquisition des sciences, nous devons toutefois tâcher par après de nous délivrer le plus qu'il est possible. Car il est aisé de suppléer à son défaut par une réflexion et attention particulière, à laquelle notre volonté peut toujours obliger notre entendement lorsque nous jugeons que la chose qui se présente en vaut la peine; mais il n'y a point d'autre remède pour

> s'empêcher d'admirer avec excès que d'acquérir la connaissance de plusieurs choses, et de s'exercer en la considération de toutes celles qui peuvent sembler les plus rares et les plus étranges. (Article 76)

Descartes's relationship with admiration thus reveals itself to be quite complex: admiration is the first of the primary passions due to its ability to recognize the "rare and extraordinary," but it is also a very dangerous passion because of its potential to interrupt reason and progress toward an understanding of the newly encountered object. Interestingly, the only way to remedy excessive admiration is precisely through knowledge. While one can nurture *volonté* to enact the desire to understand in the absence of admiration, one cannot control any of the passions, including admiration, which results from the unavoidable unknown. Just as admiration initiates man's "desire" to understand, understanding eliminates the possibility of admiration: again, Descartes emphasizes, since man can only admire what he does not already know, understanding minimizes the potential risks of admiration.

The link between knowledge and admiration permeates Descartes's treatise, and in fact constitutes the basis of his entire project. Even in the *Discours de la méthode*, published twelve years before the *Passions*, Descartes's goal is to doubt everything except that which cannot be doubted: I think, therefore I am; and if I am, then God must exist. From this base, Descartes will rebuild his understanding of the world. Proceeding in this way, Descartes gradually limits the power that admiration holds over him and over man in general. As he understands new truths, his mind learns to be less moved by admiration, and instead governed by knowledge. Thus Descartes avoids the potential danger of "excessive admiration for all things":

> Et bien que cette passion semble se diminuer par l'usage, à cause que plus on rencontre de choses rares qu'on admire, plus on s'accoutume à cesser de les admirer et à penser que toutes celles qui se peuvent présenter par après sont vulgaires, toutefois, lorsqu'elle est excessive et qu'elle fait qu'on arrête seulement son attention sur la première image des objets qui se sont présentés, sans en acquérir d'autre connaissance, elle laisse après soi une habitude qui dispose l'âme à s'arrêter en même façon sur tous les autres objets qui se présentent, pourvu qu'ils lui paraissent tant soit peu nouveaux. (Article 78)

Just as Descartes's scientific project prescribes building a knowledge base from complete doubt in order to build a knowledge base of confirmed truths, his metaphysical project prescribes knowledge in order to avoid excessive admiration, which can lead to a limited, "untrue" understanding of the object. Admiration has the potential to initiate the other passions and our desire to understand, but it also has the potential to limit man's ability to achieve a more complete understanding of the world around him.

Admiration is thus clearly not understood to be an end in itself. It is a seminal passion followed closely by other passions whose primary function *is* judgment:

> A l'admiration est jointe l'estime ou le mépris, selon que c'est la grandeur d'un objet ou sa petitesse que nous admirons. Et nous pouvons ainsi nous estimer ou nous mépriser nous-mêmes; d'où viennent les passions, et ensuite les habitudes de magnanimité ou d'orgueil et d'humilité ou de bassesse. (Article 54)

This brief article, coming directly after the original definition of admiration in Article 53,[32] contains critical information not only about the ordering of the passions, but also about that which is *not* admiration. As noted in the opening paragraph of this chapter, twenty-first century definitions of admiration all contain some degree of judgment, linking "admiration" more with "estime" and "approbation" than with the "archaic"

[32] "Lorsque la première rencontre de quelque objet nous surprend, et que nous le jugeons être nouveau, ou fort différent de ce que nous connaissions auparavant ou bien de ce que nous supposions qu'il devait être, cela fait que nous l'admirons et en sommes étonnés." (Article 53)

seventeenth-century notion of "wonder." Article 54 reveals that in the Cartesian sense of the word, *estime* is a subsequent, independent passion, and not an aspect of admiration itself. Descartes also distinguishes admiration from desire, which – like *estime* and *mépris* – is its own passion:

> La passion du désir est une agitation de l'âme causée par les esprits qui la dispose à vouloir pour l'avenir les choses qu'elle se représente être convenables. Ainsi on ne désire pas seulement la présence du bien absent, mais aussi la conservation du présent, et de plus l'absence du mal, tant de celui qu'on a déjà que de celui qu'on croit pouvoir recevoir au temps à venir. (Article 86)

Like *estime*, desire is an evaluative passion. Unlike *estime*, however, it is based on the soul's knowledge of a currently absent object, and related not to the present, but to the future. Thus, we can conclude that *estime* (or its opposite, *mépris*) follows much more closely upon admiration, as it results from the judgment of something previously unknown that the soul first admires and then determines to be suitable, whereas desire requires a previous knowledge and judgment of an object that is currently unattainable.

In the third part of the *Traité des passions*, Descartes reveals that while the six primary passions are discrete and independent from one another, they often act together to generate derivative passions. Generally, the role of admiration in such cases is to first heighten the effects of the other passions through the element of surprise, and secondly to stimulate the movement of the spirits to cause a more lasting effect. Nowhere is this truer than in the most morally desirable of passions, *la générosité* and *l'humilité*:

> l'orgueil et la générosité ne consistent qu'en la bonne opinion qu'on a de soi-même, et ne diffèrent qu'en ce que cette opinion est injuste en l'un et juste en l'autre, il me semble qu'on les peut rapporter à une même passion, laquelle est excitée par un mouvement composé de ceux de l'admiration, de la joie et de l'amour, tant de celle qu'on a pour soi que de celle qu'on a pour la chose qui fait

> qu'on s'estime: comme, au contraire, le mouvement qui excite l'humilité, soit vertueuse, soit vicieuse, est composé de ceux de l'admiration, de la tristesse, et de l'amour qu'on a pour soi-même, mêlée avec la haine qu'on a pour les défauts, qui font qu'on se méprise. Et toute la différence que je remarque en ces mouvements est que celui de l'admiration a deux propriétés: la première, que la surprise le rend fort dès son commencement; et l'autre, qu'il est égal en sa continuation, c'est-à-dire que les esprits continuent à se mouvoir d'une même teneur dans le cerveau. (Article 160)

Thus, these desirable passions (and their opposites) reveal themselves to be composite passions formed by several of the primary passions outlined in the second part of the *Traité des passions*. Admiration plays a crucial dual role in the functioning of these passions. Initially, especially in *orgueil* and *bassesse*, surprise strengthens the movement of admiration; subsequently, in the case of *générosité* and *l'humilité vertueuse*, admiration's movement of the animal spirits continues with the same strength in the brain. This article requires a bit more dissection since it seems to violate Descartes's initial statement that excessive, continuing admiration leads to undesirable *étonnement*:

> Dont la raison est que le vice vient ordinairement de l'ignorance, et que ce sont ceux qui se connaissent le moins qui sont les plus sujets à s'enorgueillir et à s'humilier plus qu'ils ne doivent, à cause que tout ce qui leur arrive de nouveau les surprend et fait que, se l'attribuant à eux-mêmes, ils s'admirent, et qu'ils s'estiment ou se méprisent selon qu'ils jugent que ce qui leur arrive est à leur avantage ou n'y est pas. Mais, parce que souvent après une chose qui les a enorgueillis en survient une autre qui les humilie, le mouvement de leurs passions est variable. (Article 160)

Excessive self-admiration comes from a lack of self-understanding and leads to an excess of self-judgment. Just as knowing many things limits man's tendency toward excessive admiration in general, knowing himself limits man's ability to surprise himself. And this is desirable because those who remain ignorant attribute every admirable, new experience to themselves and thus their *estime* or *mépris* for themselves is constantly changing:

> Au contraire, il n'y a rien en la générosité qui ne soit compatible avec l'humilité vertueuse, ni rien ailleurs qui les puisse changer, ce qui fait que leurs mouvements sont fermes, constants et toujours fort semblables à eux-mêmes. Mais ils ne viennent pas tant de surprise, parce que ceux qui s'estiment en cette façon connaissent assez quelles sont les causes qui font qu'ils s'estiment. Toutefois on peut dire que ces causes sont si merveilleuses (à savoir, la puissance d'user de son libre arbitre, qui fait qu'on se prise soi-même, et les infirmités du sujet en qui est cette puissance, qui font qu'on ne s'estime pas trop) qu'à toutes les fois qu'on se les représente de nouveau, elles donnent toujours une nouvelle admiration. (Article 160)

In this passage, Descartes comes very close to combining admiration with *estime*. Those who truly know themselves and have "la vraie générosité, qui fait qu'un homme s'estime au plus haut point qu'il se peut légitimement estimer" (Article 153) are constant in their passions and their sense of self-worth. But these individuals are also rarely surprised because they already know what gives them self-esteem. Thus, admiration mutates in these individuals to come not from surprise related to newness, but rather from a renewal of the movement provoked by the initial surprise and a continual re-affirmation of the rarity of the individual. Yet this movement is still related to the "wonder" and surprise of that which initially caused the individual to experience *estime* for himself, and ultimately *générosité*. Thus, while the meaning of admiration shifts with this self-understanding, it does not become purely synonymous with *estime*, and resists assimilation as an evaluative passion.[33]

[33] Descartes enumerates several other passions that are derivative of the primary passions: veneration is the combination of admiration and fear – which prompts the individual to submit himself to the object of admiration in order to gain its favor (Article 162); disdain is the combination of admiration and either *sécurité* or *hardiesse* – which prompts the individual to judge something as being neither good nor bad, but so inferior as to be irrelevant; and indignation arises from our surprise and admiration that things should happen other than in "la façon que nous estimons bonne" (Article 197).

Admiration, Providence and *Libre Arbitre*

Before concluding this chapter, it seems worthwhile to explore the connections between Cartesian admiration and the rest of Descartes's metaphysical and scientific projects, and to understand the legacy of Cartesian admiration in the seventeenth century. In 1941, Georges Duhamel asked why Descartes, after having spent such considerable time perfecting his scientific method would suddenly turn all of his attention to metaphysics. His somewhat dismissive answer, "Il sait, il pense qu'un philosophe de son caractère doit une métaphysique au monde,"[34] fails to mention the centrality of the metaphysical project to Cartesian physics. For Victor Delbos, the link is hierarchical:

> Dans le plan d'ensemble de la philosophie cartésienne que nous offre la préface des *Principes de la Philosophie*, la métaphysique précède la physique, et Descartes ne se contente pas même d'affirmer que c'est là un ordre de droit, il laisse entendre que c'est l'ordre qu'il a suivi en fait…. Descartes a jugé que la solution des principaux problèmes métaphysiques était requise avant la consitution régulière de sa physique.[35]

The question of the ordering of science and metaphysics for Descartes may seem ancillary to our discussion of admiration, but it in fact determines the paramount importance of admiration in the Cartesian system, and in the seventeenth century as a whole. As the passion that allows man to experience wonder and surprise about the world around him, that allows him to desire knowledge and to proceed to judgment, admiration is in fact the interface between the Cartesian metaphysical system and the physical

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[34] Nicolas Grimaldi, *Six Études Sur La Volonté et La Liberté Chez Descartes*, Bibliothéque D'histoire de La Philosophie (Paris: J. Vrin, 1988), 131.
[35] Delbos, *Descartes Pascal*, 25.

world.[36] As Nicolas Grimaldi suggests in his chapter, "La générosité chez Descartes: Passion et liberté":

> Outre la générosité et l'habitude, l'une innée et l'autre acquise, Descartes caractérise toutefois un troisième moyen pour se délivrer des passions: c'est la science. Come, en effet, l'admiration n'est la première des passions que parce qu'elle est la condition de toutes les autres, qui cesserait d'admirer aurait du même coup cessé d'être passionné. Aussi Descartes nous invite-t-il à 'tâcher de nous en délivrer le plus qu'il est possible'; car 'il arrive bien plus souvent… qu'on admire trop que trop peu,' et 'il n'y a point d'autre remède pour s'empêcher d'admirer avec excès que d'acquérir la connaissance de plusieurs choses et de s'exercer dans la considération de toutes celles qui peuvent sembler les plus rares et étranges.'[37]

Grimaldi thus sees science as a solution to the problem of excessive admiration according to the Cartesian system. In other words, while Delbos places metaphysics before physics, Grimaldi sees science as an essential solution to the risk of excessive admiration. In the end, the two Cartesian projects seem so intimately intertwined that they in fact must coexist, with admiration as the vehicle between them. As the passion on the front lines of man's interaction with the unknown world, admiration holds a particularly precarious

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[36] In *L'Anthropologie cartésienne*, Geneviève Rodis-Lewis suggests that, according to Descartes, "entendement" – which follows admiration and the engagement of man's desire to learn more about a newly encountered object – is possessed unequally by men, as opposed to *volonté* (the ability to recognize good), which is possessed equally by all men: "Descartes suit la tradition qui réfère à l'entendement le jugement spéculatif, à la volonté le consentement au bien... l'entendement passif est limité, inégal selon les individus, la volonté active et infinie est cette puissance de bien juger, égale en tous les hommes. Mais pour bien discerner le bien et le faux, elle doit suspendre son jugement en l'absence d'évidence, et quand il est nécessaire d'agir, elle devra se *contenter* 'de juger le mieux' possible 'pour faire aussi tout son mieux'. (*Discours de la méthode*, 3). Nos âmes au départ 'ne sont pas également nobles et fortes' ; mais 'la générosité peut être acquise' par tous, s'ils usent bien de leur égale bonne volonté, et 'la bonne institution' [éducation] 'sert beaucoup pour corriger les défauts de la naissance' (Article 161) : cette égalité en droit 'empêche qu'on ne méprise les autres' même s'ils ont commis des fautes par faiblesse : car 'la bonne volonté' est supposée 'être ou du moins pouvoir être en chacun des autres homme' (Article 154). Geneviève Rodis-Lewis, *L'Anthropologie Cartésienne* (Paris, 1990), 173–174.

[37] Grimaldi, *Six Études Sur La Volonté et La Liberté Chez Descartes*, 174.

position: if used appropriately, admiration alerts the brain to what is remarkable and allows *estime* and *mépris* to judge; if used in excess, or allowed to dominate, admiration prevents the normal functioning of the *volontés* and the actions and emotions of the body that might otherwise have followed.

Cartesian admiration thus allows one to see how metaphysics and philosophy overlapped with the burgeoning scientific discoveries of the seventeenth century. The Cartesian *Passions* reflect a moment in history that saw an exponentially expanding interest in man's relationship to the physical world, but also a reaffirmation of God's place as the creator of this natural world and of man as its caretaker. As previously mentioned, unlike the Stoics,[38] Descartes viewed the passions as fundamental to the human condition. While potentially dangerous, the passions were also useful and necessary to human interaction with the world. The key was therefore to understand the functioning of the passions in man's soul, and their relationship to his *volontés* and his *libre arbitre*. For, as Descartes has repeatedly shown, knowledge and understanding directly increase man's control over his world. In Article 145, Descartes expresses the link between the passion of desire, man's *libre arbitre* and God's Providence:

> Pour les choses qui ne dépendent aucunement de nous, tant bonnes qu'elles puissent être, on ne les doit jamais désirer avec passion… Et il y a deux remèdes généraux contre ces vains désirs: le premier est la générosité…; le second est que nous devons souvent faire réflexion sur la Providence divine, et nous représenter qu'il est impossible qu'aucune chose arrive d'autre façon qu'elle a été déterminée de toute éternité par cette Providence; en sorte qu'elle est comme une fatalité ou une nécessité immuable qu'il faut opposer à la fortune, pour la détruire comme une chimère qui ne vient que de l'erreur de notre entendement. Car nous ne

[38] For an overview of the influence of stoic philosophy on the seventeenth-century moralists, see Levi, *French Moralists: The Theory of the Passions, 1585 to 1649*, 1–39.

> pouvons désirer que ce que nous estimons en quelque façon être possible, et nous ne pouvons estimer possibles les choses qui ne dépendent point de nous qu'en tant que nous pensons qu'elles dépendent de la fortune, c'est-à-dire que nous jugeons qu'elles peuvent arriver, et qu'il en est arrivé autrefois de semblables. (Article 145)

Descartes places his theory of man's *libre arbitre* not in opposition to God's Providence, but firmly within it: God's Providence is in fact at the source of all things, including man's *libre arbitre*. In this line of thinking, we can conclude that for Descartes, admiration is the passion that allows man to recognize the amazing and surprising things that God has placed before him, and that are worthy of further attention. It in fact gives man the opportunity to exercise his God-given *libre arbitre.* In a letter dated January 1646, Descartes wrote to his pupil Elisabeth,

> Et avant qu'il [Dieu] nous ait envoyés en ce monde, il a su exactement quelles seraient toutes les inclinations de notre volonté c'est lui-même qui les a mises en nous, c'est lui aussi qui a disposé toutes les choses qui sont hors de nous, pour faire que tels et tels objets se présentassent à nos sens et à tel et tel temps, à l'occasion desquels il a su que notre libre arbitre nous déterminerait à telle ou telle chose.[39]

We are not to desire fortune's favor, but rather to wait until God's Providence has provided us with that which we *could* possibly possess, and which *should* be worthy of our admiration:

> Il faut donc entièrement rejeter l'opinion vulgaire qu'il y a hors de nous une fortune qui fait que les choses arrivent ou n'arrivent pas, selon son plaisir, et savoir que tout est conduit par la Providence divine, dont le décret éternel est tellement infaillible et immuable qu'excepté les choses que ce même décret a voulu dépendre de notre libre arbitre, nous devons penser qu'à notre égard il n'arrive rien qui ne soit nécessaire et comme fatal, en sorte que nous ne pouvons sans erreur désirer qu'il arrive d'autre façon. (Article 146)

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[39] Grimaldi, *Six Études Sur La Volonté et La Liberté Chez Descartes*, 151.

As Emma Gilby says in "The Language of Fortune in Descartes," published in *Chance, Literature, and Culture In Early Modern France*: "Descartes spends time dismissing 'la fortune' on the basis of arguments which, if they are taken seriously, take 'la fortune' to be so chimerical, so unsubstantial, that it is not worthy of serious consideration in the first place."[40] Yet, Gilby continues, Descartes has no choice but to acknowledge his readers' experience with fortune, and notably that of his pupils Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and Queen Christina of Sweden. In a letter dated 25 April 1646, Princess Elisabeth states her objections to Descartes's passions and their remedies:

> Je trouve encore moins de difficulté à entendre tout ce que vous dites des passions qu'à pratiquer les remèdes que vous ordonnez contre leurs excès. Car comment prévoir tous les accidents qui peuvent survenir en la vie qu'il est impossible de nombrer. Et comment nous empêcher de désirer avec ardeur les choses qui tendent nécessairement à la conservation de l'homme (comme la santé et les moyens pour vivre) qui néanmoins ne dépendent point de son arbitre.[41]

Elisabeth's objections get to the heart of the passions, their dangers and the potential remedy to these dangers: knowledge. Yet, as she points out, it would be impossible to predict the knowledge that man would need to avoid every passion in every situation. Admiration in particular seems entirely unavoidable since it is based precisely on man's *lack* of familiarity with and knowledge of an object. Descartes's response in May 1646 introduces many of the ideas that will later be developed in the *Passions*, clarifying that, in fact, man cannot hope to fully control the passions themselves, but only their effects:

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[40] Emma Gilby, "The Language of Fortune in Descartes," in *Chance, Literature, and Culture In Early Modern France*, ed. J. Kathleen Wine and John D. Lyons (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 159.
[41] Victor de Swarte, *Descartes, Directeur Spirituel: Correspondance Avec La Princesse Palatine et Le Reine Christine de Suède* (Paris: Alcan, 1904), 91–92.

> [les remèdes contres les excès des passions] ne peuvent suffire pour empescher les désordres qui arrivent dans le corps, mais seulement pour faire que l'ame ne soit point troublée, et qu'elle puisse retenir son jugement libre.[42]

In the *Passions*, Descartes elaborates, "ainsi [l'âme] peut aisément surmonter les moindres passions, mais non pas les plus violentes et les plus fortes, sinon après que l'émotion du sang et des esprits est apaisée" (Article 146). As Grimaldi says, "Comme nous avons vu toute la philosophie cartésienne s'engager et se jouer sur le statut de notre liberté, c'est donc bien tout le sens de notre liberté que nous voyons maintenant se jouer sur le problème des passions."[43] For, as already discussed, man cannot hope to control his passions, only his soul's reaction to them.

Man's first line of defense against the passions is his *générosité*: "la vraie générosité, qui fait qu'un homme s'estime au plus haut point qu'il se peut légitimement estimer" (Article 153). For Grimaldi, this *générosité* is intimately related to man's *liberté*: "Libres autant seulement que généreux, nous ne sommes donc pas libres d'être libres puisqu'il ne dépend pas de nous d'être ou non généreux: en quoi, par conséquent. La générosité est bien véritablement une passion. *La générosité est la passion de la liberté*."[44] In other words, God's Providence, as it has provided for all things, including our *libre arbitre* has either made us "généreux" or not. Further, the effects of the passions being out of our control, we are no more "libres de n'être pas passionnés que nous ne sommes libres de ne pas entendre le bruit qui éclate à nos oreilles, ou de ne pas voir la

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[42] Ibid., 90.
[43] Grimaldi, *Six Études Sur La Volonté et La Liberté Chez Descartes*, 154.
[44] Ibid., 164.

lumière qui nous éblouit."[45] But, as Grimaldi elaborates, this dependence of *liberté* on *générosité innée* creates a paradox in Descartes's reasoning since "ceux même qui ont les âmes les plus faibles pourraient acquérir un empire très absolu sur toutes leurs passions, si on employait assez d'industrie à les dresser et à les conduire" (Article 50). Grimaldi summarizes Descartes's response to this paradox as follows: "Puisque l'habitude peut faire ce que n'avait pas fait la nature, ce qui est institué par liberté peut se substituer à ce qui a été institué par la nature, et l'acquis peut donc se substituer à l'innée."[46]

Thus the goal is not to avoid the passions, or even to hope to do so, but rather to train our *volonté* to maintain free judgment, and to control the effects of the passions: "Le plus que la volonté puisse faire pendant que cette émotion est en sa vigueur, c'est de ne pas consentir à ses effets et de retenir plusieurs des mouvements auxquels elle dispose le corps" (Article 146). The *volonté* cannot control the *émotion* – the literal movement – caused by the passions. Knowledge and science help and are desirable only insofar as they permit man to understand his passions, to become familiar with them, and to avoid excessive admiration, particularly self-admiration. Admiration for the newness of the world is not only unavoidable but also desirable, as it is a necessary interface to allow God's Providence to act upon us, and to subsequently enact our *libre arbitre*, which goes hand-in-hand with our judgment.

In November 1647, in a lengthy letter to Queen Christina, Descartes elaborated upon the link between the passions, knowledge, and man's *libre arbitre*:

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[45] Ibid., 165.
[46] Ibid., 171.

> il me semble que le Souverain Bien de tous les hommes ensemble, est un amas ou un assemblage de tous les biens tant de l'ame que du corps et de la fortune, qui peuvent estre en quelques hommes; mais que celuy d'un chacun en particulier est toute autre chose, et qu'il ne consiste qu'en une ferme volonté de bien faire, et au contentement qu'elle produit. Dont la raison est, que je ne remarque aucun autre bien qui me semble si grand, ny qui soit entierement au pouvoir d'un chacun. Car pour les biens du corps et de la fortune, ils ne dependent point absolument de nous: et ceux de l'ame se raportent tous à deux chefs, qui sont, l'un de connoistre, et l'autre de vouloir ce qui est bon ; mais la connoissance est souvent au delà de nos forces; c'est pourquoy il ne reste que nostre volonté, dont nous puissions absolument disposer. Et je ne voy point qu'il soit possible d'en disposer mieux, que si l'on a tousjours une ferme et constante resolution de faire exactement toutes les choses que l'on jugera estre les meilleures, et d'employer toutes les forces de son esprit à les bien connoistre; C'est en cela seul que consistent toutes les vertus; c'est cela seul qui à proprement parler merite de la loüange et de la gloire; enfin c'est de cela seul que resulte toujours le plus grand et le plus solide contentement de la vie: Ainsi j'estime que c'est en cela que consiste le Souverain Bien.… Et qu'outre que le libre arbitre est de soy la chose la plus noble qui puisse estre en nous, d'autant qu'il nous rende en quelque façon pareils à Dieu, et semble nous exemter de luy estre sujets, et que par consequent son bon usage est le plus grand de tous nos biens, il est aussi celuy qui est le plus proprement nostre, et qui nous importe le plus.[47]

Man's *libre arbitre*, therefore, is his *souverain bien*, that which most resembles God's own creation, and which in fact makes him "similar" to God. And this *libre arbitre* depends directly on man's *volonté*, that part of the soul that is entirely within man's control. While Descartes does not explicitly link these notions to admiration, his placement of "understanding" beyond man's control is directly related to the passion that inspires it: admiration occurs involuntarily and provokes the involuntary desire to know more about an object. To recall,

> L'admiration est une subite surprise de l'âme, qui fait qu'elle se porte à considérer avec attention les objets qui lui semblent rares et extraordinaires. Ainsi elle est

[47] René Descartes, *Lettres de Mr Descartes*, ed. Claude Clerselier (Paris: Charles Angot, 1666), 1–3.

> causée premièrement par l'impression qu'on a dans le cerveau, qui représente l'objet comme rare et par conséquent digne d'être fort considéré. (Article 70)

Admiration leads to the "consideration" of the admired object, which leads to understanding, which leads to judgment and enacts man's *libre arbitre*. Thus, man's ability to choose right over wrong, his true *souverain bien*, is only enacted at the level of the *volonté* and its relationship to man's judgment of the object. Descartes formalizes these ideas in the *Passions de l'âme*:

> Et parce que l'une des principales parties de la sagesse est de savoir en quelle façon et pour quelle cause chacun se doit estimer ou mépriser, je tâcherai ici d'en dire mon opinion. Je ne remarque en nous qu'une seule chose qui nous puisse donner juste raison de nous estimer, à savoir l'usage de notre libre arbitre, et l'empire que nous avons sur nos volontés. Car il n'y a que les seules actions qui dépendent de ce libre arbitre pour lesquelles nous puissions avec raison être loués ou blâmés, et il nous rend en quelque façon semblables à Dieu en nous faisant maîtres de nous-mêmes, pourvu que nous ne perdions point par lâcheté les droits qu'il nous donne. (Article 152)

Descartes and Corneille

In the next chapter of this study, these questions of *volonté*, *libre arbitre*, desire, understanding, and of course admiration, will be of paramount importance:

> [Corneille et Descartes] voient la réflexion sous sa double forme: réflexion théorique et réflexion morale, force primordiale de l'âme, force qui, certes, peut être obscurcie et ébranlée par la passion, mais non absolument détruite. Car cette destruction signifierait en même temps l'anéantissement de l'âme, dans sa nature spécifique. La pensée est l'unique attribut qui ne saurait être retranché de l'âme; elle n'en est pas un simple accident, mais constitue la totalité de son essence… Mais à cette nature spirituelle de l'âme s'oppose, en l'homme, une nature corporelle. A cause de cette nature corporelle, il est exposé aux incitations extérieures de toute sorte, et, de chacune de ces incitations, naît dans l'âme une passion d'espèce particulière.[48]

[48] Cassirer, *Descartes, Corneille, Christine de Suede*, 13.

Yet there are also differences between the two authors and their treatment of the passions. As Annie Bitbol-Hespériès concludes in her article "Descartes et Corneille":

> Corneille insiste beaucoup sur l'effort de la volonté pour dompter les passions, alors que chez Descartes, la volonté n'a pas d'action directe sur le mécanisme corporel en jeu dans les passions. Corneille se distingue donc de Descartes parce qu'il accorde peu d'intérêt au rôle du corps dans les passions, qu'il reste proche du stoïcisme et du néo-stoïcisme et qu'il montre l'action de la volonté sur les passions.[49]

In other words, that which Descartes explores in his philosophical treatise, Corneille enacts on the stage: What are the forces acting upon man's *libre arbitre*? What is the role of surprise in generating admiration? Can man control his passions and choose what is "right"? And where will his *générosité*, his *volontés*, and his *passions* lead him?

[49] Annie Bitbol-Hespériès, "Descartes et Corneille," *Traits de Plume Des Dialogues de Descartes*, 3, accessed February 16, 2014, http://www.parisdescartes.fr/UNIVERSITE/Le-patrimoine/Rene-Descartes-1596-1650.

Chapter 2 - Admiration's Neutrality in the Theater of Pierre Corneille

Pierre Corneille's entire corpus reveals an aristocratic sense of glory at all costs that often challenges traditional positive conceptions of greatness. Within this portrayal of neutral heroism, admiration plays an extremely important role: the greatness of the Cornelian hero is dependent on his or her ability to continually amaze. Echoing the Cartesian notion of admiration as a "subite surprise de l'âme" in the *Traité des Passions*, the Cornelian hero causes admiration, as he (or she) follows his (or her) ambition for greatness with unyielding, unprecedented dedication. In a world where Cléopâtre's filicide in a bid for power is every bit as "admirable" as Horace's fratricide in defense of Rome or Nicomède's altruistic forgiveness of his brother, the twenty-first century equation of *admiration* with *estime* or emulation has very little place. For Corneille, the central notion of *admiration* is to be understood in the context of awe and surprise for the newness and "rarity" of the hero's actions.[1]

Upon closer examination, Corneille's corpus also reveals many nuances and complications of Cartesian admiration that are central to an understanding of the term's place within his plays and within the century as a whole. This chapter will consider several key questions: Who admires whom and under what circumstances? Can heroes

[1] Article 70 of René Descartes's *Traité des passions de l'âme* defines admiration as, "une subite surprise de l'âme, qui fait qu'elle se porte à considérer avec attention les objets qui lui semblent rares et extraordinaires." (Descartes, "Les Passions de L'âme," 1824.)

admire or do they exclusively act in ways that attract the admiration of others? Must admiration be spoken or can it be implied? And, does Corneille prescribe admiration, or merely present its potentiality in several forms? In order to explore these questions, this chapter will first broadly consider Corneille's relationship to admiration on both a personal and textual level, before taking a microscopic view of *Horace*, which presents admiration in both positive and negative terms.

In his 1660 *Avertissement* to *Nicomède* (1651), Corneille articulates the importance of soliciting admiration from his viewers: "Dans l'admiration qu'on a pour sa [Nicomède's] vertu, je trouve une manière de purger les passions, dont n'a point parlé Aristote, et qui est peut-être plus sûre que celle qu'il prescrit à la tragédie par le moyen de la pitié et de la crainte."[2] In his *Discours de la tragédie*, Corneille quotes a passage from Aristotle's *Poetics* that underscores the importance of attachment between tragic characters for inspiring "la pitié tragique":

> Qu'un ennemi tue ou veuille tuer son ennemi, cela ne produit aucune commisération… Qu'un indifférent tue un indifférent, cela ne touche guère davantage, d'autant qu'il n'excite aucun combat dans l'âme de celui qui fait l'action; mais quand les choses arrivent entre des gens que la naissance ou l'affection attache aux intérêts l'un de l'autre, comme alors qu'un mari tue ou est prêt de tuer sa femme, une mère ses enfants, un frère sa sœur; c'est ce qui convient merveilleusement à la Tragédie.[3]

In the context of his own plays, Corneille elaborates :

> Horace et Curiace ne seraient point à plaindre, s'ils n'étaient point amis et beaux-frères;… et le malheur d'Antiochus toucherait beaucoup moins, si un autre que sa

[2] Corneille, "Nicomède," 675.
[3] Pierre Corneille, "Discours de La Tragédie et Des Moyens de La Traiter Selon Le Vraisemblable Ou Le Nécessaire," in *Oeuvres de P. Corneille*, vol. 1, First (Paris: Librairie de L. Hachette et Cie, 1862), 65, http://www.gutenberg.org/files/31628/31628-h/31628-h.htm.

> mère lui demandait le sang de sa Maîtresse, ou qu'un autre que sa Maîtresse lui demandât celui de sa mère, ou si après la mort de son frère qui lui donne sujet de craindre un pareil attentat sur sa personne, il avait à se défier d'autres, que de sa mère, et de sa Maîtresse.[4]

Corneille underscores the importance of ambiguous relationships in his analysis of his own plays. He does not lead his reader to pity Horace over Curiace or vice versa, nor does he present Cléopâtre's filicide as more or less shocking than Rodogune's demand that Antiochus kill his own mother. The individuals presented in these relationships are all equally tragic for Corneille, and what unites them is admiration. They are admired not because of the positive effects of their actions, but because of their daring and their hunger for glory at all costs, which shocks and amazes their fellow characters and the play's audience as well. [5]

Corneille, Descartes and the Jesuits

Like Descartes, Corneille demonstrates a firm conviction in man's "volonté". Examining Corneille's experience at school in *Héros et Orateurs*, Marc Fumaroli sees the root of Corneille's "poétique de l'admiration" in his Jesuit education:

> Il est aisé de reconnaître, dans ces conceptions dramatiques… les sources de la casuistique opiniâtre que Corneille opposera au rigorisme aristotélicien de la poétique des doctes français. Il interprète les unités dans un sens ironique ou très large. Il adopte la notion de la tragédie à fin heureuse, celle des héros exemplaires, et enfin le concept de "vraisemblable extraordinaire", lié à une poétique de l'admiration. Toutes ces idées qui ont soutenu sa création dramatique,

[4] Ibid., 65–66.
[5] While the audience's shock and amazement is an important consideration that will be examined in this chapter, their reaction is in fact secondary to the admiration at work in the text. As with the other texts considered in this study, therefore, the passions of the characters within the play will be the primary focus of this study of Corneille's corpus.

> et que Corneille formulera explicitement dans ses *Discours* de 1660, ont leur racine dans la poétique, que l'on pourrait qualifier d'ignatienne, des jésuites des années 1600-1603.[6]

The notion of "vraisemblable extraordinaire" testifies to Corneille's commitment to the power of the human spirit over the natural world. Man's commitment to his own greatness knows no bounds, and his "extraordinary," surprising actions provoke admiration in those around him. As this study will explore, the Cornelian hero resembles the Cartesian man in the way he experiences "admiration": characters feel admiration for one another following great or surprising acts. This surprise is neutral and non-evaluative, and arises as much from the newness or rarity of the hero's action as it does from the positive or negative passions it may subsequently cause. Corneille's presentation of admiration differs from Descartes's, however, in its singular focus on the actions of the hero. Whereas Descartes primarily presents man's neutral admiration and subsequent evaluative passions with respect to a new "object" – be it human or material – Cornelian admiration is reserved solely for great actions.

In his comparative study, *Descartes, Corneille, Christine de Suède*, Ernst Cassirer expands upon Gustave Lanson's earlier explorations of the physical links that may explain the shared understanding of admiration between Descartes and Corneille. But for Cassirer, this link transcends the physical and points to a much more profound shared "attitude" to the world around that may in fact stem from a shared educational background:

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[6] Marc Fumaroli, *Héros et Orateurs: Rhétorique et Dramaturgie Cornéliennes* (Geneva, Switzerland: Librarie Droz S.A., 1996), 73.

> La manière dont ils envisagent et apprécient la vie humaine, d'après leur intuition, philosophique ou poétique, révèle une étroite communion. Le thème qui leur est commun est le monde des passions humaines. Descartes cherche à pénétrer ce monde en penseur; il veut comprendre la "nature" de la passion comme telle et la ramener à son dernier fondement métaphysique, l'union de l'âme et du corps. Corneille, dans ses plus hautes figures poétiques, évoque devant nous toute la puissance de la passion; il veut non seulement que nous la vivions, mais qu'en même temps nous apercevions ses motifs les plus secrets, et les forces qui l'animent.[7]

While Descartes maintains a detached, "scientific" distance from his study of the relationship between man's body and soul and their physiological reactions to external objects, Corneille focuses on human actions, allowing his audience to observe the effects of admiration arising from rare and extraordinary acts. Cornelian heroes themselves are rarely struck with admiration. Their greatness appears to be above such a "subite surprise de l'âme," and their role is rather to inspire admiration in those around them, which can then be observed by the audience. It is therefore not surprising that, with the exception of Polyeucte who explicitly admires God's greatness, the Cornelian hero does not declare admiration for anything or anyone.[8] Only in *La Mort de Pompée* does Cléopâtre express admiration, and then only for the surprising fate of great men, which she advocates people admire in a general sense: "admirons cependant le destin des grands hommes" (II.ii.). In *Horace*, Horace's commitment to fulfill the honor of having been chosen to

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[7] Cassirer, *Descartes, Corneille, Christine de Suede*, 19.

[8] A word search in a representative number of Corneille's plays reveals very few appearances in the tragedies: *Médée*: 1 occurrence (Médée); *Le Cid*: 5 occurrences (Don Dièguе, Le Comte, Elvire, L'Infante); *Cinna*: 0 occurrences; *Horace*: 5 occurrences (Julie, Curiace, Le Vieil Horace); *Polyeucte*: 1 occurrence (Polyeucte – it is rare for the hero to declare admiration except in the Christian tragedies); *La Mort de Pompée*: 3 occurrences (Achorée, Cléopâtre – "admirons le destin des grands hommes"); *Rodogune*: 2 occurrences (Laonice, Timagène); *Théodore*: 0 occurrences.

fight Curiace prevents him from admiring Curiace's equally shocking resistance to the battle, while in *Rodogune*, Cléopâtre's singular focus on her own ambition blinds her to Rodogune's equally "admirable" bid for power and revenge (and vice versa).

According to the Jesuit priest Nicolas Caussin in his 1621 *La Cour Sainte*, the privileging of greatness and its corresponding unidirectional admiration is completely in keeping with God's design for humanity:

> Dieu vous a mis dans la sphere de la grandeur, comme des arcs celestes, vous sçavez d'où il vous a tiré, et que non plus que l'arc en ciel vous n'estiez qu'une menue vapeur, mais ce Soleil vous a dorez, enrichis, esmaillez de tant de perfections qu'on vous peut appeler justement les enfans de l'admiration… dans le Ciel vos recompenses seront esgalées aux profits qu'aura fait cet exemple.[9] (Livre I, Chapter XI, "La Raison, Tirée de l'exemple que l'effect doit produire")

> Les Grands qui ont basty leur fortune sur les fondements de la crainte de Dieu, de petits et foibles commencemens sont parvenus si haut, qu'ils ont remply toutes les bouches de leurs loüanges, tous les grands esprits d'admiration, et tous les siecles des monumens de leur gloire.[10] (Livre I, Chapter XIII, "Raison, Prise de la récompense")

Caussin's treatise simultaneously reminds the nobility from whence they have come, that they are fundamentally sinful and imperfect, and that their greatness comes from being God's chosen "children of admiration". According to Caussin, these great individuals have risen to greatness because they fear God. God has therefore made them shine and sparkle in order to be noticed by others. In other words, these great men are admiration incarnate: God makes them rare and extraordinary so that they might create admiration in others, allowing their God-fearing example to be noticed. Caussin clearly lays out the responsibility of this chosen nobility to serve as an example for humanity, emphasizing

[9] Nicolas Caussin, *La Cour Sainte*, vol. 1 (Paris: Edme Couterot, 1680), 128.
[10] Ibid., 1:148.

that they will be "recompensés" in heaven based on the success of their example.[11] Caussin's use of admiration blurs the line between admiration as surprise and admiration as "example to be followed." Yet the two aspects of admiration seem to happen in two parts: the great men are first noticed for their "shiny" greatness, and only later will they be "rewarded in heaven" for their example.

For Serge Doubrovsky, the Cornelian hero differs from the Cartesian man precisely in his or her "singularité," the intense focus on his or her own individual goals and ambitions. Quoting Descartes's *Passions de l'âme* in his book *Corneille et la dialectique du héros*, Doubrovsky finds a shared language between Descartes and Corneille that testifies to their shared view of the greatness of mankind, even as it emphasizes Descartes's focus on pride and self-admiration as potentially dangerous perversions of the natural impulse of admiration:

> "Mais, quelle que puisse être la cause pour laquelle on s'estime, si elle est autre que la volonté qu'on sent en soi-même d'user toujours bien de son libre arbitre, de laquelle j'ai dit que vient la générosité, elle produit toujours un *orgueil* très blâmable, et qui est si différent de cette vraie générosité qu'il a des effets entièrement contraires; car tous les autre biens, comme *l'esprit*, la *beauté*, les *richesses*, les *honneurs*, etc. ayant coutume d'être d'autant plus estimés qu'ils se trouvent *en moins de personnes*, et même étant pour la plupart de telle nature qu'ils *ne peuvent être communiqués à plusieurs*, cela fait que les orgueilleux tâchent d'abaisser tous les autres hommes…" (*Passions de l'âme*, Art. 158. souligné par nous). Tout est dans ce texte admirable: la liste complète des valeurs cornéliennes ('esprit,' 'beauté,' 'richesse,' 'honneur,' qui se ramasseront bientôt en un seul mot, la *gloire*) y est saisie dans son irréductible opposition aux valeurs de la générosité stoïque; et Descartes, avec une acuité remarquable, met en évidence la nécessité, pour la conscience orgueilleuse, de se sentir fondé sur son absolue et incommunicable singularité, qui ne peut s'éprouver que comme

[11] The final chapter of this study will consider the Princesse de Clèves's position as an "inimitable example."

> affrontement et abaissement d'autrui. Universalité-singularité, Descartes-Corneille, c'est le duel du *Cogito bourgeois* et du *Cogito aristocratique*.[12]

Yet Corneille, like Descartes, also recognizes the potential danger of aristocratic "orgueil." As Corneille presents his aristocratic heroes – both male and female – he presents the inherent greatness of their singularity of purpose, but also explores the fine lines between "grandeur d'âme," power, and excessive pride: when man serves his need for greatness at all costs, he is no longer master of himself. Considering the example of negative admiration in *Rodogune*, Corneille's 1660 *Discours de l'utilité des parties du poème dramatique* underscores the greatness of Cléopâtre's "âme": "tous ses crimes sont accompagnés d'une grandeur d'âme qui a quelque chose de si haut qu'en même temps qu'on déteste ses actions on admire la source dont elles partent."[13] In *Morales du grand siècle*, Paul Bénichou goes one step further in an attempt to define the source of our admiration for her: "c'est plutôt le mépris du bien et du mal qui est sublime, dès lors que l'ambition, l'orgueil, la haine de la médiocrité est de la dépendance, en sont le principe. A cette condition l'horreur du spectacle se mêle d'admiration."[14]

Rodogune also offers a perfect demonstration of the potential dangers of *orgueil*. While Descartes fears that a singular focus on the self will require the prideful man to humiliate and disdain his fellow man, Corneille fears that excessive pride and ambition may pervert the very singularity that defines the hero. As Cléopâtre demonstrates, excessive *orgueil* can lead to a perversion of *grandeur* and ambition that will lead to the

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[12] Doubrovsky, *Corneille et La Dialectique Du Héros*, 68.
[13] Corneille, "Discours de L'utilité et Des Parties Du Poème Dramatique," 32.
[14] Paul Bénichou, *Morales Du Grand Siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948), 35.

undoing of the hero, without lessening the admiration that those around her initially feel for the rarity of her actions. Cléopâtre's commitment to her own greatness is not pure. According to Bénichou, she is not solely dedicated to *grandeur*, to her *moi*, but rather to power. As such, she becomes a "slave to the throne," a perversion of her original prideful dedication that reveals her true insanity in the Cornelian sense of the word:

> Il faut donc que l'orgueil soit sage, à sa manière, pour ne pas se perdre… En se modérant, l'orgueil ne cède pas proprement à la nécessité, il s'en libère plutôt, et résout d'avance, à sa gloire, le problème de ses relations avec le monde. Ce qui manque donc à Cléopâtre, en même temps que la vraie lucidité, c'est le suprême orgueil. Le trône est son maître; il la mesure toute, et il n'est rien en elle qui le puisse mesurer, et dépasser; telle est sa profonde et décisive faiblesse. La leçon que Corneille a incarnée en elle, c'est que la passion de la grandeur se mue en servitude sitôt que la considération de l'*objet* convoité, si prestigieux soit-il par lui-même, prime le *mouvement* de l'ambition, sitôt que le moi se fixe à une proie au lieu de demeurer fidèle à lui-même, et de chercher, dans le dépassement de toute convoitise, le secret de la vraie grandeur.[15]

Despite her failure to maintain a pure dedication to personal greatness, Cléopâtre is initially "admirable" in her rejection of her destiny as wife and mother. Like her predecessor Médée, Cléopâtre eschews the subservient feminine role that destiny has chosen for her.

As Cléopâtre's "admirable" resistance shows, Corneille rejects any notion of predestination, which is all the more significant when one considers the importance of fate in the ancient sources from which he adapts his tragedies. In *Héraclius* (1647), for example, Corneille rewrites the ancient source text in order to imagine what would have happened if human agency had been allowed to prevail over "destiny." In the original version of the text, Phocas executed Maurice and his six male heirs, despite the wet-

[15] Ibid., 36–37.

nurse's attempt to hide the youngest and substitute her own son. In his *avertissment au lecteur*, Corneille summarizes:

> Cette nourrice eut tant de zèle pour ce malheureux prince, qu'elle exposa son propre fils au supplice, au lieu d'un des siens [un des fils de Maurice] qu'on lui avait donné à nourrir. Maurice reconnut l'échange et l'empêcha par une considération pieuse que cette extermination de toute sa famille était un juste jugement de Dieu, auquel il n'eût pas cru satisfaire s'il eût souffert que le sang d'un autre eût payé pour celui d'un de ses fils… J'ai supposé que l'échange avait eu son effet, et de cet enfant sauvé par la supposition d'un autre, j'en ai fait Héraclius, le successeur de Phocas.[16]

As Corneille emphasizes, in the ancient text, the death of Maurice's youngest son occurred because Maurice believed it was God's "judgment," and prevented the nurse from substituting her own child's life for that of his child. Corneille explores what would have happened if human free will had been allowed to play its part in determining the destiny of these families, instead of being blocked by Maurice as in the original version of the text. Yet, Corneille adds the additional layer of switching the enemies' babies so that the children are raised in the enemy's household. Corneille follows the lives of the switched babies into adulthood: the rightful heir to the throne, Héraclius, but also the tyrant's son, Martian, both raised to love their actual enemies and despise their actual blood families. Given this shockingly unique situation, *Héraclius* stands alone in Corneille's corpus as the play that contains the most instances of the term "admiration." Some form of the term appears in the play nine times, almost twice as many as any other tragedy, and it is used by almost every character.

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[16] Pierre Corneille, *Héraclius: Empreur D'orient* (Paris: Guillaume de Luine, 1653), vi, https://play.google.com/store/books/details?id=58c5AAAAcAAJ&rdid=book-58c5AAAAcAAJ&rdot=1.

In *Oedipus*, Corneille performs a much more subtle rewriting of history, changing not the story line itself, but rather the attitude of the characters, and their willingness to accept their destiny. Comparing Corneille's and Sophocles's versions of *Oedipus*, Cassirer underscores the fatality that Corneille deliberately reverses:

> Le drame de Corneille ignore [le] frisson de transcendance. Même dans *Œdipe*, le héros tragique ne doit pas être vaincu par un fatum mystique. Il se dresse contre son sort, et la manière dont il reçoit et porte sa fortune, rétablit la force primordiale de son moi. La pièce s'achève sur une glorification du moi qui, du cœur de son être, en tant que pensée et vouloir, se sait au-dessus de toutes les puissances du destin.[17]

Throughout the play, the notion of destiny is refuted, and the liberty of the human soul proclaimed. Corneille says in the *Discours de la tragédie* that Œdipus's actions in the play provoke pity, rather than fear, since the members of the audience cannot reasonably fear unknowingly killing their own fathers and marrying their own mothers. It is important to remember that, according to Descartes's theory of the passions, admiration would necessarily precede pity since for an individual to feel pity, the soul must already have been moved to consider with greater attention something that it finds admirable.[18] If there is any fear to be felt and any shameful inclination to be purged in watching the play, Corneille says, it would be the human desire to predict the future:

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[17] Cassirer, *Descartes, Corneille, Christine de Suede*, 14–16.

[18] "Lorsque la première rencontre de quelque objet nous surprend, et que nous le jugeons être nouveau, ou fort différent de ce que nous connaissions auparavant, ou bien de ce que nous supposions qu'il devait être, cela fait que nous l'admirons et en sommes étonnés. Et pour ce que cela peut arriver avant que nous connaissions aucunement si cet objet nous est convenable, ou s'il ne l'est pas, il me semble que l'admiration est la première de toutes les passion. Elle n'a point de contraire, à cause que si l'objet qui se présente n'a rien en soi qui nous surprenne, nous n'en sommes aucunement émeus, et nous le considérons sans passion." (Descartes, "Les Passions de L'âme," 1824, Article 53.) See Chapter 1 for more details.

> Le malheur [d'Œudipe] n'excite que de la pitié, et je ne pense pas qu'à le voir représenter, aucun de ceux qui le plaignent s'avise de craindre de tuer son père ou d'épouser sa mère. Si sa représentation nous peut imprimer quelque crainte, et que cette crainte soit capable de purger en nous quelque inclination blâmable ou vicieuse, elle y purgera la curiosité de savoir l'avenir, et nous empêchera d'avoir recours à des prédictions, qui ne servent d'ordinaire qu'à nous faire choir dans le malheur qu'on nous prédit par les soins mêmes que nous prenons de l'éviter; puisqu'il est certain qu'il n'eût jamais tué son père, ni épousé sa mère, si son père et sa mère, à qui l'oracle avait prédit que cela arriverait, ne l'eussent fait exposer de peur qu'il n'arrivât. Ainsi non seulement ce seront Laïus et Jocaste qui feront naître cette crainte, mais elle ne naîtra que de l'image d'une faute qu'ils ont faite quarante ans avant l'action qu'on représente, et ne s'exprimera en nous que par un autre acteur que le premier, et par une action hors de la tragédie.[19]

Corneille explicitly denies the role of "fate" in determining Œdipus's actions: if he ends up doing what the oracle foretold, Corneille argues, it is because his parents put him on the path that allowed him to take these actions in the first place. Following Descartes's understanding of the *volontés*, man has the ability to control the actions that he takes based on his involuntary passions. If the gods, fate, or destiny controlled human actions on every level, then man's sudden, awestruck admiration for his fellow men would be non-existant; rather this admiration would be directed toward God and the surprising actions that he caused man to perform. Further, in the Christian belief system, this would preclude the neutrality of admiration since God's actions could only ever be judged to be perfect.

Can Horace admire Curiace?

[19] Corneille, "Discours de La Tragédie et Des Moyens de La Traiter Selon Le Vraisemblable Ou Le Nécessaire."

As the previous section has shown, Corneille centers his tragedies around "admirable" actions, which reflect the free will of the hero to act in extraordinary ways. In his 1640 *Horace*, Corneille presents his audience with three heroes who are fiercely loyal to their own beliefs: Horace, Curiace, and Camille surprise through their determination to stand their ground at all costs. Much of the criticism of *Horace* has focused on determining who is the true hero of the play, and whose actions are "meant" to be "admired" in both the seventeenth- and twenty-first-century definitions of the term, whose actions shock and suprise, and whose actions are justified and worthy of the audience's approval. This study will argue that this question is, in fact, of little importance. What matters is not who is more admirable in the text, but rather how the characters act to inspire admiration and, more importantly, why. Universally, these characters seek to "impress" no one but themselves. They remain loyal to their beliefs to the death: Curiace resists fighting to the point of dying on the battle field – a death that this study will argue he has chosen; Camille mourns Curiace to the point of betraying both Rome and her brother's honor, a sin which Horace feels compelled to punish; and Horace pursues personal and patriotic glory to the point of killing first his brother-in-law in battle and then his sister in the name of Rome. By pitting these three characters against one another, Corneille in fact highlights the ambiguity inherent in Descartes's primary passion: what inspires admiration is rarely predictable, and often undesirable.

The plays discussed thus far in this chapter arise out of equally extraordinary, admirable situations: twin brothers vying for the throne and for love in *Rodogune*; a son predicted to kill his father and marry his mother in *Oedipe*; an heir to be killed simply

because of his parentage in *Héraclius* and then raised as his would-be-murderer's son; and brothers pitted against one another as they fight to the death for their countries in *Horace*. These extraordinary situations, admirable in themselves, set the scene for admirable actions to occur. The ambiguities explored in *Horace* are thus equally present in *Le Cid*, *Héraclius*, *Oedipe*, and throughout Corneille's tragic corpus as he deliberately presents the audience with admirable situations that they can feel and are forced to experience as they watch the play. The remainder of this chapter will explore the ambiguous depictions of admiration that permeate *Horace* in order to understand Corneille's complex descriptions of admiration through a close reading of this remarkable text.

Curiace and Horace

Curiace first arrives onstage to interrupt the female congregation of the first act.[20] Curiace is present in *Horace* for a mere 475 lines (I, iii, 235- II, viii, 710), only slightly more than one quarter of the play. Yet discussion *about* Curiace occupies almost four full acts. He is every bit as much a focus of Corneille's presentation of admiration as the

[20] It is worth noting that many critics have suggested that Corneille codes him as a woman. For Serge Doubrovsky and later Mitchell Greenberg, Curiace possesses feminine characteristics. (Mitchell Greenberg, "Horace, Classicism and Femaile Trouble," in *Corneille, Classicism and the Ruses of Symmetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 77.) For Carlo R. François, (Carlo R. François, "En Relisant Horace Ou Les Objections de La Conscience," *The French Review* 28, no. 6 (May 1955): 472.), Curiace's attempts to avoid combat appear on the surface to be "weaker" than Horace's enthusiasm: "Curiace nous semble plus faible, moins décidé que son adversaire. Et pour cause! Il analyse les situations à mesure qu'elles surgissent. Il cherche sans relâche une réponse à un problème réel mais quasi insoluble. Il annonce un type nouveau et mal défini sur les scènes classiques." (472) But as Sabine has already established, such clear distinctions do not exist in the world of *Horace*: what matters is not one's stance, but the *fermeté* with which one defends it.

other characters. From the first moment that Curiace enters to reveal to his betrothed, Camille, that the war between his native Alba and her native Rome has been suspended, he underscores his conflicting allegiances and his desire to avoid further fighting:

> N'en doutez point, Camille, et revoyez un homme,
> Qui n'est ni le vainqueur, ni l'esclave de Rome.
> Cessez d'appréhendez de voir rougir mes mains
> Du poids honteux des fers, ou du sang des Romains.
> J'ai cru que vous aimiez assez Rome et la gloire,
> Pour mépriser ma chaîne, et haïr ma victoire,
> Et comme également en cette extrémité
> Je craignais la victoire, et la captivité… (I, iii, 235-242)[21]

Curiace repeats the opposition between two equally undesirable outcomes: être "vainqueur" ou "esclave"; porter "des fers" ou "le sang des Romains"; "la chaine" ou "la victoire"; craindre "la victoire" ou "la captivité." In other words, in the conflict between Rome and Alba, only two outcomes are possible: victory – which means death for Camille's brothers – or captivity. From Curiace's perspective, no good can come of this war. It is certainly worth noting that at this early stage, Curiace's own death never enters into his dichotomy of options. Should he be forced to fight for Alba and toward Rome's demise, he would either win and rule, or lose and become captive but, unlike Horace, he never declares an intention to win at all costs. Curiace recognizes on an impersonal level that any war waged must have a winner and a loser, and that the latter lives on "enslaved." Clearly, for Curiace, the best way to avoid the disastrous alternatives that could result from the war between Rome and Alba is to avoid fighting the war altogether. In other words, Curiace desires the *non*-admirable situation that the ceasefire between

[21] All quotes from the primary text will be taken from the following edition and cited parenthetically: Pierre Corneille, *Horace* (Paris: Gallimard, 1994).

Rome and Alba promised to give him. He recognizes that a war between neighboring countries and the brothers who defend them is an extraordinary situation that will unquestionably demand extraordinary, surprising, admirable actions.

Camille is perhaps even more conscious of the precariousness of Curiace's situation than he is. Upon learning that he has somehow avoided the two inevitable outcomes of victory or defeat, but having no knowledge of the ceasefire, she immediately calls his honor into question by suggesting that he may have fled to protect himself:

> Curiace, il suffit, je devine le reste.
> Tu fuis une bataille à tes vœux si funeste,
> Et ton cœur, tout à moi pour ne me perdre pas,
> Dérobe à ton pays le secours de ton bras. (I, iii, 243-246)

By accusing Curiace of letting his "cœur" dominate his "bras," two metonymical references that emphasize the all-encompassing conflict between love and war, devotion and victory, in the play, Camille accuses Curiace of failing to fulfill his duty to Alba. Yet she also perceptively interprets his fundamental objection to a war that is "à tes vœux si funeste," that pits neighbor against neighbor, and friend against friend. Curiace defends himself ardently, rejecting the implication that he would abandon his duty to Alba, yet without minimizing the conflict that his love for Camille creates within him:

> Je n'abandonne point l'intérêt de ma ville,
> J'aime encor mon honneur en adorant Camille;
> Tant qu'a duré la guerre on m'a vu constamment
> Aussi bon citoyen que véritable Amant,
> D'Albe avec mon amour j'accordais la querelle,
> Je soupirais pour vous en combattant pour elle;
> Et s'il fallait encor que l'on en vînt aux coups,
> Je combattrais pour elle en soupirant pour vous. (I, iii, 263-270)

Curiace resists the separation between love and honor, but he also acknowledges that he has always done his duty when it has been required of him. He has already proved himself on the battlefield. Now he desperately wants his love for Alba and his love for Camille to be compatible and to thus avoid any further "admirable" actions. The repetition and inversion of "soupirer," and "combattre" in lines 268 and 270 underscore that they weigh equally for Curiace. Yet, when forced to choose, Curiace has always headed to combat and left his love behind. Thus, as we might have surmised from Curiace's overly defensive response, Camille seems to have hit a nerve: the ceasefire has inspired in Curiace the hope for something other than war, and has awakened in him the desire for peace. In "En relisant Horace ou les objections de la conscience," Carlo R. François notes the change that occurs in Curiace following the rulers' announcement:

> [Avant] Il a mis sa flamme en veilleuse afin d'être un bon mobilisé. Il n'aurait sans doute pas hésité à renoncer à ses prétentions d'amant si elles avaient mis son honneur en danger… Mais la paix va succéder à la guerre; une promesse de paix, la trêve, trouve notre soldat enthousiaste. Ne va-t-il pas obtenir des permissions et avoir accès, de nouveau, à la maison de son amante ? Curiace succombe un instant à l'illusion de la paix.[22]

Unlike his counterpart Horace, once chosen, Curiace will not head passionately into battle thinking only of glory, honor, and duty, but rather reluctantly, thinking of the love that he has sacrificed and left behind.

At the end of Act I, Curiace explains the provisions of the ceasefire: to avoid destroying two communities so intimately intertwined, Rome and Alba will each choose three representatives to fight on their behalf. The extraordinary situation is thus created

[22] François, "En Relisant Horace Ou Les Objections de La Conscience," 473.

that will allow for Horace's subsequent admirable actions. The winners of this mini-combat will determine the fate of both cities. At its outset, therefore, the ceasefire is designed to minimize casualties and preserve alliances by not embroiling both cities and all of their inhabitants in a bloody war. The three citizens chosen are expected to fully engage themselves in the battle as representatives of their respective crowns. This is clearly the case for Horace who not only accepts his charge, but transforms his own self-doubt to become worthy of the honor:

> Mais quoique ce combat me promette un cercueil,
> La gloire de ce choix m'enfle d'un juste orgueil,
> Mon esprit en conçoit une mâle assurance,
> J'ose espérer beaucoup de mon peu de vaillance,
> Et du Sort envieux quels que soient les projets,
> Je ne me compte point pour un de vos Sujets [Albe].
> Rome a trop cru de moi, mais mon âme ravie
> Remplira son attente, ou quittera la vie. (II, i, 377-384)

Horace believes himself unworthy to be named, but the honor itself transforms him. In other words, because Rome believes in his ability to represent her, he too begins to believe. But, regardless of the battle that awaits him or his ability to win, Horace is "ravi" with Rome's choice. He questions his ability to win for Rome, but never questions his desire to fight on her behalf.

Upon hearing of Horace's nomination, but not yet knowing of his own, Curiace immediately accepts Alba's defeat and his own impending subjection:

> Puisque vous combattez, sa perte est assurée,
> En vous faisant nommer, le Destin l'a jurée,
> Je vois trop dans ce choix ses funestes projets,
> Et me compte déjà pour un de vos Sujets. (II, i, 367-370)

Echoing his own fear of "captivité" at the conclusion of Act I, Curiace seizes this opportunity not only to bolster his friend's confidence, but to declare his acceptance of Alba's fate. For Curiace, even before learning of his own impending involvement, Horace's commitment to Rome's victory has already created a no-win situation:

> Dures extrémités, de voir Albe asservie,
> Ou sa victoire au prix d'une si chère vie,
> …
> De tous les deux côtés, j'ai des pleurs à répandre,
> De tous les deux côtés mes désirs sont trahis. (II, i, 391-392…396-397)

Either Alba will be subjected to Rome's rule, or she will win and Horace will die. In either case, "de tous les deux côtés," Curiace sees his "désirs trahis": there can be no happy ending after Horace's declaration to fight for Rome to the death. Doubrovsky associates Curiace's indecision and his "pleurs" with feminine traits.[23] Yet, this position ignores the possibility that a man might also want to avoid war and the loss of loved ones. While, it may, on the surface, seem a display of weakness to resign himself so quickly to Alba's loss, Curiace's acquiescence is consistent with his repeated attempts to make the best of an impossible situation. It is interesting to note that most critics of *Horace* judge Curiace and Horace within a strong/weak dichotomy. In *Pierre Corneille,* Robert Brasillach seeks to erase the importance accorded to reader or critic sympathies by

[23] "Il n'y a aucun doute que la morale de 'l'humanité' révèle, chez Curiace, une attitude essentiellement *féminine*, dès lors qu'il n'a plus à combattre, et l'ambiguïté qui subsistait à l'acte précédent se dissipe. Son déchirement devant l'inéluctable alternative, sa douleur égale, quelle que soit l'issue, s'expriment, comme chez Camille (I, ii) par un 'hélas!' désespéré (v. 389); comme chez Sabine, par une indécision fondamentale: 'Quels vœux puis-je former et quel bonheur attendre ?' (v. 395); comme chez les deux femmes enfin, par la tentation des larmes: 'De tous les deux côtés j'ai des pleurs à répandre' (v. 396)."(Doubrovsky, *Corneille et La Dialectique Du Héros*, 139.)

showing that Curiace's brand of humanism is condemned as less heroic than Horace's commitment to war.[24] For Doubrovsky and Mitchell Greenberg, Curiace possesses feminine characteristics.[25] Even according to François's relatively sympathetic reading of Curiace, his attempts to avoid combat appear on the surface to be "weaker" than Horace's enthusiasm:

> Curiace nous semble plus faible, moins décidé que son adversaire. Et pour cause! Il analyse les situations à mesure qu'elles surgissent. Il cherche sans relâche une réponse à un problème réel mais quasi insoluble. Il annonce un type nouveau et mal défini sur les scènes classiques.[26]

By declaring that he is prepared to accept Rome's victory at Horace's hand, however, Curiace is simply attempting to salvage the unity between their families that will allow him to marry Camille and maintain his friendship with Horace.

Curiace's consistency cannot be overlooked in assessing his character. Like Horace, he remains committed to his own convictions and his "constance," a term repeated multiple times throughout the play, and an essential aspect of Curiace's character. This term, however, is strikingly at odds with the notion of "admiration" as sudden surprise. The play suggests that Curiace has already made a name for himself on the battlefield, that he has already performed many admirable feats. Much like Lafayette's Princesse de Clèves, Curiace now seeks peace and consistency, not admiration.[27] At the very least, Corneille juxtaposes two different masculine reactions to

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[24] Robert Brasillach, *Pierre Corneille* (Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1961), 143.
[25] Doubrovsky, *Corneille et La Dialectique Du Héros*, 134; Greenberg, "Horace, Classicism and Femaile Trouble," 77.
[26] François, "En Relisant Horace Ou Les Objections de La Conscience," 472.
[27] See Chapter 4.

the unprecedented situation placed before Rome and Alba. At the most, without doing so explicitly, Curiace criticizes Horace's willingness to die for Rome at the expense of his sister's happiness. Regardless, Curiace's reaction to Horace's zeal reveals that the latter is far more enthusiastic about the opportunity to act in surprising, admirable ways on the battlefield.

When Curiace hears the news that he and his two brothers have been chosen to represent Alba in the battle, he is "surprised," but claims to not be displeased. Yet the messenger's equally surprised question testifies to the physical response that belies Curiace's words:

> Dirai-je au Dictateur dont l'ordre ici m'envoie
> Que vous le recevez avec si peu de joie?
> Ce morne et froid accueil me surprend à mon tour. (II, ii, 415-418)

Curiace's outword appearance is as one already dead: "froid" et "morne." His response to the messenger offers very little reassurance of his enthusiasm for battle:

> Dis-lui que l'amitié, l'alliance, et l'amour,
> Ne pourront empêcher que les trois Curiaces
> Ne servent leur pays contre les trois Horaces. (II, ii, 418-420)

Curiace accepts his obligation to fight, but distances himself from the battle. Whereas Horace's acceptance speech in the first scene of the second act uses first-person pronouns nine times in only eight lines, Curiace's response in the second scene deliberately includes all of the brothers to depersonalize his response, and to subtly underscore that it is his family's honor that prompts him to go to battle, not his own. Further, Curiace uses a negative construction to emphasize not the glory of the battle itself or the honor of being

selected to represent Alba, but the sacrifices the battle will cost them all: "l'amitié, l'alliance, et l'amour."[28]

While Curiace must physically go to battle, the one thing he is still able to control is his psychological approach to the battle. As Bénichou has noted, Curiace's reaction may in fact be more consistent with the typical Cornelian hero's struggle to reconcile his inner *moi* and the demands of the world around him:

> L'accord intérieur n'est pas naturel dans les grandes âmes, toujours en difficulté avec elles-mêmes parce qu'elles sont en difficulté avec le monde… Le moi cornélien a une autre ambition. Il vise à s'affirmer supérieur au destin, à conquérir la liberté de haute lutte.[29]

Horace exhorts Curiace to recognize the extraordinary honor and "renommée" that they will earn in being asked to kill not an unknown enemy, but someone they love:

> Mais vouloir au Public immoler ce qu'on aime,
> S'attacher au combat contre un autre soi-même,
> Attaquer un parti qui prend pour défenseur
> Le frère d'une femme et l'amant d'une sœur,
> Et rompant tous ces nœuds, s'armer pour la patrie
> Contre un sang qu'on voudrait racheter de sa vie,
> Une telle vertu n'appartenait qu'à nous; (II, iii, 443-449)

Horace's argument in favor of their glory paraphrases the passage from Aristotle's *Poetics* that Corneille included in the *Examen* of his 1651 tragedy *Nicomède*: "Dans l'admiration qu'on a pour sa [Nicomède's] vertu, je trouve une manière de purger les passions, dont n'a point parlé Aristote, et qui est peut-être plus sûre que celle qu'il

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[28] See Pierre Brunel, "L'Épreuve Des Valeurs Héroïques Dans Horace," *Studi Di Letteratura Francese* XXVI (2001): 59–60.
[29] Bénichou, *Morales Du Grand Siècle*, 61.

prescrit à la tragédie par le moyen de la pitié et de la crainte."[30] Yet for Horace, this is not a hypothetical discussion of the importance of personal conflict in heroism: his lust for glory leads him to in fact relish being pitted against his brother-in-law. Curiace continues to be amazed at his friend's lust for glory even as he recognizes the honor of their situation and the virtue they will display in agreeing to fight one another:

> L'occasion est belle, il nous la faut chérir.
> Nous serons les miroirs d'une vertu bien rare;
> Mais votre fermeté tient un peu du barbare:
> Peu, même des grands cœurs, tireraient vanité
> D'aller par ce chemin à l'immortalité.
> À quelque prix qu'on mette une telle fumée,
> L'obscurité vaut mieux que tant de renommée.
> …
> Notre longue amitié, l'amour, ni l'alliance,
> N'ont pu mettre un moment mon esprit en balance; (II, iii, 454-460…463-464)

At this point, Curiace noticeably separates his position from that of Horace and shifts the focus of his response to Horace's "barbarous determination" going so far as to suggest that perhaps Horace's brand of heroism, unlike most who have gone before them, is in fact "vanité." Further, the introduction of the term "barbare" is critical, as the reader and Horace himself will remember this accusation when Camille later uses the same label to describe her brother's behavior.

Curiace summarizes his position, again using impersonal language, with the maxime-like sentence, "L'obscurité vaut mieux que tant de renommée." Curiace sets up an either/or situation that mirrors his desires and those of Horace: while Horace longs for "renommée," Curiace would rather live happily in the "obscurité" that he had hoped for

[30] Corneille, "Nicomède."

during the ceasefire and will now lose. In *Birth Marks: The Tragedy of Primogeniture in Pierre Corneille, Thomas Corneille, and Jean Racine* Richard Goodkin suggests that as a "gentilhomme d'Albe" Curiace, unlike his younger counterpart, Horace, does not need the battle to solidify his social status. Again invoking their "amitié," "amour," and "alliance," – perhaps in hopes of reminding Horace of all that they will both be sacrificing – Curiace reiterates that his "esprit" immediately knew its duty. By once again avoiding the subject pronoun "je" or the tonic pronoun "moi," Curiace declares not his commitment, but merely a lack of hesitation, a subtle, but certainly important distinction.

Curiace is aware that his less than enthusiastic response to the honor of being chosen might be interpreted as less than "masculine." As if responding to Doubrovsky's description of his feminine characteristics, Curiace equates his own patriotism to that of Horace:

> Et puisque par ce choix Albe montre en effet
> Qu'elle m'estime autant que Rome vous a fait,
> Je crois faire pour elle autant que vous pour Rome ;
> J'ai le cœur aussi bon, mais enfin je suis homme: (II, iii, 465-468)

By agreeing to go to war, Curiace has thus far fulfilled his duty every bit as much as Horace, and as such, his "cœur" – his bravery in the face of danger – is "aussi bon." Yet, Curiace's words convey no change of heart, but merely a statement of action. Regardless of his objections, he has "done" his duty. Furthermore, after setting up this parallel between his own actions and Horace's, Curiace uses the ambiguous conjunction, "mais" which could signal either a contradiction or an augmentation, as well as the ambiguous substantive "homme," which could represent either "human" or "man." As a

contradiction, the "mais" suggests that Curiace possesses a humanity or a manliness that Horace does not, and that this quality detracts from his ability to serve Alba; as an augmentation, the "mais" suggests that Curiace possesses a humanity or a "masculinity" that in fact make him *more* able to serve the needs of his city.

After establishing the equality of his honor and willingness to perform his duty, Curiace details how his "vision" of their nomination differs from that of Horace. While he does not explicitly use the term "admiration" in any form, Curiace marvels at the unexpected rarity of their situation:

> Je vois que votre honneur demande tout mon sang,
> Que tout le mien consiste à vous percer le flanc,
> Près d'épouser la sœur, qu'il faut tuer le frère,
> Et que pour mon pays j'ai le sort si contraire.
> Encore qu'à mon devoir je coure sans terreur,
> Mon cœur s'en effarouche, et j'en frémis d'horreur;
> J'ai pitié de moi-même, et jette un œil d'envie
> Sur ceux dont notre guerre a consumé la vie,
> Sans souhait toutefois de pouvoir reculer.
> Ce triste et fier honneur m'émeut sans m'ébranler:
> J'aime ce qu'il me donne, et je plains ce qu'il m'ôte;
> Et si Rome demande une vertu plus haute,
> Je rends grâces aux dieux de n'être pas romain,
> Pour conserver encore quelque chose d'humain. (II, iii, 469-482)

Curiace's description of their situation seems to follow the progression of the passions from admiration to a mix of the six primitive passions outlined by Descartes in the *Passions de l'âme*: "l'admiration, l'amour, la haine, le désir, la joie et la tristesse."[31] Curiace marvels at his situation before emphasizing fear above all else: "Encore qu'à mon devoir je coure sans **terreur**, / Mon cœur s'en **effarouche**, et j'en **frémis**

[31] Descartes, "Les Passions de L'âme," 1824, Article 69.

d'horreur." According to the Cartesian division of the passions, "la crainte" is a form of desire that corresponds to an instinct to protect oneself from imminent danger:

> Il suffit de penser que l'acquisition d'un bien ou la fuite d'un mal est possible pour être incité à la désirer. Mais quand on considère, outre cela, s'il y a beaucoup ou peu d'apparence qu'on obtienne ce qu'on désire, ce qui nous représente qu'il y en a beaucoup excite en nous l'espérance, et ce qui nous représente qu'il y en a peu excite la crainte, dont la jalousie est une espèce. Lorsque l'espérance est extrême, elle change de nature et se nomme sécurité ou assurance, comme au contraire l'extrême crainte devient désespoir.[32]

Having allowed himself to believe that peace and happiness were possible after the ceasefire, Curiace moves from admiring their situation to fearing the worst for their future. Mixed with this fear are "pitié de moi-même" and "envie" for those who have already perished with glory in the war. These passions are derivative of "tristesse," which is related to desire and fear, since sadness and joy arise primarily out of the impossibility or probability of man's desires. Curiace himself links his pity and envy to a sadness that moves him (his passions) without shaking him (his resolve): "Ce triste et fier honneur m'émeut sans m'ébranler." Through Curiace's progression through the passions and subsequent control thereof, Corneille expresses the Cartesian notion that the passions are "quelque chose d'humain."

Both Curiace and Horace admire the rare and extraordinary situation that pits them against one another, but Horace's admiration is followed by a desire for glory that he has every "hope" of achieving, given the situation: "J'ose espérer beaucoup de mon peu de vaillance" (380). In the most oft-discussed final onstage exchange between Horace and Curiace, their positions are summarized in two short verses:

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[32] Ibid., Article 58.

Horace
Albe vous a nommé, je ne vous connais plus.
Curiace
Je vous connais encore, et c'est ce qui me tue;
Mais cette âpre vertu ne m'était pas connue;
Comme notre malheur elle est au plus haut point:
Souffrez que je l'admire et ne l'imite point. (II, iii, 502-503)

For Horace, the call to battle has flipped a switch that allows him to simultaneously transform himself into a warrior desiring victory at all costs, and eschew all relationships that might prevent such a transformation. For Curiace, the call to battle has triggered a recognition of all that he must inevitably lose, as well as an admiration for "cette âpre vertu" that he equates with their misfortune, and refuses to imitate. Curiace *knows* Horace, but this new, "âpre vertu" is unknown to him and is cause for admiration in a negative sense.

Having decided that going to battle and literally "performing" his duty in a feigned combat against Horace is his only option, all that is left to Curiace to do is to say his goodbyes. The moment of adieu with Camille begins precisely when she presses him on his desire to kill her brother and then still hope to marry her:

Camille
Tu pourras donc, cruel, me présenter sa tête,
Et demander ma main pour prix de ta conquête?
Curiace
Il n'y faut plus penser: en l'état où je suis
Vous aimer sans espoir, c'est tout ce que je puis. (II, iv, 567-570)

Curiace refuses to acknowledge the possibility of killing Horace. Regardless of whether this refusal results from pain or dissimulation of his true intentions to die himself rather than kill Horace, the fact remains that Curiace goes to war uncommitted to the notion of

killing his friend. Curiace's final words to Camille evoke the notion of "constance," but, once again, Curiace's definition of "constance" differs greatly from that of Horace:

> Ma constance contre elle à regret s'évertue.
> N'attaquez plus ma gloire avec tant de douleurs,
> Et laissez-moi sauver ma vertu de vos pleurs.
> Je sens qu'elle chancelle, et défend mal la place,
> Plus je suis votre amant, moins je suis Curiace: (II, iv, 580-584)

Facing Camille's tears, Curiace feels his "constance" waver, but his "constance" throughout the play has been about avoiding Horace's death, not about throwing himself into battle. Curiace exhorts Camille to let him "sauver ma vertu de vos pleurs," but he never specifies that his "vertu" dictates he must kill Horace. In fact, there is nothing within Curiace's language to suggest that he is any more committed to killing Horace than he ever has been. As the scene progresses, Curiace seems to increasingly recognize his own death as the only way of avoiding Horace's. Hence, the line, "Plus je suis votre amant, moins je suis Curiace" begs the question "What is 'Curiace'?"

Curiace seems to waver, not in his commitment to Alba's cause and the battle that can guarantee her victory, but in his own personal determination to die and thereby leave Camille. For love of her and her brothers, Curiace heads into battle intending to literally become "moins… Curiace." This acceptance of death is foreshadowed both by Curiace's initial acceptance of Alba's defeat at the hands of Horace, before learning that the Curiace brothers had been chosen as her defenders, and by his "envy" of those who had previously died in the battle. While Curiace does not explicitly choose death over life, the text suggests that he would hesitate to kill Horace and might prefer the glory of dying. Choosing death over killing would certainly cause surprising admiration.

While Horace deliberately distances himself from his relationship with Curiace in order to view him as the enemy, Curiace does everything in his power to maintain his connection to Horace and distance himself from the battle. Further, his conduct during battle reveals that he refuses to see Horace as anything other than friend and brother. While Curiace's brothers, despite their many injuries, kill Horace's brothers, Curiace fails to land even one blow. One could conclude that he is merely a poor swordsman, but his past exploits cited by Camille (II, iv, 543-550) and his nomination by the Alban dictator suggest that this scenario is unlikely. Thus, Curiace's failure to injure Horace can be attributed not to a lack of skill, but to a refusal to view Horace as the enemy and to a corresponding inability to attack him. Curiace goes through the motions of battle to preserve his family's honor, but refuses to injure Horace even when doing so would ensure Alba's victory. By refusing to fully participate in the battle, Curiace effectively becomes a conscientious objector who ends up at the wrong end of Horace's sword. He is as engaged in the battle as any of the men standing by. In this scenario, Curiace is not a threat since he refuses to fight; he has caused no harm that would justify reprisal; he merely stands in the way of Horace's intended targets: Alba and the glory of conquering her in Rome's name.

Turning now to the final battle scene, it becomes clear that Curiace's refusal to see Horace as anything other than friend and brother results in a one-sided combat between a Horace who is hungry to display his "vertu," and a Curiace who presents himself half-heartedly at the battle. Valère's account of Horace's victory offers several specific pieces of information on Curiace:

> Resté seul contre trois, mais en cette aventure
> Tous trois étant blessés, et lui seul sans blessure,
> Trop faible pour eux tous, trop fort pour chacun d'eux,
> Il sait bien se tirer d'un pas si dangereux;
> Il fuit pour mieux combattre, et cette prompte ruse
> Divise adroitement trois frères qu'elle abuse.
> Chacun le suit d'un pas ou plus ou moins pressé,
> Selon qu'il se rencontre ou plus ou moins blessé;
> …
> Il attend le premier, et c'était votre gendre.
> L'autre, tout indigné qu'il ait osé l'attendre,
> En vain en l'attaquant fait paraître un grand cœur;
> Le sang qu'il a perdu ralentit sa vigueur. (IV, ii, 1103-1110…1115-1118)

First, the account reveals that Curiace has been injured along with his brothers; secondly, that he has failed to injure Horace in any way; thirdly, that he pursues the fleeing Horace; fourthly, that he is indignant at Horace's waiting for him to catch up; fifthly, that he attacks Horace with "grand coeur"; and finally, that he dies (IV, ii, 1122). It is important to remember when reading this account that it is that of an outside observer. Valère cannot possibly know the inner motivations of any of the combatants, only their outward manifestation in the actions he witnesses. Valère himself acknowledges this fact in his comment on Curiace's apparently valiant attempts to defeat Horace: "l'attaquant *fait paraître* grand coeur" (IV, ii, 1117). Thus, as Lyons has argued, there is no indication that Horace *knew* he was fleeing in order to separate the three Curiace brothers and attack them one by one: "First the Horaces are losing; then Horace flees; and finally, Horace turns to reveal that his flight was only a ruse and kills, *seriatim*, the three Curiaces."[33] It may just have been happy luck that in fleeing the battle, Horace turned to realize that he

[33] John D. Lyons, *The Tragedy of Origins: Pierre Corneille and Historical Perspective.* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 43.

could in fact win by attacking the Curiace brothers one by one. In this very plausible scenario, the irony would be overwhelming: after having chastised Curiace for his desire to avoid battle, Horace himself flees death, while Curiace actively pursues it. In the case of Curiace, Valère cannot know and never speculates why Horace was not injured – whether through his own expert swordsmanship or a lack of effort on the part of Curiace. Nor can Valère know why Curiace runs headlong after Horace in spite of his injuries and appears indignant upon seeing that Horace is waiting for him. Perhaps he is, as Valère speculates, indignant that he had to be waited for at all. But equally plausible, given the dialog that has occurred between the two male characters, is a rightful indignation that Horace would flee certain death after having declared himself so completely committed to dying in defense of Rome.

In the latter scenario, Horace would have eschewed his friendship with Curiace out of devotion to Rome, only to carelessly toss that new allegiance aside at the first sign of peril. Curiace, who seems to have accepted death in order to avoid harming Horace, might suddenly have begun to question his own self-sacrifice. If, in this scenario, as Curiace literally runs to his death, he is angry with Horace for the first time, it would be justifiably so. For, by running from the battle, Horace calls into question the valor and honor that have earned him such high regard from Curiace and which have prompted Curiace's self-sacrificing "passivity" on the battlefield. The singular action of fleeing from battle receives tremendous focus within the play as it is first recounted "erroneously" by Julie who presumes that it has guaranteed Alba's victory, then condemned at length by le vieil Horace, and finally glorified, through Valère's

correction, for its ingenuity. This action seems to have profoundly shaken Horace himself, for the next time that Horace appears on stage, it will end in his killing of Camille.

If in the process of dying Curiace finally redoubles his efforts and attacks Horace more vehemently than before, it is perhaps due to a realization that Horace may not in fact be worthy of the sacrifice that Curiace has made for him. At the very least, Horace's decision to turn and run surprises Curiace and likely causes admiration and a subsequent change in the passions that prompt him to act differently. Curiace's "constance" – his commitment to die at the hand of Horace – wavers as Horace fails to finish what he has started. At the conclusion of the battle, Curiace breaks with his commitment to fight without winning. His divergence from the original plan arises because of Horace's sudden display of unworthiness and hypocrisy. Thus, at the end of the battle, moments before the injured Curiace is overcome, what had been an unjust call to arms between equally worthy friends becomes a personal duel between sincerity and hypocrisy. Curiace's commitment to avoid killing Horace, so long as the latter remained worthy of his sacrifice, would certainly provoke the "subite surprise de l'âme" described by Descartes. According to Descartes's ordering of the passions,

> A l'admiration est jointe l'estime ou le mépris, selon que c'est la grandeur d'un objet ou sa petitesse que nous admirons. Et nous pouvons ainsi nous estimer ou nous mépriser nous-mêmes; d'où viennent les passions, et ensuite les habitudes de magnanimité ou d'orgueil et d'humilité ou de bassesse.[34]

[34] Descartes, "Les Passions de L'âme," 1824, Article 54.

Non-evaluative admiration for the surprising and unfamiliar actions of Curiace and Horace happens involuntarily, both within the text and, in parallel fashion, in the audience's reception of the text. But Descartes's *Traité des passions* suggests that admiration is immediately followed by the evaluative passions "l'estime ou le mépris," depending on whether their actions are deemed to be honorable or dishonorable in the Alba-Rome context. This evaluation is extensively debated within the text and, even today, by its critical readers.

Regardless of whether one accepts a generous reading of Curiace or, like Doubrovsky, condemns him as "disqualifié et condamné dans la perspective de l'éthique héroïque,"[35] it remains undeniable that Curiace surprises by being "humain" in a world of "vertu," "gloire," and "grandeur". The character of Curiace is designed to challenge both his fellow characters and the audience to consider whether his stance on the battle is deserving of "estime" or "mépris." Whatever the outcome of this assessment, the inscription of admiration in the text is undeniable.

Conclusion: Camille's "mépris"

Horace provokes admiration in equal but opposite fashion to his counterpart, Curiace. Whereas Curiace surprises through his refusal to fight, Horace surprises through his zeal for battle; whereas Curiace declares his love for Horace, Horace ends their life-long friendship in one short sentence. Yet his interaction with Curiace, while striking in its single-mindedness, nonetheless springs from a desire to serve his country and distance

[35] Doubrovsky, *Corneille et La Dialectique Du Héros*, 143.

himself from the pain and distraction of fighting a friend and brother. Upon his return from battle, however, Horace faces an entirely new challenge in Camille's unrelenting anger. Before Horace enters in Act IV, Camille steels herself to face him with merciless offense:

> Leur brutale vertu veut qu'on s'estime heureux,
> Et si l'on n'est barbare, on n'est point généreux.
> Dégénérons, mon cœur, d'un si vertueux père;
> Soyons indigne sœur d'un si généreux frère:
> C'est gloire de passer pour un cœur abattu,
> Quand la brutalité fait la haute vertu.
> Éclatez, mes douleurs: à quoi bon vous contraindre?
> Quand on a tout perdu, que saurait-on plus craindre?
> Pour ce cruel vainqueur n'ayez point de respect;
> Loin d'éviter ses yeux, croissez à son aspect;
> Offensez sa victoire, irritez sa colère,
> Et prenez, s'il se peut, plaisir à lui déplaire. (IV, iv, 1237-1248)

Camille's alliterative repetition of "brutale," "barbare," and "brutalité" echoes Curiace's earlier use of the same terms and foreshadows the language that she will use to enrage her brother. As Camille moves from mourning widow and sister to angry accuser and seeker of justice, she also leaves her traditional "feminine" role and moves toward a surprisingly "masculine" aggressiveness.[36] Camille exhorts her heart, "dégénérons," a verb that the 1694 edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* defines as "s'abastardir, ne suivre pas la vertu de ses ancestres,"[37] further clarifying that it is rarely used. Camille disinherits herself from her father and brother, who are formally lumped together in the parallel, assonant construction of "d'un si vertueux père"/ "d'un si généreux frère" (IV, iv, 1238-1239). This figurative disinheritance will come to fruition in the following scene

[36] See Brasillach, *Pierre Corneille*.
[37] "Dégénérer," *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (1694, n.d.).

when she will push Horace to the point of killing her, as she all but declares in the final lines of her soliloquy: "Offensez sa victoire, irritez sa colère, / Et prenez, s'il se peut, plaisir à lui déplaire." (IV, iv, 1247-1248) This series of imperatives, heightened by the percussive alliteration of the 'p's in the second verse, suggests not merely a passive resistance to her father's command to honor her brother, but a call to action that would likely have scandalized Corneille's audience.

Camille's final onstage scenes are filled with insults that seem designed precisely to push her brother over the edge:

> Donne-moi donc, barbare, un cœur comme le tien;
> …
> Puissent tant de malheurs accompagner ta vie,
> Que tu tombes au point de me porter envie;
> Et toi, bientôt souiller par quelque lâcheté
> Cette gloire si chère à ta brutalité! (IV, v, 1278…1291-1294)

Camille describes her brother's *coeur* as "barbare," and equates his *gloire* with "brutalité." In other words, she strikes at the very heart of his honor, echoing the earlier criticisms voiced by Curiace. Perhaps, if Camille's criticisms had remained confined to him, Horace might have been able to swallow his own pride and allow Camille to live. But, as if truly "taking pleasure in his displeasure," she goes on to attack Rome, the mother for whom Horace has risked everything:

> Rome, l'unique objet de mon ressentiment!
> Rome, à qui vient ton bras d'immoler mon amant!
> Rome qui t'a vu naître, et que ton cœur adore!
> Rome enfin que je hais parce qu'elle t'honore!
> …
> Puissé-je de mes yeux y voir tomber ce foudre,
> Voir ses maisons en cendre, et tes lauriers en poudre,
> Voir le dernier Romain à son dernier soupir,

Moi seule en être cause, et mourir de plaisir! (IV, v, 1301-1304…1315-1318)

Camille's repetition of "Rome" amounts to the opposite of a victory cry, emphasized by the exclamation marks at the end of the verses, and her call for destruction, a fiery threat that Horace cannot ignore: "C'est trop, ma patience à la raison fait place" (IV, v, 1319). One can assume that Horace attempted to be patient with her insults to his own honor, but that once she included Rome in her tirade, his "raison d'état" took over. It is important to note that Camille calls not only for the death of her fellow Romans, but also for her own "death from pleasure." Yet in the *Examen,* Corneille explicitly refuses the suggestion that Camille's death was suicide:

> Quand elle s'enferrerait d'elle-même par désepoir en voyant son frère l'épée à la main, ce frère ne laisserait pas d'être criminel de l'avoir tirée contre elle, puisqu'il n'y a point de troisième personne sur le Théâtre à qui il pût addresser le coup qu'elle recevrait.[38]

Corneille refutes the notion that Horace's guilt could have been mitigated had Camille actually taken her own life, since he would have been guilty for merely drawing his sword when she could be the only intended target. Thus, for Corneille, the admirable act is not necessarily Horace's actual murder of Camille, which she seemed to invite, but rather the act of drawing his sword against her. Just as Curiace and Horace are both deliberately designed to be admirable in their preparations for battle, Camille and Horace are tragically pitted against one another in a battle of conviction that can only end in Camille's death. In his "Présentation" of the 2001 Flammarion edition, Marc Escola summarizes:

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[38] Corneille, *Horace*, ed. Marc Escola (Paris, France: Flammarion, 2001), 62.

> Frère et sœur, tous deux coupables et innocents à la fois, sont également pathétiques et se partagent la sympathie du public: Camille pour s'être montrée fidèle à Curiace jusque dans la mort au prix d'un crime contre la Patrie, Horace pour s'être montré fidèle à la 'raison' patriotique au prix d'un meurtre qui souille durablement sa gloire.[39]

Nuancing Escola's analysis slightly, not only do Camille and Horace garner sympathy, they do so in shockingly violent fashion. The fact that neither will back down in the interest of love, family, or honor is admirable in the Cartesian sense of the word and engages the audience's subsequent evaluative passions.

As the characters appear one-by-one before the king to present their accusations and defenses of Horace's actions, the only thing that becomes clear is the lack of agreement on his justifiability. While Valère asks the king to arrest Horace to defend the innocence of all Romans, and Sabine asks the king to kill her in lieu of punishing Horace's crime, Le Vieil Horace ardently defends his son's actions:

> Le seul amour de Rome a sa main animée:
> Il serait innocent s'il l'avait moins aimée.
> Qu'ai-je dit, sire ? Il l'est, et ce bras paternel
> L'aurait déjà puni s'il était criminal… (V, iii, 1655-1658)

Vieil Horace, who stakes his own honor on his son's innocence, finds himself having to back-track ("Qu'ai-je dit, sire?"), as his passionate defense inadvertently suggests Horace's guilt ("Il serait innocent s'il l'avait moins aimée"). In the end, the king himself concludes that Horace's fratricide, while justified on some level by his legitimate defense of Rome, is ultimately inexcusable on a moral, human level:

> Un premier mouvement qui produit un tel crime
> Ne saurait lui servir d'excuse légitime:

[39] Ibid., 32.

> Les moins sévères lois en ce point sont d'accord;
> Et si nous les suivons, il est digne de mort.
> Si d'ailleurs nous voulons regarder le coupable,
> Ce crime, quoique grand, énorme, inexcusable,
> Vient de la même épée et part du même bras
> Qui me fait aujourd'hui maître de deux états.
> …
> Vis donc, Horace, vis, guerrier trop magnanime:
> Ta vertu met ta gloire au-dessus de ton crime; (V, iii, 1735-1742…1759-1760)

Horace is therefore guilty, but forgiven, in the eyes of the king.

The characters in the final act of *Horace* underscore the various audience reactions that Corneille analyzed in his own play. Doubrovsky argues that what triumphs in the play is the unfaltering heroism of Horace, who would rather kill himself to preserve his glory, than admit to any wrongdoing in killing Camille: "Permettez, ô grand roi, que de ce bras vainqueur / Je m'immole à ma gloire, et non pas à ma sœur" (vv. 1593-1594). This study, however, has attempted to show that Corneille also deliberately puts admiration center stage. He presents Horace as the ultimate victor, who acts admirably from start to finish by continually shocking in his emotionless pursuit of virtue and honor. Horace cannot admire Curiace, for this is not his role. But Horace only attains this greatness because of the other characters who testify to his admirability, even as they die through their own admirable acts. Corneille presents them as equally, if differently, admirable.

Chapter 3 – Truth and Admiration in Pascal's *Pensées*

When compared with its primacy in Descartes's *Passions de l'âme* and in Corneille's tragedies, admiration may seem to be a secondary consideration in Blaise Pascal's 1669 *Pensées*. Yet admiration has an undeniable presence not only in the text itself, but also in the central concepts underlying Pascalian notions of man's duality and separation from God. The *Pensées* depicts a series of fundamental dualities that characterize and divide man: heart-reason, science-religion, sin-redemption, happiness-misery. According to Gilberte Perrier's biography of her brother *La Vie de Monsieur Pascal*, the thinker's education at the hands of his father clearly divided religious matters from the scientific beginning at a very young age: "lui donnant pour maxime que tout ce qui est l'objet de la foi ne saurait l'être de la raison."[1] In his biography *Pascal*, Jean Mesnard elaborates: "De la 'maxime' enseignée par son père, Pascal n'a donc pas tiré seulement l'idée de l'autonomie du divin mais aussi celle de l'autonomie de la raison."[2] In other words, scientific pursuits and religious thought were not incompatible, as they were two fundamentally separate endeavors, both in Pascal's works and in his conception of man:

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[1] Gilberte Pascal, "La Vie de Monsieur Pascal," in *Œuvres Complètes de Pascal*, ed. Jean Mesnard, vol. 1 (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1964), 578.

[2] Jean Mesnard, *Pascal*, Les Écrivains Devant Dieu (Bruges: Desclée De Brouwer, 1965), 16. "Le domaine de la vérité rationnelle est exclusivement celui de l'évidence et Sellier de la demonstration rigoureuse, celui des sciences exactes ou de connaissances aussi solidement fondées. Les systèmes philosophiques, les doctrines des moralistes et même les théories scientifiques, dès lors qu'elles demeurent à l'état d'hypothèses non démontrées, sont bien aussi l'œuvre de la raison, mais d'une raison qui ne porte plus avec elle sa garantie, et que les 'puissances trompeuses' (L 45, Br. 83) induisent sans cesse en erreur." (Ibid., 16–17.)

> Instinct et raison, marques de deux natures. (Laf. 112, Br. 344, S. 144)
>
> Si on soumet tout à la raison notre religion n'aura rien de mystérieux et de surnaturel. Si on choque les principes de la raison notre religion sera absurde et ridicule. (Laf. 173, Br. 273, S. 204)
>
> 2. excès
> exclure la raison, n'admettre que la raison. (Laf. 183, Br. 253, S. 214)
>
> La dernière démarche de la raison est de reconnaître qu'il y a une infinité de choses qui la surpassent. Elle n'est que faible si elle ne va jusqu'à connaître cela. Que si les choses naturelles la surpassent, que dira (-t-)on des surnaturelles? (Laf. 188, Br. 267, S. 220)
>
> C'est le coeur qui sent Dieu et non la raison. Voilà ce que c'est que la foi. Dieu sensible au coeur, non à la raison. (Laf. 424, Br. 278, S. 680)

For Pascal, scientific knowledge can no more prove the existence of God than religious belief could prove observable laws of nature, but the two have to coexist and each has to play its limited part.

Similar to the reason-belief, mind-heart divide repeated throughout the *Pensées*, admiration functions on two levels in the *Pensées*. On the first level, building on the Cartesian definition of admiration as "une subite surprise de l'âme qui fait qu'elle se porte à considérer avec attention les choses qui lui semblent rares et extraordinaires," in Article 70 of the *Passions de l'âme*, Pascal recognizes man's wonder in the face of the world that surrounds him, and his desire for more perfect knowledge of that which he cannot comprehend. For Sarah Melzer, this innate desire arises out of the once perfect, God-like knowledge man possessed prior to his "Fall from grace."[3] Melzer argues in *Discourses of the Fall* that, from an original state of union with God, knowledge, and

[3] Melzer, *Discourses of the Fall*.

truth, man fell into a fundamental separation from all certainty. Philippe Sellier's "La Chute et l'ascension" describes "la verticalité… l'ascension, le vertige, la chute" as, "la hantise central [des *Pensées*]."[4] Sellier quotes the prosopopeia in fragment APR (fr. 182 in the Sellier edition of the *Pensées*) extensively, commenting that "cette révélation divine met en relief les tragiques antithèses qui, désormais, déchirent l'homme: élévation et chute, lumière et obscurité, royauté et esclavage, proximité de Dieu et parenté avec les animaux, clairvoyance et cécité, immortalité et glissement dans le périssable"[5]:

> Mais vous n'êtes plus maintenant en l'état où je vous ai formés. J'ai créé l'homme saint, innocent, parfait ; je l'ai rempli de lumière et d'intelligence ; je lui ai communiqué ma gloire et mes merveilles. L'œil de l'homme voyait alors la majesté de Dieu. Il n'était pas alors dans les ténèbres qui l'aveuglent ni dans la mortalité et dans les misères qui l'affligent.
> Mais il n'a pu soutenir tant de gloire sans tomber dans la présomption. Il a voulu se rendre centre de lui-même et indépendant de mon secours. Il s'est soustrait de ma domination et s'égalant à moi par le désir de trouver sa félicité en lui-même je l'ai abandonné à lui, et révoltant les créatures qui lui étaient soumises, je les lui ai rendues ennemies, en sorte qu'aujourd'hui l'homme est devenu semblable aux bêtes, et dans un tel éloignement de moi qu'à peine lui reste(-t-)il une lumière confuse de son auteur, tant toutes ses connaissances ont été éteintes ou troublées. Les sens indépendants de la raison et souvent maîtres de la raison l'ont emporté à la recherche des plaisirs. Toutes les créatures ou l'affligent ou le tentent, et dominent sur lui ou en le soumettant par leur force ou en le charmant par leur douceur, ce qui est une domination plus terrible et plus injurieuse.
> Voilà l'état où les hommes sont aujourd'hui. Il leur reste quelque instinct impuissant du bonheur de leur première nature, et ils sont plongés dans les misères de leur aveuglement et de leur concupiscence qui est devenue leur seconde nature. (L.G. 139, S. 182, Laf. 149, Br. 430)

Man possesses an imprint of prior knowledge and intelligence. As in Descartes's *Passions de l'âme*, admiration prompts man to deisre greater understanding of that which

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[4] Philippe Sellier, "La Chute et L'ascension," in *Essais Sur L'imaginaire Classique* (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2003), 129.
[5] Ibid., 130.

surpasses his knowledge. Certain knowledge, however, is now available only to God. On the second level of admiration, therefore, man feels the absence of this perfect knowledge in God and turns to human-centered knowledge and emulation of human examples:

> Nous souhaitons la vérité et ne trouvons en nous qu'incertitude.
> Nous recherchons le bonheur et ne trouvons que misère et mort.
> Nous sommes incapables de ne pas souhaiter la vérité et le bonheur et sommes incapables ni de certitude ni de bonheur.
> Ce désir nous est laissé tant pour nous punir que pour nous faire sentir d'où nous sommes tombés. (Laf. 401, Br. 437, S. 20)

Through the structure of this fragment, Pascal implicitly equates happiness and truth. One cannot exist without the other. Since happiness is man's primary motivation – "Tous les hommes recherchent d'être heureux. Cela est sans exception, quelques différents moyens qu'ils y emploient" (Laf. 148, Br. 425, S. 181) – in the *absence* of certain truth and happiness, man creates his own truth, his own knowledge, and his own system of judgment, which subsequently hierarchizes mankind and gives rise to human-centered admiration: "La vraie nature étant perdue, tout devient sa nature; comme le véritable bien étant perdu, tout devient son véritable bien" (Laf. 397, Br. 426, S. 680). In other words, man seeks and accepts lesser worldly certainties that temporarily satisfy him, but bring him no closer to the truth and happiness that he cannot help but desire.

In this constant quest for happiness and truth devoid of any certainty, admiration transforms to become no longer the quest for certain knowledge, but the quest for familiar, relative knowledge: man himself.

> Grandeur de l'homme.
> Nous avons une si grande idée de l'âme de l'homme que nous ne pouvons souffrir

> d'en être méprisés et de n'être pas dans l'estime d'une âme. Et toute la félicité des hommes consiste dans cette estime. (Laf. 411, Br. 400, S. 19)

Admiration has the potential to bring man closer to God by prompting him to look outside himself for happiness, but human-centered models of "estime" offer significant distraction from God's truth, which is the only *true* source of happiness. Social admiration and judgment awaken desires for glory and appeal to man's vanity, his desire to be admired and emulated by his fellow man.

> La gloire. L'admiration gâte tout dès l'enfance. O que cela est bien dit! ô qu'il a bien fait, qu'il est sage, etc. Les enfants de P. R. auxquels on ne donne point cet aiguillon d'envie et de gloire tombent dans la nonchalance. (Laf. 63, Br.151, S. 184)

In other words, admiration has the potential to lead man closer to God, truth, and happiness, but remains unavoidably imperfect in its human manifestations, which are colored by envy and competition.

This chapter will consider the ignorance-truth, knowledge-glory, God-man dualities of admiration in the *Pensées* and will argue that while admiration in the *Pensées* may implicitly begin from a place of Cartesian wonder and desire for greater knowledge of an unknown object, it is only ever explicitly stated in the form of envy and glory. This represents a significant shift from Cartesian neutrality, and signals the prominence of man's vanity, concupiscence and self-interest in the *Pensées*:

> Quelle vanité que la peinture qui attire l'admiration par la ressemblance des choses, dont on n'admire point les originaux! (Laf. 40, Br. 134, S. 166)

Like the painting, admiration in Pascal's *Pensées* is an imitation of God-centered, objective knowledge and certain truth, created by the human-centered quest for glory and

happiness that causes man to evaluate before he has understood.

Instances of Admiration in the *Pensées*

While Pascal uses some form of "admiration" throughout the *Pensées*,[6] a closer examination reveals a striking imbalance in his use of the different forms of this word. In the Lafuma and Brunschvicg editions of the *Pensées*[7] the term appears only 3 times in its substantive form (*admiration*), 19 times in its verbal form (conjugations of *admirer*, including 3 instances of the past participle *admiré*), and a striking 26 times in its adjectival form (*admirable*). As a comparison, Descartes's *Passions de l'âme* contains the substantive "admiration" 31 times, the verbal form 12 times, and the adjective not even once. This shift in emphasis from "admiration" to "admirable" signals a shift from neutral, impersonal admiration in the *Passions de l'âme* to a more subjective, evaluative form of admiration in the *Pensées*. Whereas the Cartesian man can withdraw into his solitary world of doubt, receiving and reacting involuntarily to the impressions that come from the outside world and that initiate *admiration*, the Pascalian man engages heart and reason to evaluate outside stimuli judged to be *admirable* in a way that serves his own *amour-propre* and quest for happiness.

This shift toward the subject's engagement with admiration continues into the narrator's use of "admiration" and "admirer," which at times convey the Cartesian notion of surprise, but more often closely resemble twenty-first century uses of admiration for

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[6] See introduction for a more complete exploration and definition of *admirari*.
[7] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, accessed July 20, 2013, http://www.ub.uni-freiburg.de/fileadmin/ub/referate/04/pascal/pensees.pdf.

something not only familiar, but judged to be worthy of extended consideration and emulation, typically for personal gain. Five of the instances of "admirable" appear as part of the phrase, "Cela est admirable," which is used to convey Pascal's judgment of a phenomenon that he has just presented:

> Vanité.
> Qu'une chose aussi visible qu'est la vanité du monde soit si peu connue, que ce soit une chose étrange et surprenante de dire que c'est une sottise de chercher les grandeurs. **Cela est admirable.** (Laf. 16, Br. 161, S. 50)

> Infini rien… Pesons le gain et la perte en prenant croix que Dieu est. Estimons ces deux cas: si vous gagnez vous gagnez tout, et si vous perdez vous ne perdez rien : gagez donc qu'il est sans hésiter. **Cela est admirable.** (Laf. 418, Br. 233, S. 680)

> **Cela est admirable**: on ne veut pas que j'honore un homme vêtu de brocatelle et suivi de sept ou 8 laquais. Et quoi! Il me fera donner des étrivières si je ne le salue. Cet habit est une force. C'est bien de même qu'un cheval bien enharnaché à l'égard d'un autre. Montaigne est plaisant de ne pas voir quelle difference il y a et **d'admirer** qu'on y en trouve et d'en demander raison.[8] (Laf. 89, Br. 315, S.123)

Clearly, when used in this phrase, "Cela est admirable," the adjective is synonymous with "surprising" or "shocking," but with a note of disapproval akin to disbelief. In the final quote, this disapproval extends to the verb "admirer," which Pascal attributes mockingly to Montaigne's "amusing" idea that custom should not dictate "honor" for a visibly superior man. In *Aesthetic Bodies*, Erec Koch equates this mockery to Pascal's acknowledgment of the importance of social conventions:

> Pascal clearly leans towards the arbitrariness of social conventions, while acknowledging their naturalizing necessity… The clothing of the nobleman constitutes a metaphoric force because his dress and comportment are a substitute for the application of literal force, the lash. What is of significance is that the

[8] Michel de Montaigne, "De L'inconstance de Nos Actions," in *Essais*, ed. Pierre Villey and Verdun L. Saulnier, vol. 2, 3 vols. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1978), 334, http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/philologic/getobject.pl?c.0:3:0.montaigne.

> comportment is not the product of robotic causality, nor of semiotic decoding, but is motivated by the Hobbesian passion of fear.[9]

As noted in the "Introduction" to this study, Hobbes's *Elements of Law Natural and Politic* outlines fear and appetites as man's primary passions, while admiration merely provides a "hope or expectation of knowledge"[10]:

> external objects cause conceptions, and conceptions appetite and fear, which are the first unperceived beginnings of our actions: for either the action immediately followeth the first appetite, as when we do any thing upon a sudden; or else to our first appetite there succeedeth some conception of evil to happen unto us by such actions, which is fear, and withholdeth us from proceeding. And to that fear may succeed a new appetite, and to that appetite another fear, alternately, till the action be either done, or some accident come between, to make it impossible; and so this alternate appetite and fear ceaseth. This alternate succession of appetite and fear, during all the time the action is in our power to do, or not to do, is that we call DELIBERATION.[11]

If admiration is among the initial conceptions created by external objects, it must feed the fear that creates a judgment of "admirability" in the relationship between the "man of honor" and the man who bows to him.

The social convention at work in determining the "admirable" fear of the man who bows is a form of social deference that leads to the second type of admiration at work in the *Pensées*: emulative, or even envious, admiration for the perceived superior qualities of a fellow man. In two fragments, Pascal explicitly links "admiration" and "gloire":

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[9] Koch, *The Aesthetic Body: Passion, Sensibility, and Corporeality in Seventeenth-Century France*, 286–7.

[10] "And this hope and expectation of future knowledge from anything that happeneth new and strange, is that passion which we commonly call ADMIRATION; and the same considered as appetite, is called curiosity, which is appetite of knowledge." Hobbes, *The Elements of Law Natural and Politic*, Chapter 9: Of the Passions of the Mind.

[11] Ibid., Chapter 12: How by Deliberation From Passions Proceed Men's Actions.

> La gloire. L'admiration gâte tout dès l'enfance. O que cela est bien dit! Ô qu'il a bien fait, qu'il est sage. Les enfants de P.R. auxquels on ne donne point cet aiguillon d'envie et de gloire tombent dans la nonchalance. (Laf. 63, Br. 151, S. 97)
>
> Gloire. Les bêtes ne s'admirent point. Un cheval n'admire point son compagnon. Ce n'est pas qu'il n'y ait entre eux de l'émulation à la course, mais c'est sans conséquence. Car étant à l'étable, le plus pesant et le plus mal taillé n'en cède pas son avoine à l'autre, comme les hommes veulent qu'on leur fasse. Leur vertu se satisfait d'elle-même. (fr. L.G. 579, Br. 401, Laf. 685, S. 564)

In these fragments, Pascal defines both *admiration* and *admirer* as distinctly human passions. In the first fragment, Pascal implies that admiration has become such an integral part of human interaction and, more specifically, educational endeavors, that those who are not admired quickly lose interest and no longer seek greater knowledge. The conjugations of *admirer* in the second fragment above are explicitly linked to *emulation* and to social deference to a superior specimen. Further, the reciprocal verb *s'admirer* refers to a human emotion of mutual esteem, as opposed to the intrinsic notion of virtue with which horses are satisfied in the absence of reasoned interference with instinct.

***Le Cœur* and *La Raison*: Two Centers of Admiration**

It seems worthwhile at this point to briefly elaborate the distinction between *le cœur* and *la raison*, two isolated centers of understanding that only barely communicate as reason creates "propositions" from the heart's "principles," and the heart "recognizes the validity" of heart's propositions. For Pascal, the *coeur* is clearly distinguished from *l'imagination* and *la raison*. There is no true communication between heart and reason:

"Instinct et raison, marques de deux natures" (Br. 344, S. 144, Laf. 112). The truths presented by the heart are inherent and inalterable, and only tangentially contribute to reason's raw material for processing. The distinction between *cœur* and *raison* is particularly relevant in the realm of faith: "Les hommes prennent souvent leur imagination pour leur cœur: et ils croient être convertis dès qu'ils pensent à se convertir" (L.G. 756, Br. 275, Laf. 975, S. 739). Man mistakes intellectual conversion for faith when, in fact, this kind of conviction can only lie in the heart. It only involves the mind to avoid rational resistance to the heart's truths. These two centers of thought play different roles within the body and, while they can inform one another, they cannot perform the other's role. The propositions formulated by reason are merely "received" by the heart as new truths, or rejected as untrue. The heart's job is neither to justify, nor to evaluate, but merely to contain and transmit life's fundamental truths. Yet after original sin, that transmission has been interrupted leading to moral and intellectual ambiguity, and the subsequent transformation of admiration from God-centered knowledge to human-centered knowledge.

In *Beyond Imagination*, John Lyons summarizes the Cartesian definition of the passions as "the opposite of an action," which removes much of the agency and direct responsibility in the human passions.[12] In the *Passions de l'âme*, Descartes describes objective movement from the brain to the animal spirits and into the heart, while Pascal indentifies unchanging belief located immaterially in the heart. Involuntary change and

[12] John D. Lyons, *Before Imagination: Embodied Thought from Montaigne to Rousseau* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 112.

movement are essential for Descartes, who warns against an abundance of admiration without reason; but this change is dangerous for Pascal who warns against reason's ability to interfere with man's access to the truth that is always already known within the heart. Pascal's reaction to Descartes's objectification of the passions will be to reassign responsibility to something interior to the human being himself. According to Lyons, "Pascal's major challenge to the Cartesian description is to reassign responsibility to some more inner source and to reduce the role of outward stimuli. He accompanies this reassignment with striking shift of emphasis in the enumeration and identification of the passions."[13] Pascal in fact praises the philosophers who have suppressed their passions: "Immatérialité de l'âme. Les philosophes qui ont dompté leurs passions, quelle matière l'a pu faire?" (L.G. 106, Br. 349, Laf. 115, S. 147). For Descartes, the suppression of the passions is tantamount to the suppression of life and of interaction with the outside world. But for Pascal, this suppression of the passions is the result of an inward focus on the heart-centered, God-given pre-Fallen knowledge of life's greater truths, which are immaterial.

Heart and reason transfer information without ever truly communicating. This brief and non-dialogical transfer allows man to formulate his propositions and determine his principles, but the two "orders"[14] remain fundamentally divided:

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[13] Ibid., 117.

[14] For a thorough discussion of Pascal's use of "order and orders," see Hugh McCullough Davidson, *The Origins of Certainty: Means and Meanings in Pascal's Pensées* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 37. Davidson distinguishes three types of "orders" present in the *Pensées*: 1) sequence or arrangement; 2) area or domain, such as the members within the boundaries of a certain category; 3) imperative or command.

> L'ordre. Contre l'objection que l'Écriture n'a pas d'ordre. Le cœur a son ordre, l'esprit a le sien qui est par principe et démonstration. Le cœur en a un autre. On ne prouve pas qu'on doit être aimé en exposant d'ordre les causes de l'amour ; cela serait ridicule. (L.G. 280, Br. 283, Laf. 298, S. 329)

The mind orders through a starting point and subsequent demonstrations: proofs. The heart intuits and does not need proofs, which would be "ridiculous." Admiration exists within an unclear space between these two centers of understanding.

Pascal's understanding of the passions attributes judgment, evaluation, and responsibility to the individual. Man's admiration for something new or surprising is thus born in the interaction between the perception of the senses and man's internal evaluative emotions. As man perceives something that attracts his admiration, his reason seeks to explain it and to formulate logical propositions related to it; but as Pascal demonstrates in the *Pensées*, man has always already judged the new object. Cartesian neutrality becomes impossible precisely because the object's fundamental truth remains inaccessible. Admiration thus begins in the moment of discovery as an unending evaluative passion that, once initiated in man's longing, can never fully be satisfied through his quest for knowledge.

Pascalian admiration is inextricably entwined with concupiscence and pride.[15] The multiplicity we see in Pascal's incorporation of admiration is characteristic of his multi-leveled understanding of man's interaction with the exterior world:

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[15] While outside the scope of this study, it is worth pausing to consider Pascal's explicit judgments of Montaigne and Descartes. Many fragments verge on being competitive with Pascal's predecessors, to the point of making the *Pensées* itself a prideful text. Pascal's sister seemed aware of this potential criticism when she wrote in the *Vie* that her brother never sought attention for his writing.

> Quand on ne croit que par la force de la conviction, et que l'automate est incliné à croire le contraire, ce n'est pas assez. Il faut donc faire croire nos deux pièces, l'esprit par les raisons qu'il suffit d'avoir vues une fois en sa vie, et l'automate par la coutume, et en ne lui permettant pas de s'incliner au contraire. La raison agit avec lenteur et avec tant de vues sur tant de principes, lesquels il faut qu'ils soient toujours présents, qu'à toute heure elle s'assoupit ou s'égare manque d'avoir tous ses principes présents. Le sentiment n'agit pas ainsi ; il agit en un instant et toujours est prêt à agir. Il faut donc mettre notre foi dans le sentiment, autrement elle sera toujours vacillante. (L.G. 671, Br. 252, Laf. 821, S. 661)

In this one fragment, faith involves no fewer than five different interacting and interlinked elements: *la conviction*, *l'esprit*, *la raison*, *la coutume*, *le sentiment*. Advocated among these is the *sentiment*, which Buford Norman has defined as

> nothing less than the way people form ideas about the physical (and spiritual) universe and the way they combine ideas to reach an immediate understanding of the combination without proceeding through discursive reasoning (what the Port-Royal *Logic* calls *raisonnement* and opposes directly to *sentiment*).[16]

While *sentiment* will not be our focus in this chapter, Norman's procedure for examining Pascal's terminology is worth pausing to consider. Norman emphasizes the multiple interpretations that Pascal presents of key terms such as *sentiment*, which can "refer to an opinion or to a mental operation," or the *cœur* which is at times "creux et plein d'ordure" (Laf. 139, S. 171) or "an excellent means of knowledge" (L.G. 101, Br. 282, Laf. 110, S. 142).[17] This phenomenon of multiple signifieds for one signifier is not surprising when

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[16] Buford Norman, *Portraits of Thought: Knowledge, Methods, and Styles in Pascal* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1988), 15. Cited in Lyons, *Before Imagination: Embodied Thought from Montaigne to Rousseau*, 98.

[17] Norman, *Portraits of Thought: Knowledge, Methods, and Styles in Pascal*, xvi–xvii. Norman concludes that, "there are, then, four basic ways to understand *sentiment* in the *Pensées* – as a product, (1) an impression on either the senses or the mind and (2) an opinion about the impressions one has had; as an operation, (3) the mental operation itself and (4) the functioning of that operation, that is, awareness or consciousness. To be complete, we have only to make room

taken in the context of the *Logique de Port Royal*, written by Pascal's contemporaries, which itself attributes no fewer than three definitions – or "équivoques" – to *sens* and *sentiments*.[18]

In exploring the multiple definitions of "sentiment" in the *Pensées*, Norman considers "sentiment" in the following fragment:

> La raison agit avec lenteur, et avec tant de vues, sur tant de principes, lesquels il faut qu'il soient toujours presents, qu'à toute heure, elle s'assoupit ou s'égare, manque d'avoir tous ses principes presents. Le sentiment n'agit pas ainsi: il agit en un instant, et toujours est prêt à agir. Il faut donc mettre notre foi dans le sentiment, autrement elle sera toujours vacillante. (Laf. 821, S. 661 Br. 252)

Norman uses *sentiment* as a starting point to explore other key terms in the *Pensées*, advocating that, "we find out all we can about A (*sentiment*), and then use that information to understand B (other terms). The information we learn about B can then be used to find out more about A, since it is not being used to prove what one already knew about A but to go beyond that original information."[19] As Norman highlights, Pascal himself says that much of our interpretation of a particular word depends on context and,

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for the third order in this scheme, for the operation that produces faith instead of human truths, that causes belief instead of knowledge" (11).

[18] "Il y a même beaucoup d'équivoques dans les mots de *sens* et de *sentiments*, lors même qu'on ne prend ces mots que pour quelqu'un des cinq sens corporels. Car il se passe ordinairement trois choses en nous lorsque nous usons de nos sens… La première est qu'il se fait de certains mouvements dans les organes corporels… La seconde que ces mouvements donnent occasion à notre âme de concevoir quelque chose… La troisième est le jugement que nous faisons de ce que nous voyons… La première de ces trois choses est uniquement dans notre corps. Les deux autres sont seulement en notre âme, quoiqu'à l'occasion de ce qui se passe dans notre corps. Et néanmoins nous comprenons toutes les trois, quoique si différentes sous le même nom de *sens* et de *sentiment*." (MM. de Port-Royal and Louis Barré, *La logique ou L'art de penser* (Paris: J. Delalain et Fils, 1877), 79, http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k5496489f/f287.image.r=admiration.langEN. Cited in Norman, *Portraits of Thought: Knowledge, Methods, and Styles in Pascal*, 9.)

[19] Norman, *Portraits of Thought: Knowledge, Methods, and Styles in Pascal*, 17.

further, that multiple interpretations are essential to man's complete understanding of an author and, especially, of the Bible:

> On ne peut faire une bonne physionomie qu'en accordant toutes nos contrariétés et il ne suffit pas de suivre une suite de qualités accordantes sans accorder les contraires ; pour entendre le sens d'un auteur, il faut accorder tous les passages contraires. Ainsi pour entendre l'Écriture il faut avoir un sens dans lequel tous les passages contraires s'accordent ; il ne suffit pas d'en avoir un qui convienne à plusieurs passages accordants, mais d'en avoir un qui accorde les passages même contraires. (L.G. 241, Br. 684, Laf. 257, S. 289)

Throughout the *Pensées*, Pascal emphasizes the importance of seeing the whole, not merely examining the parts, and of including the parts that do not neatly fits one's argument because the truth of the whole cannot be separated from the truth of the parts and vice versa. As this chapter will consider in the "Disproportion de l'homme," man's insignificance grants him only partial understanding of the world around him, which prevents him from attaining the truths to which he had access prior to the fall into uncertainty. Underlying this notion, is Pascal's fundamental belief that only God himself understands the whole of his own creation: the conflicts and discordances that exist in the world exist because God created them as such. Admiration allows man to wonder at and contemplate these contrasts as part of God's creation in the absence of understanding, yet also initiates his desire to understand more. Admiration's multiplicity thus fits neatly within the economy of "équivoques" in the *Pensées*.

Admiration and *La Logique de Port-Royal*

Pascal's use of multiple meanings in the *Pensées* communicates a message of uncertainty that echoes notions of ambiguity that were explicitly explored by his

contemporaries, Nicole and Arnauld. Their *Logique de Port-Royal*[20] contains four instances of the term *admiration*, one instance of *admire* and five instances of the term *admirable*. The majority of these references appear in Chapter X "Quelques exemples de ces idées confuses et obscures, tirés de la morale," which follows upon a chapter using examples from physics titled, "De la clarté et distinction des idées, et de leur obscurité et confusion." A brief examination of the use of "admiration" in the *Logique* will be helpful to understand how Pascal might have understood and used the term in the *Pensées*:

> L'homme trouve en soi l'idée du bonheur et du malheur, et cette idée n'est point fausse ni confuse tant qu'elle demeure générale: il a aussi des idées de petitesse, de grandeur, de bassesse, d'excellence; il désire le bonheur, il fuit le malheur, il admire l'excellence, il méprise la bassesse.[21]

Admire is an act of appreciating excellence. It is further listed alongside desiring happiness, fleeing sadness or misfortune, and disdaining lowliness or inferiority. There is a departure from the neutral, involuntary Cartesian notion of "surprise" inherent in the evaluative, subjective reaction to excellence. This is not surprising when one considers that the entire chapter endeavors to explain confusing ideas from a moral perspective. What *is* surprising is the repeated use of "admiration" to explain them when the term appears only six other times[22] in the text. Further, admiration is repeatedly equated with esteem:

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[20] While this digression into the *Logique* cannot guarantee that Pascal would have understood *admiration* as a social emotion akin to esteem and respect, his physical, religious, and philosophical proximity to the primary authors of the text, Arnauld and Nicole, give us good reason to discuss "admiration" as a social phenomenon in the *Pensées*.
[21] MM. de Port-Royal and Barré, *La logique ou L'art de penser*, 72.
[22] "Admirable" appears 5 times – each time in reference to something judged to be impressive; "admiration" appears one other time in the text, in reference to the state of wonder of the Chinese

> Comme il y a une certaine excellence dans le bonheur, [l'âme] ne sépare jamais ces deux idées, et elle regarde toujours comme grands tous ceux qu'elle considère comme heureux, et comme petits ceux qu'elle estime pauvres et malheureux ; et c'est la raison du mépris que l'on fait des pauvres, et de l'estime que l'on fait des riches. Ces jugements sont si injustes et si faux, que saint Thomas croit que c'est ce regard **d'estime et d'admiration** pour les riches qui est condamné si sévèrement par l'apôtre saint Jacques…. Mais quoique ces idées et les jugements qui en naissent soient faux et déraisonnables, ils sont néanmoins communs a tous les hommes qui ne les ont pas corrigés, parce qu'ils sont produits par la concupiscence dont ils sont tous infectés. Et il arrive de là que l'on ne se forme pas seulement ces idées des riches, mais que l'on sait que les autres ont pour eux les mêmes mouvements **d'estime et d'admiration**; de sorte que l'on considère leur état, non-seulement environné de toute la pompe et de toutes les commodités qui y sont jointes, mais aussi de tous ces jugements avantageux que l'on forme des riches, et que l'on connaît par les discours ordinaires des hommes et par sa propre expérience.[23]

In this section of the *Logique*, admiration is clearly a social, evaluative "idée… mouvement… regard": it is a way of looking upon rich, outwardly impressive men. Admiration is further summarized as "tous ces jugements avantageux," which are not individual or private assessments but rather grow in sprawling fashion based on hearsay or man's own direct experience ("l'on sait…" and "l'on connaît…") that other men view them in exactly the same, mutually agreed-upon way. Admiration for false, earthly pomposity grows through man's personal, individual experience which is further augmented by the "discours ordinaires des hommes" and man's assumption that others share his judgments.

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upon being introduced to European clocks, and the ease of breaking this admiration with knowledge of the inner workings of the clock.

[23] MM. de Port-Royal and Barré, *La logique ou L'art de penser*, 73–74.

The *Logique* thus reveals a movement between the inner experience of admiration, and its outer social manifestation in "les admirateurs" that is repeated in the *Pensées*. Yet this notion of greatness is an illusion, a "fantôme":

> C'est proprement ce fantôme, composé de tous les **admirateurs** des riches et des grands que l'on conçoit environner leur trône, et les regarder avec des **sentiments intérieurs de crainte, de respect et d'abaissement**, qui fait l'idole des ambitieux, pour lequel ils travaillent toute leur vie et s'exposent à tant de dangers.[24]

In other words, the outward appearance of wealth and stature engenders a phantom notion that others must view this opulence with admiration. It is not so much that this vision truly creates "des sentiments intérieurs de crainte, de respect et d'abaissement," but that it makes man believe that others must share those feelings. This, according to Port-Royal, is the root of man's ambition:

> Ce n'est donc pas les simples effets extérieurs de l'obéissance des hommes, séparés de la vue de leurs pensées, qui sont l'objet de l'amour des ambitieux; ils veulent commander à des hommes et non à des automates, et leur plaisir consiste dans la vue des mouvements de crainte, **d'estime et d'admiration** qu'ils excitent dans les autres.[25]

It is not admiration itself, but the outward effects of admiration for which the ambitious man strives. In other words, men who build needlessly ostentatious houses do so because,

> Ils s'imaginent que tous ceux qui verront leurs palais concevront des mouvements de **respect et d'admiration** pour celui qui en est le maître; et ainsi ils se représentent à eux-mêmes au milieu de leur palais, environnés d'une troupe de gens qui les regardent de bas en haut, et qui les jugent grands, puissants, heureux, magnifiques; et c'est pour cette idée qui les remplit qu'ils font ces grandes dépenses et prennent toutes ces peines… Si l'on examine de même tous les états, tous les emplois et toutes les professions qui sont estimés dans le monde, on trouvera que ce qui les rend agréables, et ce qui soulage les peines et les fatigues

[24] Ibid., 74.
[25] Ibid.

> qui les accompagnent, est qu'ils présentent souvent à l'esprit des **mouvements de respect, d'estime, de crainte, d'admiration**, que les autres ont pour nous.[26]

The *Logique* thus establishes a strong link between admiration, self-love, and social influence. By presenting himself to society in a certain light, the rich man *imagines* (or represents to himself) that he inspires "*mouvements*" of respect, esteem, fear and admiration in his fellow man – particularly in those beneath him – which in turn validates his efforts and confirms the imagined self that he has always already created. This circle of admiration and self-imagination requires a tremendous degree of social participation: alone, man cannot perceive the reflection of his own outward show of greatness. He needs society to confirm his imagined self:

> Ce qui rend, au contraire, la solitude ennuyeuse à la plupart du monde est que, les séparant de la vue des hommes, elle les sépare aussi de celle de leurs jugements et de leurs pensées. Ainsi, leur cœur demeure vide et affamé, étant privé de cette nourriture ordinaire, et ne trouvant pas dans lui-même de quoi se remplir.[27]

The importance of social "feedback" takes for granted that man *will* judge the world around him, even as it pre-supposes man's desire *to be* judged.

The conclusion of this chapter will consider this turn to social admiration as man's last resort in the search for truth. In the absence of an attainable absolute truth, the objective sense of wonder that initiates the Cartesian passions has no destination, and man resorts to examining the truth observable in his fellow man. Man becomes motivated by self-admiration and the definition of admiration shifts to a judgment-driven, ego-centric form of esteem and self-love.

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[26] Ibid., 76.
[27] Ibid., 76–77.

Pascal and the Passions: Curiosité, Gloire, and Admiration in the *Pensées*

> La plus grande bassesse de l'homme est la recherche de la gloire, mais c'est cela même qui est la plus grande marque de son excellence; car, quelque possession qu'il ait sur la terre, quelque santé et commodité essentielle qu'il ait, il n'est pas satisfait, s'il n'est dans l'estime des hommes. Il estime si grande la raison de l'homme que, quelque avantage qu'il ait sur la terre, s'il n'est placé avantageusement aussi dans la raison de l'homme, il n'est pas content. C'est la plus belle place du monde, rien ne le peut détourner de ce désir, et c'est la qualité la plus ineffaçable du coeur de l'homme. (Laf. 470, Br. 404, S. 707)

The quest for glory is man's lowest point. Pascal uses a proliferation of superlatives – four in all, plus the ultimatum "il n'est pas content" – to emphasize the contrasting greatness and lowliness of man. This strategy is used often in the *Pensées*, such as in the fragment on the "Disproportion de l'homme" (Laf. 199, Br. 72, S. 230), to emphasize man's conflicted position as God's fallen yet chosen being. Physically "lowly" on earth, man seeks the figuratively "advantageous" position of superior reason and esteem. But the path to this exalted position is glory itself, "la plus grande marque de son excellence." Man's passions push and pull him in every direction and condemn him to a life of sinfulness, even as his rational control and triage of those passions elevates him above the animals and objects that surround him. While man is influenced by many sinful passions in the *Pensées*, his primary conscious and subconscious motivator is his own happiness:

> Tous les hommes recherchent d'être heureux. Cela est sans exception, quelques différents moyens qu'ils y emploient. Ils tendent tous à ce but. Ce qui fait que les uns vont à la guerre et que les autres n'y vont pas est ce même désir qui est dans tous les deux accompagné de différentes vues. La volonté fait jamais la moindre démarche que vers cet objet. C'est le motif de toutes les actions de tous les hommes, jusqu'à ceux qui vont se pendre. … Les uns le cherchent dans l'autorité, les autres dans les curiosités et dans les sciences, les autres dans les voluptés. (Laf. 148, Br. 425, S. 181)

While the source of man's happiness may differ from one individual to the next, his *volonté* ensures that every action arises from this primary motivator. Akin to the primacy of *amour-propre* in La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes*,[28] happiness drives man to act in his own self-interest, even if that means approaching his own destruction. Thus, the *Pensées* repeatedly shows that worldly happiness is only illusory and temporary, and that acting solely based on worldly concerns and endeavors leads man to figuratively "hang himself." God is the only true source of happiness, yet he has made himself unknowable to man, "hidden to man's knowledge":

> … [cette religion] dit… que les hommes sont dans les ténèbres et dans l'éloignement de Dieu, qu'il s'est caché à leur connaissance, que c'est même le nom qu'il se donne dans les Écritures, *Deus absconditus*; (Laf. 427, Br. 194, S. 681)

Man seeks a happiness that he can never fully attain because the one, true source of happiness (God) has hidden himself.

Where, then, is man to attain the happiness he seeks? The primary path to temporary, illusory happiness in the *Pensées* is "divertissement." Pascal criticizes both the Stoics who push man within himself and the Libertines who push man toward "divertissement":

> Les stoïques disent: rentrez au-dedans de vous-même, c'est là où vous trouverez votre repos. Et cela n'est pas vrai. Les autres disent: sortez dehors et cherchez le bonheur en un divertissement. Et cela n'est pas vrai, les maladies viennent. Le bonheur n'est ni hors de nous ni dans nous; il est en Dieu et hors et dans nous. (Laf. 407, Br. 465, S. 26)

[28] See Chapter 4.

By pushing man to look outside of himself, "divertissement" has the potential to lead man closer to God, but instead of finding Him, man finds only "agitation" and "tumult":

> Ils ont un instinct secret qui les porte à chercher le divertissement et l'occupation au-dehors, qui vient du ressentiment de leurs misères continuelles. Et ils ont un autre instinct secret qui reste de la grandeur de notre première nature, qui leur fait connaître que le bonheur n'est en effet que dans le repos et non pas dans le tumulte. Et de ces deux instincts contraires il se forme en eux un projet confus qui se cache à leur vue dans le fond de leur âme qui les porte à tendre au repos par l'agitation et à se figurer toujours que la satisfaction qu'ils n'ont point leur arrivera si en surmontant quelques difficultés qu'ils envisagent ils peuvent s'ouvrir par là la porte au repos. ("Le divertissement." Laf. 136, Br. 139, S. 168)

According to this excerpt from the fragment on *divertissement*, man has two conflicting instincts that arise out of the imprints of his first nature: an imprint of internal "repos" and an instinct to seek happiness outside of himself as a distraction from acknowledging his own true misery:

> L'unique bien des hommes consiste donc à être divertis de penser à leur condition ou par une occupation qui les en détourne, ou par quelque passion agréable et nouvelle qui les occupe, ou par le jeu, la chasse, quelque spectacle attachant, et enfin par ce qu'on appelle divertissement.[…] De là vient que le jeu et la conversation des femmes, la guerre, les grands emplois sont si recherchés…. De là vient que les hommes aiment tant le bruit et le remuement. De là vient que la prison est un supplice si horrible, de là vient que le plaisir de la solitude est une chose incompréhensible. ("Le divertissement." Laf. 136, Br. 139, S. 168)

Man is compelled to look outside himself and to admire objects deemed worthy. To do so, however, creates conflicting movements since man must act in a society, not alone in a room.

Man looks outside of himself and desires to understand, through observation and reason, the objects that he admires. But man is limited in his ability to understand the objects that surround him, let alone the vastness of nature. These objects consume him as

he views them not as a path towards greater understanding of God, but as ends in themselves that serve his "vanity" and his happiness:

> …[la] faute [des hommes] n'est pas en ce qu'ils **cherchent** le tumulte. S'ils ne le **cherchaient** que comme un divertissement, mais le mal est qu'ils le **recherchent** comme si la possession des choses qu'ils **recherchent** les devait rendre véritablement heureux, et c'est en quoi on a raison d'accuser leur **recherche** de vanité…. Et ainsi quand on leur reproche que ce qu'ils **recherchent** avec tant d'ardeur ne saurait les satisfaire, s'ils répondaient comme ils devraient le faire, s'ils y pensaient bien, qu'ils ne **recherchent** en cela qu'une occupation violente et impétueuse qui les détourne de penser à soi et que c'est pour cela qu'ils se proposent un objet attirant qui les charme et les attire avec ardeur ils laisseraient leurs adversaires sans répartie... Ils ne savent pas que ce n'est que la chasse et non la prise qu'ils **recherchent**… Ils croient **chercher** sincèrement le repos et ne **cherchent** en effet que l'agitation. ("Le divertissement." Laf. 136, Br. 139, S. 168, emphasis added)

Pascal uses the words "chercher" or "rechercher" ten times in the space of 150 words, emphasizing man's active quest to distract himself. *Divertissement* does not simply "happen" to man; it is a subconscious avoidance of his own miserable condition. Pascal would not blame man for his "divertissement" if he looked outside of himself in order to find truth. On the contrary, however, man's vanity and the passions that serve it prompt him to see objects and distraction as a final source of happiness. Man sees knowledge, distraction, and happiness as ends in themselves rather than paths to the certain truth that lies in God.

In God's absence, his creation – man and his world – are the best proxy for seeing God. But man fails to recognize that they are not ends in themselves:

> Philosophes.
> Nous sommes pleins de choses qui nous jettent au-dehors.
> Notre instinct nous fait sentir qu'il faut chercher notre bonheur hors de nous. Nos passions nous **poussent** au-dehors, quand même les objets ne s'offriraient pas pour les exciter. Les objets du dehors nous **tentent** d'eux-mêmes et nous

> **appellent** quand même nous n'y pensons pas. Et ainsi les philosophes ont beau dire rentrez-vous en vous-mêmes, vous y trouverez votre bien; on ne les croit pas et ceux qui les croient sont les plus vides et les plus sots. (Laf. 143, Br. 464, S. 176, emphasis added)

The verbs of this fragment – poussent, tentent, appellent – emphasize the contrasting motions that force man into the "tumult." Passion, instinct, and human nature push man to seek happiness outside of himself. But man is simultaneously pulled by the objects that "call" him. The passions thus function involuntarily, pushing and pulling man outward toward the objects that surround him, but with equal internal and external movements. These movements are as essential in the *Pensées* as they are in Descartes's *Passions de l'âme* – "Notre nature est dans le mouvement, le repos entier est la mort" (Laf. 641, Br. 129, S. 529 *bis*) – but with an important difference. Throughout the *Pensées*, Pascal repeats that reason and the passions combine to distract man from God:

> Cette guerre intérieure de la raison contre les passions a fait que ceux qui ont voulu avoir la paix se sont partagés en deux sectes. Les uns ont voulu renoncer aux passions et devenir dieux, les autres ont voulu renoncer à la raison et devenir bête brute. Des Barreaux.[29] Mais ils ne l'ont pu ni les uns ni les autres, et la raison demeure toujours qui accuse la bassesse et l'injustice des passions et qui trouble le repos de ceux qui s'y abandonnent. Et les passions sont toujours vivantes dans ceux qui y veulent renoncer. (Laf. 410, Br. 413, S. 29)

Whereas Cartesian admiration feeds reason and interacts with it as a harmonious whole to serve man in nature, Pascal's passions work against reason.

Despite being "at war" with one another, reason and the passions have much in common: they are part of the unavoidable human condition and, in a sense, they create a

[29] Pascal references Jacques Vallée, Sieur Des Barreaux, who was known for his poetry and his physical relationship with several prominent libertine authors, including Théophile de Viau.

sort of "divertissement" from man's true misery. They combine to distract man from God's certain truth as they mutually mislead and attack one another:

> L'homme n'est qu'un sujet plein d'erreur naturelle, et ineffaçable sans la grâce. Rien ne lui montre la vérité. Tout l'abuse. Ces deux principes de vérité, la raison et les sens, outre qu'ils manquent chacun de sincérité, s'abusent réciproquement l'un l'autre; les sens abusent la raison par de fausses apparences. Et cette même piperie qu'ils apportent à l'âme, ils la reçoivent d'elle à leur tour; elle s'en revanche. Les passions de l'âme les troublent et leur font des impressions fausses. Ils mentent et se trompent à l'envi. (Laf. 45, Br. 83, S. 78)

While Pascal does not deny the role of admiration in alerting man to that which is worthy of greater consideration, this fragment implies that, if it exists, such admiration – "une subite surprise de l'âme qui fait qu'elle se porte à considérer avec attention les choses qui lui semblent rares et extraordinaires" (*Passions de l'âme*, Article 70) – cannot be trusted. Reason and the senses do not, *cannot*, communicate the truth to the passions, and the passions, which this fragment locates explicitly in the soul, cannot attach genuine admiration to perceived objects. Thus, what is communicated by the senses as admirable is never actually what man *should* be admiring. Admiration thus serves man's happiness and "gloire" as he fails to attain the truth he seeks and instead creates his own relative human truths.

Man recognizes himself in his fellow man, but he also recognizes his difference, and this recognition creates differential, envious admiration. This comparison itself becomes another sort of *divertissement*, distracting man from his true ignorance and misery by focusing instead on his worldly insufficiencies:

> Orgueil.
> Curiosité n'est que vanité. Le plus souvent on ne veut savoir que pour en parler, autrement on ne voyagerait pas sur la mer pour ne jamais en rien dire et pour le

> seul plaisir de voir, sans espérance d'en jamais communiquer. (Laf. 77, Br. 152, S. 112)

Pascal's use of "curiosité" in this fragment approximates Descartes's use of "admiration" as a passion that drives man to learn more. Genuine, neutral admiration that motivates man to learn more does not exist in Pascal's understanding of the passions because it is always colored by pride and vanity.

Passion drives man to seek glory, merit, and truth where they do not truly exist. Man's passions thus obstruct the certain truth and happiness available in God, with admiration taking the lead as man's purveyor of false happiness. Yet the imprint of man's pre-fallen perfection remains in his heart and gives him the ability to attain true happiness by surpressing his misleading passions:

> Contrariétés. Après avoir montré la bassesse et la grandeur de l'homme. Que l'homme maintenant s'estime son prix. Qu'il s'aime, car il y a en lui une nature capable de bien; mais qu'il n'aime pas pour cela les bassesses qui y sont. Qu'il se méprise, parce que cette capacité est vide; mais qu'il ne méprise pas pour cela cette capacité naturelle. Qu'il se haïsse, qu'il s'aime: il a en lui la capacité de connaître la vérité et d'être heureux; mais il n'a point de vérité, ou constante, ou satisfaisante. Je voudrais donc porter l'homme à désirer d'en trouver, à être prêt et dégagé des passions, pour la suivre où il la trouvera, sachant combien sa connaissance s'est obscurcie par les passions. (Laf. 119, Br. 423, S. 151)

Pascal wants man to be ready to find the truth. And the first step in preparing for this truth is to accept that he does not currently have it. As the title of this fragment – "Contrariétés" – suggests, man must love the natural capacity that he possesses but, despicably, cannot currently access. Any current attempt to see the truth will lead only to false truths acquired through misdirected passion, including admiration for man himself.

Case Study: Admiration in the "Disproportion de l'homme"

"Voilà où nous mènent les connaissances naturelles. Si celles-là ne sont véritables il n'y a point de vérité dans l'homme, et si elles le sont il y trouve un grand sujet d'humiliation, forcé à s'abaisser d'une ou d'autre manière" (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230). The opening sentences of the "Disproportion de l'homme" question man's understanding of the natural world, of himself, and of his place within nature. As Hugh M. Davidson comments in *Pascal and the Arts of the Mind*,

> An important transition takes place when Pascal turns decisively to a consideration of Nature as a whole, as a surrounding and enveloping order, rather than a locus of particular problems to be dealt with in corresponding treatises. What I mean is that man enters explicitly into the scene presented by Nature. … Now Pascal brings him into his reflections not as an implied knower but as an element in the composite picture: a body among all the other bodies in Nature and thus subject to the essential quantitative characteristics of the whole.[30]

In the "Disproportion de l'homme," Pascal introduces yet another paradox: if man's "connaissances naturelles"[31] are untrue, then the truth of man himself is destabilized; if they are true, then man must accept his own humiliation and insignificance when compared to them. Either way, man's humiliation is assured. In an attempt to pull him out of his rational and reasoned world of constructed truths and desires, the narrator of the "Disproportion de l'homme" calls upon man to truly "contemplate" the world around him

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[30] Hugh M. Davidson, *Pascal and the Arts of the Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 12.

[31] Roger Ariew's 2005 translation of the *Pensées* translates this as "natural knowledge," but the context seems to suggest that a more accurate translation would be "knowledge of nature". Of course, both translations are available to us in the French, and the double-entendre is perhaps intentional: man's natural ability to understand and his understanding of the natural world, both of which are fundamentally limited both by man's ability to access the truth and his willingness to accept his own humiliation.

and to consider his own insignificance within it. Thus, man's humiliation is assured before he even begins to consider his place in the greater context of the natural world: "Je souhaite, avant que d'entrer dans de plus grandes recherches de la nature, qu'il la considère une fois sérieusement et à loisir, qu'il se regarde aussi soi-même, et connaissant quelle proportion il y a" (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230). Pascal's separation of internal *connaissance* and external *recherche* of the natural world perpetuates the distinctions he has elsewhere set forth between heart-centered understanding and reason-centered knowledge:

> Plût à Dieu que nous n'eussions au contraire jamais besoin [de la raison] et que nous connussions toutes choses par instinct et par sentiment! Mais la nature nous a refusé ce bien; elle ne nous a au contraire donné que très peu de connaissances de cette sorte; toutes les autres ne peuvent être acquises que par raisonnement. Et c'est pourquoi ceux à qui Dieu a donné la Religion par sentiment du cœur sont bienheureux et bien légitimement persuadés; mais <à> ceux qui ne l'ont pas, nous ne pouvons la donner que par raisonnement, en attendant que Dieu la leur donne par sentiment de cœur, sans quoi la foi n'est qu'humaine et inutile pour le salut. (L.G. 101, Br. 282, Laf. 110, S. 142)

For those who do not have a natural *sentiment*[32] in their heart that allows them to believe in God, man can only convince through reason. These two types of understanding are so different that reasoned belief "is but human," and *cannot* lead to salvation without God's intervention in the heart. Reason thus acts as an interim solution that allows man to teach

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[32] While the term *sentiment* is used in various ways throughout the seventeenth century, and even throughout the *Pensées* themselves, this instance should be understood as a naturally felt opinion about something: "On appelle, *Sentiments naturels,* Certains mouvements qui sont inspirez par la nature. *Il n'a point les sentiments de fils. ce pere a perdu tous les sentiments du sang. il n'a aucun sentiment d'humanité*… Il signifie aussi, l'Opinion qu'on a de quelque chose, ce qu'on en pense, ce qu'on en juge. *Bon sentiment, mauvais sentiment. il est dans de bons sentimens. il a de mauvais sentimens de la foy. il n'est pas dans des sentimens bien orthodoxes. je ne suis pas de son sentiment. je suivray tousjours vos sentimens. selon mon sentiment. je voudrois bien sçavoir quel est son sentiment sur cela*" (*Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 1694 edition).

and learn faith, but knowledge of faith and religion is *not* understanding of God, which remains the only path to salvation. By providing examples and explanations of God's invisible presence and man's relationship to God, the narrator of the *Pensées* appeals to the reader's reason and ability to form logical propositions regarding faith. Yet this form of faith, this logically reasoned knowledge of God, lacks any certainty. The narrator thus calls for a suspension of scientific examination until the true proportion of nature has first been "understood." Yet this understanding is itself predicated upon man's self-understanding and his comparison of the two.

In the "Disproportion de l'homme," Pascal calls upon Man to consider nature in its vast greatness, rather than focusing only on the "lowly" objects immediately surrounding him: "que l'homme contemple donc la nature entière dans sa haute et pleine majesté, qu'il éloigne sa vue des objets bas qui l'environnent" (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230). The narrator creates an upward movement through the explicit contrast between the "haute nature" of nature's majesty and the "objets bas" that surround man.[33] The incorporation of "contempler" suggests Pascal's inclusion of notions that approach the modern evaluative definition of admiration. For example, quoting the "Disproportion de l'homme," the definition of "contempler" in the Emile Littré 1872 *Dictionnaire de la langue française* implies a very close relationship between admiration and contemplation:

[33] The division of these planes seems to recall the narrative of the Fall itself in the movement from the snake to the Tree of Knowledge. Thus, even as man's gaze is called up, the daily lowliness of the objects surrounding him recall his own lowliness. Not only must man look beyond the immediately visible to consider what lies beyond, but he must "contemplate" nature in its entirety.

"Considérer attentivement, avec amour ou admiration."[34] Pascal includes a degree of evaluative fixation that resembles the Cartesian notion of "étonnement." Here, however, the action of contemplating is not only positive but mandated. Pascal exhorts man to place himself in a perpetual state of contemplation without any hope of greater understanding: when man can see no further, and his imagination can "conceive" no further, still nature will continue. And it is in fact the condition for this realization that Pascal hopes to create in man. As Melzer says,

> Human greatness is constituted in part by the awareness of an otherness: the very desire for something 'other' that lies outside our present understanding implies that we are not totally enclosed within the codes we use to define our object of desire. The otherness implied by desire creates misery because it makes us sense all that we are currently lacking. But it also points to our greatness because, unlike animals, we can be aware of our misery and imagine a better state.[35]

What defines man is this awareness of otherness and of misery. Elsewhere in the *Pensées*, Pascal likens man to a "thinking reed," evoking man's physical fragility and insignificance, but also his greatness as a thinking being:

> Roseau pensant. Ce n'est point de l'espace que je dois chercher ma dignité, mais c'est du règlement de ma pensée. Je n'aurais point d'avantage en possédant des terres. Par l'espace, l'univers me comprend et m'engloutit comme un point ; par la pensée je le comprends. (L.G. 104, Br. 348, Laf. 113, S. 145)
>
> L'homme n'est qu'un roseau, le plus faible de la nature, mais c'est un roseau pensant. Il ne faut pas que l'univers entier s'arme pour l'écraser : une vapeur, une goutte d'eau suffit pour le tuer. Mais quand l'univers l'écraserait, l'homme serait encore plus noble que ce qui le tue puisqu'il sait qu'il meurt et l'avantage que l'univers a sur lui, l'univers n'en sait rien. Toute notre dignité consiste donc en la pensée. C'est de là qu'il faut nous relever et non de l'espace et de la durée, que

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[34] Emile Littré, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*: "Contempler," ARTFL Project, <http://artflx.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=contempler>.
[35] Melzer, *Discourses of the Fall*, 82.

> nous ne saurions remplir. Travaillons donc à bien penser : voilà le principe de la morale. (L.G. 186, Br. 347, Laf. 200, S. 231)

The *roseau* fragments emphasize man's physical insignificance even as they laud his mental superiority. As Hal Bjørnstad says in *Créature sans créateur*,

> Il est tentant d'y voir une structure qui annonce en quelque sorte la dignité du Roseau pensant: une grandeur malgré la faiblesse et dans la faiblesse, un avantage d'un autre ordre… le Roseau tend vers la hauteur, figurant ainsi l'aspiration humaine de transcender sa condition présente… Tout comme l'homme dans son corps, malgré sa pensée, le Roseau ne peut pas se libérer de la boue dans laquelle il est enraciné, pour monter aux cieux vers lesquels il tend naturellement. Malgré ses hautes aspirations, son élément est la terre, avec les vers, sinon la boue ou la fange, don't il est sorti et à laquelle il va dans peu de temps retourner, jeté par terre, redevenant terre, la bassesse horizontale l'emportant à jamais sur la verticalité.[36]

Man's faculty of thought does not allow him to overcome his misery, but the fact that man can understand his own insignificance within nature and his own state of misery demonstrates his greatness and allows him to "imagine" a different state: "C'est donc être misérable que de (se) connaître misérable, mais c'est être grand que de connaître qu'on est misérable" (Br. 397, Laf. 114, S. 146). John Lyons's *Before Imagination* argues that imagination, which "frames sensory perception and is the inner repository of embodied, physical sensation,"[37] is central to the *Pensées*, particularly to the cognitive leap required in the "Disproportion de l'homme." It is through imagination that man organizes what he can directly observe. In the "Disproportion de l'homme," Pascal repeatedly assumes man's ability to use his "cosmic imagination": the entire fragment takes as its premise the notion that man can "imagine" the physical existence of the infinite, despite his

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[36] Hall Bjørnstad, *Créature sans Créateur: Pour Une Antrhopologie Baroque Dans Les Pensées de Pascal* (Québec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2010), 109.
[37] Lyons, *Before Imagination: Embodied Thought from Montaigne to Rousseau*, 108.

fundamental inability to see it, let alone understand it. Pascal begins with tangible experience, such as viewing the microscopic with the "newly-invented microscope," but quickly "plung[es] the speculative imagination into physically invisible spaces that can only be seen with the mind."[38]

From the infinitely great to the infinitesimally small, Pascal relies on the human mind to "imagine" the unseeable based on real, tangible experience. And yet, this ability to reason and extrapolate is paradoxically challenged by the "Disproportion," which emphasizes the limits of man's ability to understand. For just as man's reason positions him at the top of God's creation, so his fallen state limits the extent of his ability to arrive at the fundamental truth of things. As this chapter will consider in the "Disproportion de l'homme," admiration incorporates all sides of this paradoxical "otherness." Admiration shows man his own limits as he marvels at something he doesn't understand – nature, in the case of the "Disproportion." But man is also distinguished from the natural world that he fails to fully understand *because* of his capacity to admire its greatness and seek a fuller understanding of it.

Pascal recognizes that even man's cosmic imagination is but speculation, limited to extrapolation based on the experiences he has had. Thus, man's knowledge – his reason, combined with his cosmic imagination - allows him to expand his understanding of the physical world, without ever even approaching the inner limits of the infinite. Full understanding of nature is inherently impossible to all but God himself. Pascal thus

[38] Ibid., 110–111.

adopts the paradoxical strategy of denying all that man presumes to know in order to free him to "contemplate" beyond the realm of the visible:

> Tout le monde visible n'est qu'un trait imperceptible dans l'ample sein de la nature. Nulle idée n'en approche; nous avons beau enfler nos conceptions au-delà des espaces imaginables, nous n'enfantons que des atomes, au prix de la réalité des choses. C'est une sphère infinie dont le centre est partout, la circonférence nulle part. (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230)

Pascal informs man that even that which he presumes to understand is in fact a mere speck in the grand scheme of nature. Nature is far bigger than anything man can see, conceive or imagine, and Pascal is careful to include all three terms. Thus, man is subsumed within nature's sphere that is always everywhere, with no outer limits and no definable center. For Pascal, God's greatness is most perceptibly revealed to man in this concept of his imagination: "C'est le plus grand caractère sensible de la toute-puissance de Dieu que notre imagination se perde dans cette pensée" (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230). In other words, God who is always and everywhere demonstrates his greatness in man's inability to imagine the outer limits of nature: the fact that man *can* imagine, and yet *cannot* successfully imagine the greatness of God's creation, proves God's greatness.

This limit to man's understanding, admiration, and imagination is not limited to the grandest elements of nature, but extends to the very smallest of God's creations. Man is equally incapable of understanding the invisible smallness that surrounds him on a daily basis. Pascal illustrates the infinitesimally small with the familiar "ciron," the cheese mite. While man might think that the body parts of this tiny creature would be the smallest units of nature, the narrator confirms that there is always something smaller: "des jambes avec des jointures, des veines dans ses jambes, du sang dans ses veines, des

humeurs dans ce sang, des gouttes dans ces humeurs, des vapeurs dans ces gouttes" (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230). Again calling upon man's "cosmic imagination,"[40] Pascal proceeds from man's concrete experience with the commonly visible "ciron" to the abstraction of the infinitely divisible. Even the smallest thing the human mind can conceive can be divided, and itself possess universes, worlds, heavens:

> Je lui veux peindre non seulement l'univers visible, mais l'immensité qu'on peut concevoir de la nature dans l'enceinte de ce raccourcie d'atome; qu'il y voie une infinité d'univers, dont chacun a son firmament, ses planètes, sa terre, en la même proportion que le monde visible, dans cette terre des animaux, et enfin des cirons… qu'il se perde dans ces merveilles aussi étonnantes dans leur petitesse que les autres par leur étendue. (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230)

The infinitesimally small is, in many ways, more beyond man's comprehension than the infinite itself. Able to see the natural world extending beyond his field of vision, growing blurry in the distance, continuing indefinitely before him on a journey, man's imagination can more easily conceive that there *must* be something bigger, beyond the visible. But to imagine the infinite divisibility of that which he can already see, touch, and experience requires not only "speculative imagination,"[42] but a refusal of that which is already presumed to be known. In one part of the "Disproportion," Pascal humbles man in the context of the imaginable, but incomprehensible infinite, and in the next part, he dismantles this incomprehensible imagination by transferring the context of the infinite to

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[40] Lyons, *Before Imagination: Embodied Thought from Montaigne to Rousseau*, 110.

[42] See Lyons: "Once again Pascal produces a failure of imagination that somehow is only the prelude to a new round of still smaller entities that repeat cyclically the same types of articulations on ever decreasing scales. This rhetoric of humiliation begins with an affirmative Salesian exercise, passes through a Cartesian mind-experiment with a negative outcome, and then continues into an attack on physical perception that is deeply reminiscent of Montaigne" (Lyons, *Before Imagination: Embodied Thought from Montaigne to Rousseau*, 111–112.)

the presumably understood realm of the minute. This destabilization of accepted truths simultaneously destabilizes the spatial understanding of the vast and the familiar.

It is in this space of destabilization that the narrator explicitly calls upon man's admiration of the mysterious unknown. Man's desire to understand extends not only to the end of things at infinity's edge, but also their origin:

> Car qui **n'admirera** que notre corps, qui tantôt n'était pas perceptible dans l'univers imperceptible lui-même dans le sein du tout, soit à présent un colosse, un monde ou plutôt un tout à l'égard du néant où l'on ne peut arriver? Qui se considérera de la sorte s'effraiera de soi-même et, se considérant soutenu dans la masse que la nature lui a donné entre ces deux abîmes de l'infini et du néant, il tremblera dans la vue de ces merveilles, et je crois que, sa curiosité se changeant en **admiration**, il sera plus disposé à les contempler en silence qu'à les rechercher avec présomption. (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230, emphasis added)

The repetition of the term "admiration" in this short paragraph stands out in the *Pensées*. Further, by beginning with the future tense "qui n'admirera" and not the conditional "qui n'admirerait," Pascal presumes man's admiration as evident when presented with this juxtaposition of greatness and insignificance. There is no need to specify a condition under which man might marvel at the colossal size of his body when compared with the incomprehensibly small: such surprise and awe is inevitable when man sees himself as simultaneously insignificant with respect to the infinite and infinite with respect to the minute.

The automatic, involuntary action implied by "admirer" in the first sentence of this passage initially recalls Cartesian surprise. And yet the vocabulary associated with this action clarifies that admiration, for this narrator and for the observer he describes, involves judgment: only after man has considered himself (*se considérera*) and

frightened himself (*s'effraiera*) within the incomprehensibility of Nature will his "curiosity" change to admiration. In this ordering of actions, curiosity takes the place of Cartesian admiration, occurring involuntarily and prompting man to take an active second look at himself and his place in the world. A "scared," "trembling" mass of incomprehension, man subsequently achieves a state of perpetual, silent admiration of the natural universe and of its Creator.

Whereas the Cartesian passions offer man a point of sensorial and affective access to the natural world, Pascal's man remains silently imprisoned in a natural world that he is fundamentally unable to comprehend. For Davidson, Pascal's invitation to "see where our dispassionate science will lead us," permits man to seek the limits of his human existence:

> If by observation and imagination we go far enough up into Nature's silent spaces beyond the stellar universe or far enough down into its infinitely divisible recesses, we end in astonishment; we cannot help wondering about ourselves and our place on such a stunning scale of reality. Scientific objectivity, itself based on a determination of value and then deployed in the fruitful study of Nature, takes us eventually to questions concerning the limits of human existence, and makes explicit our desire for a place where our impulses to seek the truth and to possess the good may come finally to rest.[43]

Yet this place of rest in the world of man is a place of silent, still admiration. The place of rest is man's acceptance of his own limitations. In other words, Davidson suggests, whereas Descartes warns against *étonnement* as a breakdown of the movement of the mind toward understanding, Pascal prescribes contemplation as the cure for man's seeking of truth:

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[43] Davidson, *Pascal and the Arts of the Mind*, 112.

> Although Pascal's natural and human subject matters turn out to have strikingly different characteristics, there is an interesting similarity on the point of movement. Movement in the physical world is something that Pascal treats as being oriented toward rest, to be attained when bodies are related to a point of balance or center of gravity. Perhaps one could call motion and rest the sphere of human morality, where the mobility of opinions and desires causes a great deal of agitation, and where Pascal's inquiry locates at last an end to movement – in God, grasped provisionally in this life, definitely in the next?[44]

Rather than seeking knowledge, man should take advantage of his fear-driven stillness to enter a state of contemplation: a state of stillness that will lead him to God. But being thus cast in the role of perpetual still admirer of God's creation, on both the macrocosmic and microcosmic levels, man cannot progress to greater understanding of the two extremes that both surround him and subsume him, even as they elude him:

> Car enfin qu'est-ce qu'un homme dans la nature: Un néant à l'égard de l'infini, un tout à l'égard du néant, un milieu entre rien et tout, infiniment éloigné de comprendre les extrêmes. La fin des choses et leurs principes sont pour lui invinciblement cachés dans un secret impénétrable… L'auteur de ces merveilles les comprend. Tout autre ne le peut faire. (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230)

Man is nothing when compared to the infinite, and yet everything when compared to nothingness. This reference to man as simultaneously "nothing" and "everything," both infinitely big and infinitely small in the natural world, is intimately related to the mathematical notion of limits approaching infinity on the one hand, and zero on the other. Man's place in the world can be reasoned like a mathematical proof, but its truth, origin and significance will constantly elude him. Man is "infiniment éloigné de comprendre les extrêmes": even *if* the human mind can imagine the existence of extremes, this concept brings man no closer to understanding them. He is no more able to understand their "end"

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[44] Ibid., 16.

– neither their literal finality nor their figurative goal or destination – than their beginning.

In the fallen world, therefore, the *Pensées* emphasizes man's responsibility to silently contemplate the infinite extremes that surround him. Yet this contemplation presumes that man's knowledge cannot reach these extremes. It is therefore not surprising that the "Disproportion" goes on to criticize those who attempt to understand through "recherche" that which should be contemplated and admired:

> Manque d'avoir contemplé ces infinis, les hommes se sont portés témérairement à la recherche de la nature comme s'ils avaient quelque proportion avec elle. C'est une chose étrange qu'ils ont voulu comprendre les principes des choses et de là arriver jusqu'à connaître tout, par une présomption aussi infinie que leur objet. Car il est sans doute qu'on ne peut former ce dessein sans une présomption ou sans une capacité infinie, comme la nature. (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230)

The 1694 *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* defines "recherche" as "Enquête, perquisition," offering academic examples of usage ("les recherches de l'antiquité"). The dictionary also offers a definition of courtship: "Il signifie aussi, Poursuite que l'on fait pour avoir une fille en marriage." In the context of Nature, this definition seems worth noting: not only is man attempting to gain greater scientific knowledge of Nature, but also to become more familiar with her in a sense that resembles courtship. Man's presumption of his ability to understand is as infinite as his incomprehension of nature itself. Caught in a vicious circle of misunderstanding that continually originates with and returns to his own self-ignorance, man presumes that understanding the *principes* (the originating principle of things) will allow him to understand everything. As Pascal suggests, the errors inherent in this assumption are manifold: first, that the *principes* can

ever be understood by man; secondly, that such understanding would subsequently lead to any greater understanding of nature itself; and thirdly that nature, the world, and "le tout" constitute some sort of finite, understandable, and definable entity. This passage recalls Pascal's earlier discussion of principles and propositions: "Les principes se sentent, les propositions se concluent et le tout avec certitude quoique par différentes voies" (L.G. 101, Br. 282, Laf. 110, S. 142). Man cannot possibly hope to understand nature's principles through science and research because principles (*la connaissance*) and propositions (*le savoir*) are fundamentally divided forms of knowledge. Propositions may be researched, but principles must be felt.

The proliferation of the term "infini" in the "Disproportion de l'homme" underscores the impossibility of ever attaining an ultimate understanding of Nature's principles or those of her creator:

> La nature ayant gravé son image et celle de son auteur dans toutes choses, elles tiennent presque toutes de sa double infinité. C'est ainsi que nous voyons que toutes les sciences sont infinies en l'étendue de leurs recherches, car qui doute que la géométrie, par exemple, a une infinité d'infinités de propositions à exposer? Elles sont aussi infinies dans la multitude et la délicatesse de leurs principes. (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230)

The terms "infini" or "infinités" are repeated five times in this short passage. It is important to recognize, however, that Pascal is not attempting to discourage man from performing scientific examinations, but rather to encourage him to recognize the limited nature of such examinations: man can admire the unknown and seek to gain more knowledge of it, but this knowledge will always be necessarily incomplete. Just as he repeatedly calls on man to accept his own state of misery, Pascal underscores the limits of

man's attempts at knowledge. In the first instance, man should not – and cannot – stop thinking, and in the second, man cannot stop attempting to learn more about the natural world. Rather, he must accept the limitations of his miserable state, and that the true nature of things will never be accessible to him.

Pascal recalls man's presumption that the limits of his understanding pertain only to the great vastness of nature, and his ignorance that nature's incomprehensibility extends to the infinitely small as well:

> De ces deux infinis des sciences, celui de grandeur est bien plus sensible… Mais l'infinité en petitesse est bien moins visible. Les philosophes ont bien plutôt prétendu d'y arriver, et c'est là où tous ont achoppé. C'est ce qui a donné lieu à ces titres si ordinaires, *Des principes des choses, Des principes de la philosophie*,[45] et aux semblables aussi fastueux en effet, quoique moins en apparence, que cet autre qui crève les yeux: *De omni scibili*.[46] (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230)

Man can more easily recognize and accept the limits of his knowledge of the infinitely large. Knowledge of the infinitely small seems much more attainable, albeit falsely so. The center, or the essence, of things remains as elusive as the extreme:

> On se croit naturellement bien plus capable d'arriver au centre des choses que d'embrasser leur circonférence, et l'étendue visible du monde nous surpasse visiblement. Mais, comme c'est nous qui surpassons les petites choses, nous nous croyons plus capables de les posséder, et cependant il ne faut pas moins de capactié pour aller jusqu'au néant que jusqu'au tout. Il la faut infinie pour l'un et l'autre, et il me semble que qui aurait compris les derniers principes des choses pourrait aussi arriver jusqu'à connaître l'infini. L'un dépend de l'autre, et l'un conduit à l'autre. Ces extrémités se touchent et se réunissent à force de s'être

[45] The Michel Le Guern edition of the *Pensées* finds here a direct reference to Descartes's *Principia philosophiae*.

[46] "about every knowable thing". Perhaps an allusion to Pic de La Mirandole's nine hundred theses: "*Per numerous habetur via ad omnis scibilis investigationem et intellectionem*" (quoted in Michel LeGuern, Ed., *Pensées*, 564, note 15).

> éloignées, et se retrouvent en Dieu, et en Dieu seulement. (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230)

Human understanding of the essence of things remains as elusive as the understanding of infinity itself, because the two are fundamentally linked in their origin and end: God, the Alpha and the Omega.[47] Pascal effectively creates a diagram for his reader to understand his true place in Nature. Surrounded by the unattainable sphere of Nature's greatness, man is equally inhabited and surrounded by an essence of things that he cannot understand: "l'un dépend de l'autre, l'un conduit à l'autre. Ces extrémités se touchent et se réunissent à force de s'être éloignées" (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230).

Pascal exhorts Man to recognize his limited place within these extremes even as he cannot hope to truly know what exactly those extremes are:

> Connaissons donc notre portée. Nous sommes quelque chose et nous ne sommes pas tout. Ce que nous avons d'être nous dérobe la connaissance des premiers principes qui naissent du néant, et le peu que nous avons d'être nous cache la vue de l'infini. (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230)

Man's physical being separates him from God and prevents him from understanding the "first principles" of creation. In other words, man's "somethingness" prevents him from understanding the original nothingness known only to God, and the fundamental truths that lie hidden at its center. At the same time, the limits of his physical being – his very "humanness" – inhibit man's ability to understand the infinite. Man is reduced to a floating entity in the vast greatness of God's creation:

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[47] See Revelation 1:8: "'I am the Alpha and the Omega,' says the Lord God, 'who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.'" See also Isaiah 41:4, Isaiah 44:6, Isaiah 48:12, Revelation 1:8, Revelation 1:17, and Revelation 2:8.]

> Nous voguons sur un milieu vaste, toujours incertains et flottants, poussés d'un bout vers l'autre… Ne cherchons donc point d'assurance et de fermeté ; notre raison est toujours déçue par l'inconstance des apparences : rien ne peut fixer le fini entre les deux infinis qui l'enferment et le fuient. Cela étant bien compris, je crois qu'on se tiendra en repos, chacun dans l'état où la nature l'a placé. (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230)

Man's situation as an island of isolated, limited and constantly shifting understanding prevents any hope of achieving the stability he desires. For Sellier, even the sounds of the fragment signal instability: "Le poème en prose nous livre aux sortilèges des nasales ('l'inconstance des apparences') et à l'incertitude des des finales féminines, toutes créatrices de vertige; il fait régner, grâce aux stridences du 'i', la tragédie."[48] As the "Disproportion" repeatedly shows, a key underlying assumption in the *Pensées* is man's search for a stable truth on which to base his thoughts and judgments: "Nous brûlons du désir de trouver une assiette ferme" (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230). Man's reason and imagination push him to consider the greatness or smallness of Nature, but in either case, the limits of his understanding will inevitably lead to disappointment because they cannot attain the fundamental truth that he desires. Man's only hope for happiness is not only to accept his limitations, but to accept that even that condition is passing, unfixed and, most importantly, arbitrary:

> Ce milieu qui nous est échu en partage étant toujours distant des extrêmes, qu'importe qu'un autre ait un peu plus d'intelligence des choses; s'il en a, il les prend un peu de plus haut; n'est-il pas toujours infiniment éloigné du bout? Et la duré de notre vie n'est-elle pas également infime <dans> l'éternité pour durer dix ans davantage? Dans la vue de ces infinis, tous les finis sont égaux, et je ne vois pas pourquoi asseoir son imagination plutôt sur un que sur l'autre. (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230)

[48] Sellier, "La Chute et L'ascension," 136.

In this passage, the narrator universalizes the human experience: since his separation from God, man is equally distanced from the ultimate truth that he is drawn to seek. A man who knows more about "things" is still infinitely separated from their fundamental essence, just as a man who lives ten years longer is still a blip in the eternity known only to God. Of course, this passage, like most of the *Pensées*, can be read in two ways: because man's placement in the world is arbitrary, and his insignificance assured in God's grand scheme, man's self-promotion serves no purpose; on the other hand, the mention of "imagination" suggests that man should not desire a higher status, wealth, or intellect because his place simply is what it is.[49] The theme of man's arbitrary and insignificant placement in any particular place, time, or set of circumstances reappears later in all editions of the *Pensées*:

> Je vois ces effroyables espaces de l'univers qui m'enferment, et je me trouve attaché à un coin de cette vaste étendue, sans que je sache pourquoi je suis plutôt placé en ce lieu qu'en un autre, ni pourquoi ce peu de temps qui m'est donné à vivre m'est assigné à ce point plutôt qu'en un autre de toute l'éternité qui m'a précédé et de toute celle qui me suit. Je ne vois que des infinités de toutes parts qui m'enferment comme un atome et comme une ombre qui ne dure qu'un instant sans retour. Tout ce que je connais est que je dois bientôt mourir; mais ce que j'ignore le plus est cette mort même que je ne saurais éviter. (L.G. 398, Br. 194, Laf. 427, S. 681)

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[49] Lyons, *Before Imagination: Embodied Thought from Montaigne to Rousseau*, 108. Lyons discusses the customary habits performed by the body and resulting not from rational thought, but merely from imagined associations of power: "Pascal's Montaigne sees absurdity where Pascal sees necessity, since Pascal places his political description deliberately at the level of the 'people,' in other words within a vision that does not engage in an elaborate process of reasoning to conclude that it is a good idea to fear well-dressed men with many servants. The view of the 'people' thus constructed by Pascal supposes that if the aristocracy has power, it must deserve that power, where Montaigne – and the whole category of thinkers Pascal calls *demi-habiles* (the half-clever people) – sees the perpetuation of unjustified privilege. Pascal does not disagree with Montaigne's analysis but considers it simply a form of reasoning in a domain that belongs to imagination." (108)

In other words, the different degrees of man's finite nature remain nonetheless finite in God's infinite creation. Even the basic truths that man presumes to understand – such as the inevitability of his own death – are in fact completely misunderstood: man knows neither when nor how his death will occur, nor what awaits his soul after death. Even the certainty that man will die is here phrased with a negative understanding: "que je ne saurais éviter."

By observing the example of his fellow man, each individual could potentially observe in the other his own limitations: his knowledge of self is as limited as his knowledge of God. But, even if man took the time to "first study himself," and was able to recognize the limits of his own knowledge, still his logical attempts to understand the visible world that he can touch and see through reason and the senses would lead to disappointment and incomplete truths:

> Comment se pourrait-il qu'une partie connût le tout? Mais il aspirera peut-être à connaître au moins les parties avec lesquelles il a de la proportion. Mais les parties du monde ont toutes un tel rapport et un tel enchaînement l'une avec l'autre que je crois impossible de connaître l'une sans l'autre et sans le tout. L'homme par exemple a rapport à tout ce qu'il connaît. (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230)

Having assessed his proportion within nature, man may logically turn toward understanding that with which he shares a similar "proportion": his fellow man. But even this understanding will be illusory as the essence of man cannot be known without an understanding of the whole, and man's place within it. As Melzer explains, the truth sought by man in the *Pensées* is merely a "representation of truth [that] depends on a prior knowledge of that truth":

> Our access to that truth must necessarily be mediated through human forms. These forms set up the criteria for truth, which are not transmitted to us by any means outside our representations. Therefore it is our representations that establish the basis for our ability to perceive truth as truth. In this perspective, then, the representation is both posterior and anterior to the truth. All human efforts to arrive at solid and certain truth fall into language that is structured by the hermeneutic circle.[50]

Man's knowledge of one thing cannot be complete without a complete knowledge of all things to which it is related. This summary of man's exclusion from truth creates a circle of unattainable truth that excludes man.

> Donc toutes choses étant causées et causantes, aidées et aidantes, médiatement et immédiatement, et toutes s'entretenant par un lien naturel et insensible qui lie les plus éloignées et les plus différentes, je tiens impossible de connaître les parties sans connaître le tout, non plus que de connaître le tout sans connaître particulièrement les parties. (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230)

Man cannot know the whole without knowing its parts, and he cannot know the parts without first understanding the whole that they form. As man's reason and imagination fail to attain the truth they desire, his "curiosity" will change to "admiration," a state of still wonder and contemplation, a judgment of Nature's great incomprehensibility. As Pascal summarizes,

> Voilà une partie des causes qui rendent l'homme si imbécile à connaître la nature. Elle est infinie en deux manières, il est fini et limité; elle dure et se maintient perpétuellement en son être; il passe et est mortel. (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230)

His ephemeral, mortal insignificance separates man irremediably from the great and small eternities that surround him. The key to man's peace – his "repos" – lies not even in accepting his own finite nature, but in accepting his own inability to understand the very

[50] Melzer, *Discourses of the Fall*.

finiteness that defines him. Man is but a speck in space and time, and accepting that God alone understands his position within the unattainable infinities that surround him is his only recourse.

Faced with a vast universe that man cannot hope to understand, his sole consolation is his ability to recognize what he *does* know and what he *cannot* know. This makes him superior to all that he cannot understand in the natural world. Once again, Pascal calls his thinking man inward to focus on his own thoughts and inner workings in the hope that he will accept his own limitations and his own miserable state. Only then will his heart be able to recognize (*connaître*) God's truths: "Le grandeur de l'homme est grand en ce qu'il se connaît misérable; un arbre ne se connaît pas misérable. C'est donc être misérable que de <se> connaître misérable, mais c'est être grand que de connaître qu'on est misérable" (L.G. 105, Br. 397, Laf. 114, S. 146). What differentiates man from nature is his ability to think, but with this ability comes man's ability to recognize his own misery and the very limits to his understanding. As Bjørnstad says of the "roseau" metaphor, "Comme l'homme, le roseau est creux; comme l'homme le roseau cache un vide intérieur; comme l'homme, le roseau ne peut pas trouver en lui-même une réponse à la misère créaturelle dans laquelle il est emprisonné."[51] This paradox creates the basis for the *Pensées*: man's greatness lies in his recognition of his own insignificance, his separation from God and God's fundamental truths.

[51] Bjørnstad, *Créature sans Créateur: Pour Une Antrhopologie Baroque Dans Les Pensées de Pascal*, 111.

Yet man clearly remains unwilling to accept this solution for his own peace. The final section of this chapter will examine social admiration – admiration for one's fellow man – as the natural consequence of man's desire for the truth that eludes him: in the absence of the original truths that man has lost and remains unable to reclaim, he resorts to constructing his own earthly greatness, resulting in admiration for his fellow man, and egocentric self-admiration.

Man's Social and Self-Admiration

As the "Disproportion" suggests, man's best course of action in a world where certain knowledge is unavailable to him is to consider that with which he has proportion: his fellow man. According to Davidson, in the "Disproportion de l'homme," "Pascal now has before him what will henceforth be his principal subject-matter: human nature and, more precisely, the human self. For he has composed in the "Disproportion" an exercise in self-knowledge."[52] Pascal concludes the "Disproportion" with a discussion of man's inability to understand even his own nature, which he describes as the most "prodigious" element of Nature:

> Qui ne croirait à nous voir composer toutes choses d'esprit et de corps que ce mélange-là nous serait bien compréhensible. C'est néanmoins la chose qu'on comprend le moins; l'homme est à lui-même le plus prodigieux objet de la nature, car il ne peut concevoir ce que c'est que corps et encore moins ce que c'est qu'esprit, et moins qu'aucune chose comment un corps peut être uni avec un esprit. (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230)

This concluding paragraph to the "Disproportion" refers to man's opinion of himself as

[52] Davidson, *Pascal and the Arts of the Mind*, 12–13.

"the most prodigious object of nature." The *Dictionnaire de l'Académie* defines "*prodige*" as, "Effet surprenant qui arrive contre le cours ordinaire de la nature… Il se dit souvent par exagération, en parlant des personnes & des choses qui excellent dans leur genre."[53] The resemblance between this definition and that of "admiration" in the same edition is striking, though "prodige" contains an important difference: that of judgment for things that "excel" in their nature. While Pascal begins the "Disproportion" by encouraging the reader to look beyond the "lowly things that surround him,"[54] he concludes by recognizing that man's gaze will inevitably fall to himself and his fellow man, and his desirous admiration will lead him to seek a more complete understanding of this "proportional" fellow being that allows him to believe he understands the world and himself.

Man's admiration for human greatness simultaneously generates disdain for lowliness:

> Il est bien ridicule de se scandaliser de la bassesse de Jésus-Christ, comme si cette bassesse était du même ordre duquel est la grandeur qu'il venait faire paraître. Qu'on considère cette grandeur-là dans sa vie, dans sa passion, dans son obscurité, dans sa mort, dans l'élection des siens, dans leur abandonnement, dans sa secrète résurrection et dans le reste, on la verra si grande qu'on n'aura pas sujet de se scandaliser d'une bassesse qui n'y est pas. Mais il y en a qui ne peuvent admirer que les grandeurs charnelles comme s'il n'y en avait pas de spirituelles. Et d'autres qui n'admirent que les spirituelles comme s'il n'y en avait pas d'infiniment plus hautes dans la sagesse. Tous les corps, le firmament, les étoiles, la terre et ses royaumes, ne valent pas le moindre des esprits. Car il connaît tout cela, et soi, et les corps rien**.** (L.G. 290, Br. 793, Laf. 308, S. 339)

In this fragment, Pascal distinguishes first between earthly, charnel lowliness and

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[53] "Prodige," *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, 1694, ARTFL Dictionnaires d'autrefois, http://artflsrv01.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=concupiscence.
[54] "qu'il éloigne sa vue des objets bas qui l'environnent" (L.G. 185, Br. 72, Laf. 199, S. 230).

spiritual greatness, and secondly between different aspects of earthly greatness: charnel, spiritual, and intellectual. Man's misguided admiration for earthly greatness and disdain for lowliness, even the lowliness of Christ, reflects his limited access to truth and knowledge. In the absence of complete understanding of himself and his place in the world, man alternately admires physical, mental, or spiritual greatness. Man's social judgments exist within a system whose constructed truths are in fact false: judging his proportion within the greatness and smallness of things, man focuses on that which is in his power to understand, his fellow man. Yet this presumption of understanding is based on a misunderstanding of man's insignificance: while man is nothing compared to the vastness of Nature, and everything compared to the ciron, even the least among men (*le moindre des esprits*) recognizes the greatness of the natural world, and of his thinking self with respect to the inanimate objects that surround him. In other words, man has every reason to admire his fellow man, but that which he commonly identifies as admirable – wealth, status, and beauty – in his fellow man simply misses the mark.

The double nature of admiration in the *Pensées* is a reflection of Pascal's concept of man's double nature after the Fall:

> Le christianisme est étrange. Il ordonne à l'homme de reconnaître qu'il est vil et même abominable, et lui ordonne de vouloir être semblable à Dieu. Sans un tel contrepoids, cette élévation le rendrait horriblement vain, ou cet abaissement le rendrait horriblement abject. (L.G. 332, Br. 537, Laf. 351, S. 383)

Man requires this balance between greatness and abjection: without it he would be irremediably proud or hopeless. This condition exists only in a world of imperfect knowledge combined with man's desire to understand. More importantly, this condition

exists because man has created the social systems to ensure its existence. Pascal shows repeatedly that man's ego drives him to avoid the truth that he so desperately seeks, since reaching the truth hidden in his heart would entail the acceptance of his misery. Such acceptance would enable man to see the truth that he desires, but man does not desire the *real* truth:

> nous haïssons la vérité, on nous la cache; nous voulons être flattés, on nous flatte; nous aimons à être trompés, on nous trompe… [l'homme] ne veut donc pas qu'on lui dise la vérité. Il évite de la dire aux autres. (Laf. 978, Br. 100, S. 743)

In other words, man's "vanité," his quest for happiness, will never allow him to escape the closed sphere of limited understanding that surrounds him. While man may desire such an escape, and be driven by his ardent admiration for the unknown, his self-admiration and his pride prevent him from going through with it.

In a letter to his sister, Gilberte, on October 17, 1651, upon the occasion of the death of their father, Pascal explains the reasons underlying man's infinite self-love:

> Dieu a créé l'homme avec deux amours, l'un pour Dieu, l'autre pour soi-même; mais avec cette loi, que l'amour pour Dieu serait infini, c'est-à-dire sans aucune autre fin que Dieu même, et que l'amour pour soi-même serait fini et rapportant à Dieu. L'homme en cet état non seulement s'aimait sans péché, mais ne pouvait pas ne point s'aimer sans péché.
> Depuis, le péché étant arrivé, l'homme a perdu le premier de ces amours; et l'amour pour soi-même étant resté seul dans cette grande âme capable d'un amour infini, cet amour-propre s'est étendu et débordé dans le vide que l'amour de Dieu a quitté; et ainsi il s'est aimé seul, et toutes choses pour soi, c'est-à-dire infiniment.[55]

During man's initial union with God, his love for God was infinite, and his self-love finite and related to God. To not love the self in this uncorrupted world was a sin. Self-

[55] Blaise Pascal, *Œuvres Complètes*, vol. 1 (Paris: Libraire de L. Hachette, 1858), 442. Quoted in Le Guern, *Pascal et Arnauld*, 39.

love was thus part of man's initial perfection. After original sin, however, man lost this union and, consequently, his infinite love for God was replaced with an ever-expanding self-love. By this logic, man in a sense replaced God and thus became his own God-figure.

Despite man's intellectual capacities and the passions that drive him to gain superior knowledge, he cannot get back to a point of certain truth. It escapes his understanding because, in falling from grace, he has lost the ability to understand this point of origin: "Incompréhensible que Dieu soit et incompréhensible qu'il ne soit pas; que l'âme soit avec le corps, que nous n'ayons point d'âme; que le monde soit créé, qu'il ne soit pas, etc.; que le péché originel soit et qu'il ne soit pas" (L.G. 655, Br. 230, Laf. 809, S. 656). The knowledge of God's existence, the creation of man, and the nature of original sin lie outside man's ability to understand rationally. All man can do is prepare himself for the truth by supressing the passions. Strive as he may to attain greater knowledge, man's efforts will remain fundamentally circumscribed within the realm of knowledge available to him, save for the knowledge of the heart, which he may access only through hearing "la raison du cœur" and creating in his body habits of faith.[56]

[56] The fragment on the necessity of involving both the body and the mind in belief, cited earlier in this chapter, is worth recalling here: "Quand on ne croit que par la force de la conviction, et que l'automate est incliné à croire le contraire, ce n'est pas assez. Il faut donc faire croire nos deux pièces, l'esprit par les raisons qu'il suffit d'avoir vues une fois en sa vie, et l'automate par la coutume, et en ne lui permettant pas de s'incliner au contraire. La raison agit avec lenteur et avec tant de vues sur tant de principes, lesquels il faut qu'ils soient toujours présents, qu'à toute heure elle s'assoupit ou s'égare manque d'avoir tous ses principes présents. Le sentiment n'agit pas ainsi ; il agit en un instant et toujours est prêt à agir. Il faut donc mettre notre foi dans le sentiment, autrement elle sera toujours vacillante. (L.G. 671, Br. 252, Laf. 821, S. 661)

The heart thus offers the hope for escape. Yet the "reason of the heart" remains obscured by the orders of the body and the mind, and requires man to look outside of himself to recognize that God is not in him, but always everywhere. Admiration in the *Pensées*, therefore, whether associated with surprise, the quest for knowledge, or a social judgment of something worthy of greater consideration or emulation, is a passion that pushes man to look outside of himself, offering the potential to find God that can never be realized unless man surpresses the man-made social admiration that contributes to his sinful "divertissement."

Whereas the Cartesian admiration that spurs the desire for knowledge is viewed as a positive source of motivation, the Pascalian quest for truth remains hopelessly closed within the hermeneutic circle of misery and ignorance that surrounds man and limits his access to certainty. The furthest reaches of man's admiration for that which surprises and escapes his understanding does not even begin to approach the realm of truth and certainty, which exists only in the imprint of the God's presence in the heart. Man's admiration therefore remains fundamentally limited to his own human-centered admiration, and cannot hope to extend beyond his own judgment of that which he can see, presume to understand, and judge.

Chapter 4 - Admiration's Involuntary Incarnations in La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes* and Lafayette's *La Princesse de Clèves*

Admiration is a sudden, involuntary passion in Descartes's *Passions de l'âme*, an impersonal ideal related to the heroic in Corneille's tragedies, and a fallen, desirous state in Pascal's *Pensées*. In the salon milieu of the late seventeenth century, admiration was given and received like currency: the more one managed to inspire "admiration" the higher one's value in society climbed. In François de La Rochefoucauld's 1664 *Maximes* and Marie-Madeleine Pioche de la Vergne's (Madame de Lafayette's) 1678 *La Princesse de Clèves*, admiration appears as an involuntary, ongoing social judgment of worth, beauty, and rarity.

La Rochefoucauld's portrayal of admiration shows it to be a subjective, involuntary passion that acts independently in the best interest of the individual's *amour-propre*: the individual seeks and feels admiration based on the self-aggrandizing, often subconscious desires of his own *amour-propre*. La Rochefoucauld creates an inescapable vicious circle in which any attempt to act against one's *amour-propre* is, in fact, a self-interested act. Thus, the Princess's repeated attempts to escape the passions[1] exchanged at court in order to protect her virtue and ensure her *repos* could be seen as self-

[1] In his book chapter, "The Economy of Love in *La Princesse de Clèves*" Philippe Desan says: "Despite appearances, Mme de Lafayette wrote a social novel… Numerous passages in the novel refer directly to human relations as a commercial activity, and I will argue that whthin its scope women represent a veritable *commerce*" (Desan, "The Economy of Love in La Princesse de Clèves," 104.)

interested. In *Madame de Lafayette Par Elle-Même*, Bernard Pingaud summarizes the rather Pascalian understanding of the passions at work in the novel as:

> Les passions, qui nous 'divertissent,' font aussi notre malheur. Nous aimons ce malheur, car la nature de l'homme est dans le mouvement et pour nous, 'le repos entier est la mort.' Mais si nous voulons échapper aux inquiétudes et aux tourments, nous n'avons d'autre recours que cette mort volontaire qui s'appelle la 'retraite.'[2]

Reconsidering *The Princesse de Clèves* through the passion of admiration offers new insight into the Princess's ultimate decision to withdraw from the court, to choose "cette mort volontaire." Throughout her life at court, the Princess tries to avoid the admiration of her fellow courtiers. Her very attempt to avoid this admiration, however, seems to attract the attention she so desperately wishes to flee. The entire novel thus effectively responds to Cartesian, Pascalian and La Rochefoucauldian notions of admiration and *amour-propre* by offering the Princesse de Clèves as an alternative model. By quietly removing herself from the physical space of the court and the exchange of admiration that takes place there, the Princess escapes admiration and finds her inimitable *repos*.

Part I : *Les Maximes* – The Social Exchange of Admiration

Descartes first associated admiration and surprise in his 1649 *Traité des passions de l'âme*: "l'admiration est une subite surprise de l'âme, qui fait qu'elle se porte à considérer avec attention les objets qui lui semblent rares et extraordinaires" (Article 70). Sixteen years later, many of La Rochefoucauld's published collection of *Maximes*

[2] Bernard Pingaud, *Madame de Lafayette Par Elle-Même* (Paris: Seuil, 1959), 104. quoted in Philippe Sellier, *Port-Royal et La Littérature*, vol. 2 (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1999), 202.

demonstrate a distinct familiarity with Descartes's definition. Like Descartes's *Passions de l'âme*, La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes* show that admiration occurs most strongly in new human relationships, but that with increased familiarity, admiration is lost. Revealing Pascalian and Augustinian influences, La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes* also depict what La Chapelle-Bessé termed "l'homme corrompu."[3] As Philippe Sellier summarizes,

> Par la chute, toute l'humanité a abandonné Dieu, et Dieu l'a *abandonnée* avec justice. Par miséricorde il discerne dans cette masse corrompue quelques élus, mais il *laisse* les autres en proie à leurs concupiscences: les voluptés, le goût effréné de savoir (ou curiosité), l'orgueil.[4]

La Rochefoucauld demonstrates a similar opinion of the state of man, yet considers man's inherent corruption with almost no mention of God. As Richard Hodgson says in *Falsehood Disguised: Unmasking the Truth in La Rochefoucauld*, "Like Descartes and Malebranche, like his contemporary Pascal, La Rochefoucauld desperately sought out truth, but in his case the search was carried out without the consolation provided by faith in the Christian God as Truth's ultimate source."[5] In other words, for La Rochefoucauld, man's corrupted state cannot be transcended, but merely acknowledged. While man searches for the truth beyond his limited understanding,[6] the absence of a transcendent source of truth in God makes this quest necessarily human-centered, and intimately

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[3] Sellier, *Port-Royal et La Littérature*, 2:145.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Richard G. Hodgson, *Falsehood Disguised: Unmasking the Truth in La Rochefoucauld* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1995), 3.
[6] Ibid.

related to man's *amour-propre*. In other words, as Bénichou says in *Morales du grand siècle*, man's truth lies within him and in his relation to other human beings:

> L'état de la société determine, avec la psychologie des groupes humains qui la composent, la formation et le sens des courants de la pensée morale; mais cela n'est ainsi que parce que la société a d'abord besoin de pensée, autrement dit parce que l'homme social a besoin de se conduire par des motifs plus vastes que ses intérêts immédiats…Le rapport de la pensée avec la vie était jadis exprimé de façon parfaite par un mot dont on se servait pour designer les idées dans ce qu'elles ont d'actif, et qui en elles justifie et anime une conduite. Le mot de 'maximes' rendait bien l'aspect pratique, tendencieux, et en même temps la prétention à la généralité, de toute pensée morale. On peut dire de tout système d'idées qu'il est un ensemble de maximes dont les circonstances sociales éclairent la source, c'est-à-dire la destination.[7]

It is thus not surprising that the *Maximes* present an understanding of admiration that is clearly social in nature: while admiration as a passion may be felt objectively and individually upon seeing something surprising and new, the *Maximes* suggest that this passion is quickly transformed into an evaluative adjective – admirable – that confers an increase in societal value. Man's *amour-propre* influences his initial admiration and engages him in a social economy where admiration is given and received in a mutual exchange that has little to do with true value and everything to do with appearances and perceptions. Admiration maintains its connection to the unknown and its involuntary nature in the *Maximes*: it acts in the service of the individual's *amour-propre*, which is itself acting independently of the consicious individual. Yet admiration is also intimately associated with *amour-propre's* assessment of the worthiness, attractiveness, and suitability of the individual being admired: admiration transforms from Cartesian non-evaluative "surprise" to esteem, a passion that Descartes contrasts with "mépris" and

[7] Bénichou, *Morales Du Grand Siècle*, 297–98.

classifies as a subsequent assessment of worth. In other words, while admiration in the *Maximes* may initially stem from a "subite surprise de l'âme," its origin lies in the subconscious desires of *amour-propre*, and its continuation depends entirely on the subjective goals, desires and aspirations of the admirer. In the birth and continuation of admiration, personal gain is of paramount importance. The *Maximes* thus reveal a new, social feature in admiration: mediated through his *amour-propre*, man's admiration for others is no longer involuntary or individual. Just as admiration initiates and filters human experience of the subsequent Cartesian passions, *l'amour-propre* influences all human interaction with the surrounding world in the *Maximes*, including admiration.

***Amour-propre*'s Agency**

As Françoise Jaouën highlights in *L'art de plair en petits morceaux*, La Rochefoucauld was criticized for revealing society's "dirty secrets," but also for failing to offer any path out of the corruption that he should not even have been publishing.[8] Apparently aware of these criticisms from his early readers, La Rochefoucauld in the "avis au lecteur" tells his reader in the first edition, "de se mettre d'abord dans l'esprit qu'il n'y a aucune de ces Maximes qui le regarde en particulier, et qu'il en est seul excepté."[9] Jaouën suggests that in subsequent editions, La Rochefoucauld wished to remove the hint of irony in his previous statement and added the following precisions:

> L'auteur n'a considéré les hommes que dans cet état deplorable de la nature corrompue par le péché… [la manière] dont il parle de ce nombre infini de défauts

[8] Jaouën, *De L'art de L'aire En Petits Morceaux. Pascal, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère*, 79–84.
[9] Ibid., 83–84. Quote from the 1665 edition of the *Maximes*.

> qui se rencontrent dans leurs vertus apparentes ne regarde point ceux que Dieu en preserve par une grâce particulière.[10]

La Rochefoucauld also suggests in this same *avis* that the reader must be wary of his own *amour-propre* in approaching the *Maximes*, for whether he accepts their cutting truths or rejects them, his *amour-propre* will be the source and cause of this decision:

> je prie le lecteur … de ne laisser point entraîner son esprit au premier mouvement de son cœur, et donner ordre, s'il est possible, que l'amour-propre ne se mêle point dans le jugement qu'il en fera; car, s'il le consulte, il ne faut pas s'attendre qu'il puisse être favorable à ces Maximes; comme elles traitent l'amour-propre de corrupteur de la raison, il ne manquera pas de prévenir l'esprit contre elles. Il faut donc prendre garde que cette prévention ne la justifie, et se persuader qu'il n'y a rien de plus propre à établir la vérité de ces réflexions que la chaleur et la subtilité que l'on témoignera pour les combattre. En effet, il sera difficile de faire croire à tout homme de bon sens qu'on les condamne par d'autres motifs que par celui de l'intérêt caché, de l'orgueil et de l'amour-propre.[11]

For Jaouën, this prominent placement of *amour-propre*, personified as an inescapable, self-interested agent that prevents the spirit from seeing the truths contained (or "reflected") in the *Maximes*, explains our automatic equation of the *Maximes* with *amour-propre*.[12]

To obtain a clear, declarative definition of *amour-propre*, one must turn to the "première maxime supprimée":

> L'amour-propre est l'amour de soi-même et de toutes choses pour soi; il est plus habile que le plus habile homme du monde; il rend les hommes idolâtres d'eux-

[10] La Rochefoucauld, "Avis au lecteur," *Maximes*. Quoted in Ibid., 84.
[11] François La Rochefoucauld, *Maximes*, ed. Jean Lafond (Paris: Imprimerie nationale éditions, 1998). Quoted in Frédéric Godefroy, *Etudes et Modèles de Style*, vol. 2, Les Prosateurs, Histoire de La Littérature Française Depuis Le XVIème Siècle Jusqu'à Nos Jours (Paris: Gaume Frères et J. Duprey, 1860), 64.
[12] Jaouën, *De L'art de L'aire En Petits Morceaux. Pascal, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère*, 85–86.

> mêmes, et les rendrait les tyrans des autres si la fortune leur en donnait les moyens.[13]

Even suppressed, this definition underlies La Rochefoucauld's understanding of *amour-propre*. La Rochefoucauld suggests that *amour-propre* acts not only ahead of man's passions, thoughts and emotions, but ahead of man himself: *amour-propre* is more clever than the cleverest of men. Even if man were able to transcend this focus on the self, he would be doing so out of self-interest: admiration can thus never be disinterested. La Rochefoucauld places man in an inescapable bind whereby even his best intentions are somehow rooted in self-interest.

As the first of the Cartesian passions, admiration is the first "victim" of the La Rochefoucauldian concept of *amour-propre*. Recalling Descartes's definition of admiration from Article 70 of the *Passions de l'âme* ("L'admiration est une subite surprise de l'âme, qui fait qu'elle se porte à considérer avec attention les objets qui lui semblent rares et extraordinaires."[14]), it becomes clear that, while the cause of admiration remains entirely involuntary, its source in the *Maximes* is internalized and relativized, even as its influence is socialized and externalized. Whereas Cartesian admiration begins with the external object that presents itself as "rare or extraordinary" and creates an impression in the brain that initiates the movement of the animal spirits and initiates the

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[13] La Rochefoucauld, *Maximes*, 148. While outside the scope of this study, many critics have considered why this maxime was suppressed in subsequent editions. Considering the *Maximes* from a stylistic perspective, Jaoüen speculates that this maxime may have been cut for its lack of brevity and "pointe". See Jaouën, *De L'art de L'aire En Petits Morceaux. Pascal, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère*, 89.

[14] Descartes, *Les Passions de L'âme*, 1649, 95. Hereafter, the articles from the *Passions de l'âme* will be cited parenthetically.

other passions, La Rochefoucauld reverses this process. La Rochefoucauldian admiration stems not from the rarity of the external object, but from the *amour-propre* that directs the attention of the observer to consider objects – or individuals – that may in fact serve the self-interest of the individual.

In the 1664 edition of the *Maximes*, the maxim on *amour-propre* is followed by:

> Comme si ce n'était pas assez à l'amour-propre d'avoir la vertu de se transformer lui-même, il a encore celle de transformer les objets, ce qu'il fait d'une manière fort étonnante. Car non seulement il les déguise si bien qu'il y est lui-même abusé, mais aussi, comme si ces actions étaient des miracles, il change l'état et la nature des choses soudainement.[15]

Not only does the object lose its primacy as the initiator of the passions, it is in fact completely altered to meet the needs of the self-interested beholder. Perceived objects and people are altered in man's perception of them, as his *amour-propre* acts to direct man's attention to one aspect or another. Importantly, La Rochefoucauld reappropriates many of the terms (étonnante, soudainement) contained in the Cartesian understanding of admiration:

> Lorsque la première rencontre de quelque objet nous surprend, et que nous le jugeons être nouveau, ou fort différent de ce que nous connaissions auparavant ou bien de ce que nous supposions qu'il devait être, cela fait que nous l'admirons et en sommes étonnés. (*Passions de l'âme*, Article 53)

While Descartes emphasizes the neutral surprise generated by the object, La Rochefoucauld emphasizes the surprising transformation that the subject effects on his own perception of the object. Admiration in the *Maximes*, therefore, is a judgment arising

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[15] François La Rochefoucauld, *Collected Maxims and Other Reflections*, ed. Francine Giguère (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), Maxime supprimée 101, 1664 edition. Quoted in Jaouën, *De L'art de L'aire En Petits Morceaux. Pascal, La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère*, 95. Hereafter cited parenthetically.

from *amour-propre*'s ability to "change[r] l'état et la nature des choses soudainement" (Maxime supprimée 101). The object's objective existence is henceforth subordinated to the involuntary *judgment* of the subject, rather than his involuntary surprise and subsequent passions. According to this relativist understanding of *amour-propre's* influence on perception and admiration, objects can never be perceived in the same way by two different individuals, since they will necessarily change according the interests of the individual.

The notion of "admiration" appears 6 times in the *Maximes* with the following distribution: "admiration" itself is absent from the text; "admiré" appears twice; "admirer" appears three times, but in only two distinct maxims; "admirable" appears only once. The latter refers to *amour-propre*'s self-hate, as quoted above from the "première maxime supprimée." In addition to this judgment of *amour-propre's* "admirable" or "surprising" self-loathing, we find admiration in the following four maxims:

> Ce qui nous fait aimer les nouvelles connaissances n'est pas tant la lassitude que nous avons des vieilles ou le plaisir de changer, que le dégoût de n'être pas assez admirés de ceux qui nous connaissent trop, et l'espérance de l'être davantage de ceux qui ne nous connaissent pas tant. (Max. 178)
>
> Nous aimons toujours ceux qui nous admirent; et nous n'aimons pas toujours ceux que nous admirons. (Max. 294)
>
> Nous ne louons d'ordinaire de bon cœur que ceux qui nous admirent. (Max. 356)
>
> L'envie d'être plaint, ou d'être admiré, fait souvent la plus grande partie de notre confiance. (Max. 475)

Judgment and *amour-propre* are clearly indicated as the driving forces of admiration in each of these maxims. Maxim 178 recalls the "newness" that provokes admiration in the

Cartesian passions, yet with an important mediating difference: desire. Desire for more admiration prompts man to seek out those who do not already know him, and thereby might be struck by the very newness that Descartes describes. Thus, La Rochefoucauld does not refute the Cartesian passions, but rather resituates their origin and destination within self-aggrandizing *amour-propre*.

In Maxim 294 ("Nous aimons toujours ceux qui nous admirent; et nous n'aimons pas toujours ceux que nous admirons"), love and admiration are intertwined in the receptive mode, and yet divorced in the active mode. In other words, love is born out of the feeling of being admired, but not necessarily out of man's active admiration: man can admire someone that he does not love. While not explicitly stated, the presence of *amour-propre* in this maxim is undeniable: love results universally from *amour-propre's* perception of being admired. On the other hand, that same self-interest may direct man's admiration toward something that he does not even like, let alone love. Further, while the subject may *perceive* his admiration to be objective, even this perception of objectivity arises out of *amour-propre*'s self-interested influence.

While Maxims 356 and 475 similarly equate admiration with judgment and *amour-propre*, they turn our attention toward a more social form of admiration, suggesting that admiration depends on societal, not merely individual, perceptions. Reading Maxim 356 ("Nous ne louons d'ordinaire de bon cœur que ceux qui nous admirent") through the language of Maxim 294 ("Nous aimons toujours ceux qui nous admirent; et nous n'aimons pas toujours ceux que nous admirons") reveals an equation of "louons" and "aimons," and both actions are predicated upon first being admired by one's

fellow man. Further, the verb "louons" suggests one individual praising another in front of some sort of audience. As seen in the *Princesse de Clèves*, public admiration in the form of praise defined an individual's reputation at court in the seventeenth century. In this sense, La Rochefoucauld's implicit equation of admiration and *amour-propre* may in fact be a logical conclusion based on the observation that societal admiration improved one's reputation and social standing. Maxim 475 ("L'envie d'être plaint, ou d'être admiré, fait souvent la plus grande partie de notre confiance") suggests that, in the absence of the prior admiration indicated in Maxims 294 and 356, man confides in order to attract the attention he is lacking. In other words, when admiration is not achieved spontaneously through societal observation, confiding in someone will draw societal attention to one's "admirable"[16] qualities by putting them into circulation and thus allowing them to be recognized. This interpretation of "admiré" in Maxim 475 is further supported by its opposition with "plaint," which the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie* defines as "Avoir pitié, avoir compassion des maux d'autruy, en estre fasché, en estre touché."[17] The "desire" to elicit this sympathetic emotional reaction from the listener can motivate the confider as much as the opposing desire, to be "admired."

Whereas Descartes defines admiration as an individual experience of involuntary, physical surprise when faced with something new and extraordinary, La Rochefoucauld understands admiration to be a judgment within an inescapably social context. The

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[16] In this sense, admirable comes to mean something closer to "noteworthy": surprising and new but, more importantly, capable of attracting enough attention to increase one's relative value in society.

[17] "Plaindre," *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, 1694, ARTFL Dictionnaires d'autrefois, http://artflsrv01.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=plaindre.

pronoun "nous" places man in a shared human condition, a society of sorts, and each of the maxims cited above implies multiple admirers: "ceux qui ne nous connaissent pas trop" and "ceux qui nous admirent." Resembling Pascalian admiration – born of surprise at newness, but transformed into a quest for individual glory – La Rochefoucauld's maxims on admiration go one step further. Admiration is a currency through which man's value in society is determined. Hélène Merlin-Kajman sees the maxim as a blurring of the public and private spheres in the second half of the seventeenth-century in France:

> Les deux espaces particulier et public sont donc devenus entièrement poreux et même superposables, et c'est pour cela qu'on retrouve chez La Rochefoucauld, non seulement le postulat d'une unité du monde moral, mais encore le postulat d'une unité du monde *social*. Unité désagrégée, cependant: car dans cette porosité des frontières, l'un et l'autre espace ont perdu toutes leurs qualités respectives et ont cumulé leurs défauts. L'amour-propre en témoigne, le particulier a tout envahi, le domaine des interêts et des rapports physiques. Les commentateurs ont dès longtemps souligné l'importance des métaphores marchandes dans les *Maximes*: c'est, en fait, que *l'économique* a gagné l'ensemble de l'espace social.[18]

Considering admiration in this context, the admiration that once belonged to the private sphere of individual passions has now been subsumed by the social codes, appearances, and dissimulations of the court. While admiration may be initiated within the individual, it is motivated and perpetuated by its social implications. Like money or any other commodity that must circulate to have value, admiration as an internal, solitary passion has no social value until it is shared: admiration is exchanged as the currency of reputation. Admiration in the *Maximes* reflects the shift from private, internal wonder to

[18] Hélène Merlin, "Raisons Historiques D'un Genre: Maximes (politiques) et Amour-Propre," *Littératures Classiques* 35 (1999): 88.

socialized desires for glory. The remainder of this chapter will consider the exchange of admiration in the social space of the court in Lafayette's *Princesse de Clèves*.

Part 2: *La Princesse de Clèves* – Escaping the Social Exchange of Admiration

In *Subjectivity and Subjugation in Seventeenth-Century Drama and Prose*, Mitchell Greenberg sees the unification of the public and private in the courtly world of the *Princesse de Clèves*:

> In the *Princesse de Clèves*, there is no division possible between the external ('real') world and the court: the court is the world and the world the court, there is no outside, nothing exists that is not already included within the representational parameters of the text/court… The text's insistence on its own closure, on the projections of the world as closed, could thus be interpreted as a defense against the demands of that other world, the burgeoning bourgeois society[19] that is beginning to threaten a noble order, beginning to replace what was a complicated 'feudal' distribution of power, of sexuality and of social networking with a new, only dimbly perceived order in which the pieces of the societal jigsaw puzzle are being redistributed in a threateningly novel way.[20]

Whereas Merlin-Kajman emphasizes the moral take-over of the public sphere by the private, as evidenced by the predominance of the *amour-propre* in the *Maximes*, Greenberg views the unification of the public and private as a resistance to the growing privatization and separation of bourgeois society at the end of the seventeenth century. In "The Economy of Love in *La Princesse de Clèves*," Philippe Desan says, "Numerous passages in the novel refer directly to human relations as a commercial activity, and…

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[19] For a more complete history of the transition from feudal power structures to the new bourgeois economy, Greenberg kindly directs his reader to *Histoire de la vie privée*, ed. Ph. Ariès and G. Duby (Paris: Seuil, 1985, 1987), vols. 2 and 3.

[20] Mitchell Greenberg, *Subjectivity and Subjugation in Seventeenth-Century Drama and Prose: The Family Romance of French Classicism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 178.

within its scope women represent a veritable *commerce*. Indeed, this economic aspect of love appears essential to any interpretation of the novel."[21] Desan focuses on love as a value and women as the vehicle in the new bourgeois economy by which passions are actively and publicly exchanged, and opposes it to the old feudal system of secret passions where declarations of love alone confered value. While the notion of "economies" does not seem particularly useful to this study and risks confusion with the literal economic exchange that took place through marriage at the time, Desan's elaboration of the "commerce" or "exchange" of passions is a helpful structure for considering the social significance of admiration in the second half of the seventeenth century.

The term "*admiration*" appears in the *Princesse de Clèves* at key moments such as the Princess's initial appearance at court, her growing passion for Nemours, her "inimitable" declaration to her husband, and her final decision to permanently withdraw from court society. In the *Princesse de Clèves*, admiration precedes love as an indicator of rarity and quality, but also, in Cartesian fashion, as the passion that initiates the exchange of all subsequent passions in the novel. Lafayette's 1678 novel demonstrates an understanding of admiration as a passion that incorporates both surprise and social judgment. In the end, the Princess finds a way to remove herself from the social exchange of admiration.

The novel routinely suggests the presence of admiration prior to love: both the duc de Nemours and M. de Clèves "admire" the beauty of the Princess prior to falling in

[21] Desan, "The Economy of Love in La Princesse de Clèves," 104.

love with her. In "L'Économie des marques dans *La Princesse de Clèves*," John Lyons argues that "marks" of passions are the traded currency in the novel:

> Dans le monde clos de la cour c'est la marque qui constitue la mediation entre le public et le privé, l'objet des regards et la monnaie d'échange. Tous les personnages, y comprise l'héroïne, se trouvent dans le dilemme de toute économie: si on donne trop de marques elles perdent leur valeur, si on n'en donne pas elles ne circulent pas et n'ont pas de valeur.[22]

Lyons defines a "mark" as an outward "geste" or "indice" that can be either voluntary or involuntary – and this distinction is actually of little importance, since "les personnages s'efforcent d'assumer la même maîtrise sur les marques naturelles et sponatanées que sur les gestes délibérés"[23] – and communicates some inner feeling or passion. In the circulation of "marks" in the *Princesse de Clèves*, however, admiration seems to be the only openly universal currency, as well as the only gender-neutral passion. A word search reveals that the term "passion" appears 113 times, "amour" 50 times, "amoureux" 54 times, and some form of "admiration" or "admirer" 38 times. Yet, these frequencies do not accurately reflect the gender inequities in the distribution of these terms. While the female characters are at least figuratively "punished" when their passion becomes public knowledge – Madame de Tournon dies and the Princess's *aveu* of her passion leads to Clèves's death – and the word "amoureuse" is conspicuously absent from the text despite 54 instances of the masculine adjective "amoureux," both male and female characters declare their *admiration* in the text, with the exception of the Princess herself. In other

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[22] John D. Lyons, "L'Économie Des Marques Dans La Princesse de Clèves," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 81 (1980): 326, quoted in Desan, "The Economy of Love in *La Princesse de Clèves*," 104–5.
[23] Lyons, "L'Économie Des Marques Dans La Princesse de Clèves," 327.

words, women who feel passion and love are expected to hide their romantic leanings, while admiration remains neutral enough to be shared by "tout le monde": "elle fut reçue des reines avec tous les agréments qu'on peut s'imaginer, et avec une telle admiration de tout le monde, qu'elle n'entendait autour d'elle que des louanges."[24]

Given that the exchange of admiration is more or less equally available to all characters within the novel, it is striking that the Princess herself does not explicitly "admire" in the text: she provokes, inspires and perpetuates admiration in others, but active admiration is neither attributed to her nor declared by her.[25] Instead, her appearance, her actions, and her sincerity are repeatedly admired by the other characters in the novel. But the Princess shows no desire to participate in this exchange of admiration. Given Lafayette's intellectual and personal affinity for La Rochefoucauld, and her intimate knowledge of his *Maximes*, it is reasonable to question whether the Princess's avoidance of her admirers is itself an attention-seeking act of *amour-propre*. The admiration other characters feel for the Princess, however, seems to happen in spite of her apparent avoidance of it and of them. She repeatedly attempts to escape the public admiration that her private acts of sincerity, such as her "inimitable" avowal to her husband, generate, and while we must assume that the Princess, like everyone else,

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[24] Marie-Madeleine Pioche de la Vergne, Comtesse de Lafayette, *La Princesse de Clèves* (Paris: Ménard et Desenne, Fils, 1818), 18.

[25] John Lyons sees the princess "admiring" the writer of the letter, as the narrator tells us that she "enviait la force qu'elle avait eue de cacher ses sentiments de M. de Nemours" (135). Yet this attribution of "admiration" equates it with the Princess' envy, a leap that this study cannot take. The Princess' envy in this passage would seem more fittingly equated with jealousy than with admiration, for the Princess seems the opposite of surprised: far from surprising her, Nemours' behavior in fact confirms her mothers' warnings. (Lyons, "L'Économie Des Marques Dans La Princesse de Clèves," 329.)

experiences involuntary admiration for Nemours and the many new, beautiful people who surround her at court, she never openly reveals it in the text. The Princess not only attempts to remove herself from the exhange of admiration,[26] but seems to situate admiration in the realm of the private, the individual, the interior. Desan and Greenberg have argued that the Princess resists the increasingly public (bourgeois) economy of passions, in favor of an older, private (feudal) system, depending on confidences and unspoken love. If this is the case, then the Princess's use of admiration in the text takes this resistance one step further: the Princess's admiration is entirely absent. While other characters exchange their admiration as a currency of social worth, the Princess abstains from revealing any mark of admiration, public or private, and even the narrator refrains from ascribint admiration to her.

The specific uses of admiration in the text reveal that admiration in the *Princesse de Clèves* is consistently involuntary, unavoidable, and fundamentally linked to social judgment. In the opening pages the initial descriptions of the characters in the court of Henri II include some form of "*admirer*" six times:

> La magnificence et la galanterie n'ont jamais paru en France avec tant d'éclat que dans les dernières années du règne de Henri second. Ce prince était gallant, bien fait et amoureux… Comme il réussissait *admirablement* dans tous les exercices du corps, il en faisait une de ses plus grandes occupations. C'étaient tous les jours des parties de chasse et de paume, des ballets, des courses de bagues, ou de

[26] It is noteworthy that admiration all-but-disappears in the second part of the book, appearing only once as the judgment "admirablement," and appearing only passively and evaluatively in the third part of the novel. In the third part of the novel, admiration appears four times, but never in the active form: "admiration" and "admirable" each appear twice. Like Descartes, Lafayette thus associates admiration with the processes of discovery and "re-discovery" that occur at the beginning and end of the novel, respectively, but always within a public, social context of judgment and evaluation.

> semblables divertissements; les couleurs et les chiffres de madame de Valentinois paraissaient partout, et elle paraissait elle-même avec tous les ajustements que pouvait avoir mademoiselle de La Marck, sa petite-fille, qui était alors à marier.[27]

The narrator's opening words thrust the reader immediately into the realm of evaluative description that will occupy the courtiers within the text, but with a historic, backwards-looking gaze that grants the narrator the comparative authority to make such judgments and pass them along to the reader. In so doing, the narrator paints an almost voyeuristic picture for the reader in which people are presented not in great physical detail, but in terms of their socially relevant relationships and behaviors. The attribution of admiration in the text depends consistently on a sort of group-think: the King's exploits are *generally* considered "admirable". In other words, they are admirable according to a mutually determined group standard, and in comparison to other individuals within the group. According to René Girard's *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*, all passions, all desires, are based on the desires of others: "Le prestige du médiateur [le rival] se communique à l'objet desiré et confère à ce dernier une valeur illusoire. Le désir triangulaire est le désir qui transfigure son objet."[28] According to this theory, the King, the courtiers, and soon-after, the Princess are admired and desired because others admire and desire them: societal approval begets greater societal approval. Of course the reverse is also true: those who fall out of favor lose all "illusory" value at court.

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[27] Lafayette, *La Princesse de Clèves*, 1980, 85. Hereafter, the text will be cited parenthetically, with emphasis added added to highlight the text as necessary.
[28] René Girard, *Mensonge Romantique et Vérité Romanesque* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1961), 25.

The description of the King praises his physical prowess and fierce love for madame de Valentinois, both of which surprise in their "admirable" longevity. This pattern of presenting the members of Henri II's court through communal, evaluative statements continues throughout the novel:

> Jamais cour n'a eu tant de belles personnes et d'hommes *admirablement bien faits*; et il semblait que la nature eût pris plaisir à placer ce qu'elle donne de plus beau, dans les plus grandes princesses et dans les plus grands princes. (86, emphasis added)

> Mais ce qui rendait cette cour belle et majestueuse était le nombre infini de princes et de grands seigneurs *d'un mérite extraordinaire*. Ceux que je vais nommer étaient, en des manières différentes, *l'ornement et l'admiration de leur siècle*. (87, emphasis added)

The emphasis on the assessment of the collective physical attributes of the courtiers, rather than their individual physical features, in the first quote is followed by the evaluation of their "extraordinary merit" in the second quote. While admiration might be initiated by the courtiers' surprising physical appearance and reputation, the imperfect used throughout their presentation and "definition" as "l'ornement et l'admiration de leur siècle" suggests that it is not a temporary, initiator of passions, but rather an ongoing attribution of worth, beauty and rarity. Further, the evaluation of the courtiers as the "ornament and admiration of their century" explicitly moves admiration out of the private sphere and into that of the social: admirable courtiers ornamented the court, a social space that seems to act in the best interesest of its collective subconscious *amour-propre*.

The narrator describes the duc de Guise as having "une valeur…admirable;" the cardinal de Lorraine as having "un esprit vif et une eloquence admirable;" and the vidame de Chartres, the Princess's uncle, whose lineage is presented in greater detail than his

person, as "beau, de bonne mine, vaillant, hardi, libéral; toutes ces bonnes qualités étaient vives et éclatantes; enfin, il était seul digne d'être comparé au duc de Nemours, si quelqu'un lui eût pu être comparable" (88). These individuals are presented comparatively in such a way as to create the backdrop for the main players who are about to enter upon the scene. The narrator first presents the duc de Nemours using antonyms to emphasize the incomparable greatness of his every attribute:

> ce prince était un chef-d'œuvre de la nature; *ce qu'il avait de moins admirable était d'être l'homme du monde le mieux fait et le plus beau*. Ce qui le mettait au-dessus des autres était une valeur incomparable, et un agrément dans son esprit, dans son visage et dans ses actions, que l'on n'a jamais vu qu'à lui seul; il avait un enjouement qui plaisait également aux hommes et aux femmes, une adresse extraordinaire dans tous ses exercices, une manière de s'habiller qui était toujours suivie de tout le monde, sans pouvoir être imitée, et enfin, un air dans toute sa personne, qui faisait qu'on ne pouvait regarder que lui dans tous les lieux où il paraissait. Il n'y avait aucune dame dans la cour, dont la gloire n'eût été flattée de le voir attaché à elle; peu de celles à qui il s'était attaché se pouvaient vanter de lui avoir résisté, et même plusieurs à qui il n'avait point témoigné de passion n'avaient pas laissé d'en avoir pour lui. Il avait tant de douceur et tant de disposition à la galanterie, qu'il ne pouvait refuser quelques soins à celles qui tâchaient de lui plaire: ainsi il avait plusieurs maîtresses, mais il était difficile de deviner celle qu'il aimait véritablement. (88-89, emphasis added)

This extensive elaboration of the unparalleled merit of the duc de Nemours is initiated with admiration: the reader may be tempted to fixate his or her admiration upon Nemours's physical beauty, but this, of course, would be a mistake since his wit, valor, and kindness are infinitely more admirable. The final sentence in this description emphasizes that what is truly admirable in the duc de Nemours is his ability to attract the admiration of those around him – particularly the women around him – without revealing the true leanings of his own inclinations. Nemours participates enthusiastically in the circulation of passions. Part of his allure, however, is that he "marks" his passion for so

many women at court that his *true* "inclinaisons" remain effectively hidden. Thus, until the appearance of the Princess, Nemours's participation in the *commerce* of admiration is non-competitive, and equal-opportunity.

Against the backdrop of the male characters presented in the introduction alongside the women they court,[29] Mademoiselle de Chartres, the future Princess de Clèves, is introduced as a *new* object "giving" an entirely *new* level of admiration that will shift the entire functioning of the economy of passions at court:

> Il parut alors une beauté à la cour, qui attira les yeux de tout le monde, et l'on doit croire que *c'était une beauté parfaite, puisqu'elle donna de l'admiration dans un lieu où l'on était si accoutumé à voir de belles personnes*. Elle était de la même maison que le vidame de Chartres, et une des plus grandes héritières de France. Son père était mort jeune, et l'avait laissée sous la conduite de madame de Chartres, sa femme, dont le bien, la vertu et le mérite étaient extraordinaires. (94, emphasis added)

From her first introduction in the novel, the Princess is presented as being exceptional in every way. She has been raised by her mother, educated openly in the ways of love, and taught to seek "vertu" and "honnêteté" in suitors and, above all, to "aimer son mari et d'en être aimée" (94-97). This singular education, along with the grooming of her natural beauty earns mademoiselle de Chartres immediate admiration upon her very first appearance at court. Yet, as with the King's description at the outset of the novel, the narrator offers only summative assessments of the Princess's attributes, with very few

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[29] In *Revising Memory*, Faith Beasley argues convincingly that the historical portraits presented in the first pages of the novel have been deliberately crafted to inscribe women's writing within the text, and to thus direct the reader's understanding of the Princesse's actions: "*La Princesse de Clèves*, in addition to being a fictional masterpiece, is a conscious attempt to rewrite history to promote an alternative view of the past and of plausible conduct for women in the present"(Faith Beasley, *Revising Memory: Women's Fiction and Memoirs in Seventeenth-Century France* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 194.)

details of what *actually makes* her admirable. Rather, Lafayette focuses the entire attention of the reader upon the social reaction to mademoiselle de Chartres's arrival at court. As Lyons says in *Before Imagination*,

> The single sentence announcing the heroine's arrival at court turns away from any consideration of the embodiment of this beauty toward a scale of perfection and toward social effect. Instead of imagination, judgment is the faculty or the way of thinking stressed by Lafayette.[30]

Mademoiselle de Chartres's overall physical beauty, rather than any single aspect of her appearance, and the reputation that precedes her appearance at court determine her social worth. Further, her description is given comparatively: the future Princesse de Clèves effectively demotes the value of all of the other participants in the economy of the passions, as she is admired amid their aforementioned perfection.

The most thorough presentation of the Princess's beauty is filtered through the narrator's omniscient perception of Monsieur de Clèves's reaction upon seeing her for the first time in the shop:

> Comme elle y était, le prince de Clèves y arriva. Il fut tellement *surpris* de sa beauté, qu'il ne put cacher sa *surprise*; et mademoiselle de Chartres ne put s'empêcher de rougir en voyant *l'étonnement* qu'elle lui avait donné. Elle se remit néanmoins, sans témoigner d'autre attention aux actions de ce prince que celle que la civilité lui devait donner pour un homme tel qu'il paraissait. *Monsieur de Clèves la regardait avec admiration, et il ne pouvait comprendre qui était cette belle personne qu'il ne connaissait point.* Il voyait bien par son air, et par tout ce qui était à sa suite, qu'elle devait être d'une grande qualité. Sa jeunesse lui faisait croire que c'était une fille; mais ne lui voyant point de mère, et l'Italien qui ne la connaissait point l'appelant madame, il ne savait que penser, et il la regardait toujours avec *étonnement*. Il s'aperçut que ses regards l'embarrassaient, contre l'ordinaire des jeunes personnes qui voient toujours avec plaisir *l'effet de leur beauté*; il lui parut même qu'il était cause qu'elle avait de l'impatience de s'en aller, et en effet elle sortit assez promptement. (97-98, emphasis added)

[30] Lyons, *Before Imagination: Embodied Thought from Montaigne to Rousseau*, 169.

This lengthy quote is critical to understanding the role of admiration within the text: Mlle de Chartres causes surprise and M. de Clèves is dumbstruck. Instead of progressing forward toward greater knowledge, Clèves remains fixated on his initial impression of her. In Article 53 of the *Passions de l'âme*, Descartes predicates admiration upon the newness of an object:

> Lorsque la première rencontre de quelque objet nous surprend, et que nous le jugeons être nouveau, ou fort différent de ce que nous connaissions auparavant ou bien de ce que nous supposions qu'il devait être, cela fait que nous l'admirons et en sommes étonnés.[31]

As discussed in the first chapter of this study, the word "jugeons" has a complicated place in this passage of the *Passions de l'âme*. Article 70 defines admiration as a "subite surprise de l'âme," which initiates the movement of the animal spirits. This suggests that any judgment leading to admiration is, in fact, itself involuntary or even ingrained. The language of the first encounter between Mlle de Chartres and Monsieur de Clèves emphasizes his ignorance: "Monsieur de Clèves la regardait avec admiration, et il *ne pouvait comprendre* qui était cette belle personne *qu'il ne connaissait point*." Despite his success in securing the Princess's hand in marriage, Monsieur de Clèves's position of incomprehension will persist throughout the novel and eventually contribute directly to his death.

In the following sentences, the reader finally gets a physical description of Mlle de Chartres, but only through the eyes of her admirer or, in Lyons's words:

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[31] Descartes, *Les Passions de L'âme*, 1649, 87.

> We know that the appearance of Mlle de Chartres has struck the Prince de Clèves and that this vision will alter his life. However, rather than dwell on all that is implied by the concise expression 'he gazed at her admiringly,' rather than let us know what he saw, the narrator follows Clèves's thoughts through a procedure of translating all visual (and other) information about this unknown woman into social markers. She is wealthy and socially important, probably unmarried, and unusually modest. Lafayette so strongly encourages interpretation of gestures, costume, tone of voice, and every other physical clue as signs of some veiled message that characters and readers are all on the alert to decipher meanings rather than to dwell on their sensuous envelope.[32]

Thus, while the vision of the Princess causes a very Cartesian admiration in Clèves, generating surprise, *étonnement*, and incomprehension, his subsequent assessment of her – still from a place of ignorance – depends entirely on an interpretation of what that beauty must mean within a social context. Cartesian admiration is thus placed from their very first meeting within a context of social evaluation and assessment. Admiration leads Monsieur de Clèves to feel "passion" and "esteem" for the future Princess that will continue to grow throughout the text: "Il demeura si touché de sa beauté, et de l'air modeste qu'il avait remarqué dans ses actions, qu'on peut dire qu'il conçut pour elle dès ce moment une passion et une estime extraordinaires" (98). Article 54 of the *Passions de l'âme* associates admiration with "estime et mépris":

> A l'admiration est jointe l'estime ou le mépris, selon que c'est la grandeur d'un objet ou sa petitesse que nous admirons. Et nous pouvons ainsi nous estimer ou nous mépriser nous-mesmes; d'où viennent les passions, & ensuite les habitudes de magnanimité ou d'orgueil & d'humilité ou de bassesse. (Art. 54)

Clèves's assessment of his future wife thus proceeds in true Cartesian fashion from a sudden, involuntary movement of the soul upon encountering something new and unfamiliar, to "estime" for its "grandeur." The 1694 *Dictionnaire de l'Académie* offers a

[32] Lyons, *Before Imagination: Embodied Thought from Montaigne to Rousseau*, 169–170.

slightly different definition of "l'estime": "Le cas, l'estat qu'on fait d'une personne, ou de son merite, de sa vertu."[33] *Merite* and *vertu*, unlike newness and surprise, imply a certain social relativization: one only has merit or virtue according to relative social standards. Thus, in addition to a clear link to the Cartesian notion of admiration as a sudden, involuntary movement of the soul for something new and unfamiliar, Monsieur de Clèves's admiration also takes the form of social judgment prior to knowledge that will continue to varying degrees throughout the novel.

As the appearance of Mlle de Chartres at court shows, Lafayette first associates admiration with surprise and newness: when Monsieur de Clèves first sees Mlle de Chartres, he is awestruck with admiration for her beauty and "quality," which leads him to admire her. This initial impression of her worth is very Cartesian in nature: involuntary and individual. In parallel fashion, when Mlle de Chartres arrives at court, she is "received" with admiration by "everyone": "Mademoiselle de Chartres parut en effet le jour suivant [à la cour]; *elle fut reçue des reines avec tous les agréments qu'on peut s'imaginer, et avec une telle admiration de tout le monde*, qu'elle n'entendait autour d'elle que des louanges" (99). Thus far, Mlle de Chartres's presence at court has merely introduced a new, unfamiliar object of value that has engendered involuntary, Cartesian admiration. Yet, the quality of this passion contains an important distinction from its manifestation in the *Passions de l'âme*: the Princess is received with *agréments*… *admiration*… and *louanges* that she can hear around her. Rather than remain silently

[33] "Estime," *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française*, 1694, ARTFL Dictionnaires d'autrefois, http://artflsrv01.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=estime.

internal, engendering other internal movements of the passions, the admiration felt for the Princess is immediately transformed into shared demonstrations of admiration. Lafayette's incorporation of admiration in the remainder of the text will continue in this vein, transforming it into a visible, external, communal testimony to the worth of the admired object. The arrival of the "inimitable" Princess at court fundamentally changes the nature of admiration at court: the Princess's actions continually provoke surprise, thereby increasing her relative value at court and making association with her – through friendship, love, or marriage – desirable to any young courtier who wishes to increase their own "admirability" in the eyes of society. La Rochefoucauld's cynical perspective that everyone is always acting out *amour-propre* is clearly evident in the courtiers' immediate attachment to the Princess, even when such an attachment is forbidden by the King.

The Princess herself spends the remainder of the text attempting to escape the admiring gaze of the court, yet finds herself continually pulled back into it. This seems to be Lafayette's response to the self-interested exchange of admiration at court. In a letter written to Madame de Sablé, her fellow salonnière, Mme de Lafayette, wrote of La Rochefoucauld's manuscript of the *Maximes*:

> Ha Madame! quelle corruption il faut avoir dans l'esprit et dans le cœur, pour estre capable d'imaginer tout cela! J'en suis si espouvantée, que je vous asseure que si les plaisanteries estoient des choses sérieuses, de telles maximes gasteroient plus ses affaires que touts les potages qu'il mangea l'autre jour chez vous.[34]

[34] As the notes to the Fournier edition indicate, La Rochefoucauld was apparently a great fan of Madame de Sable's *potages* and would even request them in exchange for his literary production: "'Voilà, lui écrit-il un jour en lui envoyant son manuscript [à Madame de Sablé], voilà tout ce que j'ai de *maximes* ; mais, comme on ne fait rien pour rien, je vous demande un potage aux carottes,

Madame de Lafayette is "horrified" by the ideas presented in La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes* and discounts them as mere "plaisanteries." In a second letter, she contrasts the pessimism of La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes* with Madame de Sablé's more "reasonable" and "honest" maxims:

> Madame du Plessis m'a donné une curiosité estrange de voir [les *maximes* de Mme de Sablé]; et c'est justement parce qu'elles sont honnestes et raisonnables que j'en ay envie, et qu'elles me persuaderont que toutes les personnes de bon sens ne sont pas si persuadées de la corruption générale que l'est M. de La Rochefoucauld.[35]

Lafayette's language does not clarify whether it is the *maximes* or Madame du Plessis and Madame de Sablé themselves who are "honest and reasonable." Regardless, "honnêtes et raisonnables" are clearly not portrayed in Lafayette's language as synonymous with "bon sens," since M. de La Rochefoucauld apparently has "bon sens" without necessarily being "honnête et raisonnable." Further, the repetition of "persuader" in the second half of the sentence underscores the influential power of the *Maximes* (or of their author). In spite of La Rochefoucauld's "persuasive good sense," Lafayette wants to believe that

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un ragoût de moutons, etc.'…Les *maximes* même, qui pouvoient rompre [leur liaison], y servirent par les occasions de discussions qu'elles amenèrent entre l'auteur et sa spirituelle adversaire, entre le corrompu à convertir et l'aimable prêcheuse : 'C'est, dit fort bien M. Sainte-Beuve, c'est cette idée de corruption générale qu'elle s'attacha à combattre en M. de La Rochefoucauld, et qu'elle rectifia. Le désir d'éclairer et d'adoucir ce noble esprit fut sans doute un appât de raison et de bienfaisance pour elle, aux abords de la liaison étroite.'" In a later letter, Madame de Lafayette thanks Madame de Sablé for "ce que vous avés faict pour ce gentilhomme, je vous en irai encore remercier moy-mesme, et je me serviray toujours avec plaisir des prétextes que je trouveray pour avoir l'honneur de vous voir ; et si vous trouviés autant de plaisir avec moy que j'en trouve avec vous, je troublerois souvent vostre solitude." Thus, La Rochefoucauld's *Maximes* seem to constitute one of the origins of their well-known connection.

[35] Marie-Madeleine Pioche de la Vergne, "Lettres À Mme de Sablé," in *Variétés Historiques et Littéraires*, vol. X, Édouard Fournier (Paris: Pagnerre, 1863), 121, http://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Lettres_de_Mme_de_La_Fayette_à_Mme_de_Sablé#ancrage_2.

man is not as fundamentally corrupted as the *Maximes* would suggest. The Princess's persistent refusal to accept her role in the exchange of admiration at court thus constitutes a potential escape from the *amour-propre* that La Rochefoucauld insists underlies even man's most virtuous actions. Lafayette does not refute man's fundamental corruption, but offers a path to redemption by escaping the admiring gaze of the court.

From her initial presentation at court, the Princess is associated with the admiration that she first inspired in Monsieur de Clèves, and the fixation that this admiration engendered in him:

> [Madame, sœur du roi], après avoir loué sa beauté, lui conta l'étonnement qu'elle avait donné à monsieur de Clèves. Ce prince entra un moment après.
> —Venez, lui dit-elle, voyez si je ne vous tiens pas ma parole, et si en vous montrant mademoiselle de Chartres, je ne vous fais pas voir cette beauté que vous cherchiez; *remerciez-moi au moins de lui avoir appris l'admiration que vous aviez déjà pour elle*.
> Monsieur de Clèves sentit de la joie de voir que cette personne qu'il avait trouvée si aimable était *d'une qualité proportionnée à sa beauté*; *il s'approcha d'elle, et il la supplia de se souvenir qu'il avait été le premier à l'admirer, et que, sans la connaître, il avait eu pour elle tous les sentiments de respect et d'estime qui lui étaient dus*. (99-100, emphasis added)

The repetition of "admiration" as Monsieur de Clèves and Mademoiselle de Chartres officially learn the other's identity underscores the primal importance of this instinctive passion. The fact that M. de Clèves was the *first* to admire her beauty apparently confers certain rights: the value that he first attributed to her initiated her good reputation at court. But a closer examination of the vocabulary and verb tenses used reveals important details about Lafayette's privileging of admiration. First, the narrator implicitly equates "étonnement" and "admiration" through parallel sentence structure, as the narrator retells the actions of the King's sister: "[Madame, sœur du roi] lui conta *l'étonnement* qu'elle

avait donné à monsieur de Clèves" / "remerciez-moi au moins de lui avoir appris l'admiration que vous aviez déjà pour elle." The narrator reminds the reader that this admiration was born without knowledge of the Princess's true identity and social standing. Further, Madame's use of the imperfect, rather than the plus-que-parfait, suggests that M. de Clèves's admiration has continued well beyond his initial surprise, suggesting a continuation of Cartesian *étonnement*: "remerciez-moi au moins de lui avoir appris l'admiration que vous aviez déjà pour elle." If admiration had been a short, passing passion, Madame could have used "l'admiration que vous aviez eue." After this meeting, however, M. de Clèves himself transforms the tense of his declaration to the Princess into the plus-que-parfait, indicating that the shift from the admiration that he initially felt to the subsequent feelings of respect and esteem is now a *fait accompli*, opening the possibility for future passions to follow on both sides. As introduced above in the definition of *estime*, the Princess's social status and admirable reception at court have increased M. de Clèves's esteem for this unknown person of quality. Further, her status as a "forbidden fruit" after the King refused to allow her marriage to the Prince de Montpensier seems to have earned her even greater desirability in the eyes of the courtiers.

The reader soon learns that M. de Clèves's completely overestimated Mlle de Chartres's accessibility, and his own ability to move beyond surface admiration:

> [Monsieur de Clèves] voyait avec beaucoup de peine que les sentiments de mademoiselle de Chartres ne passaient pas ceux de l'estime et de la reconnaissance, …

> —Je ne me trompe pas à votre rougeur, répondit-il; c'est un sentiment de modestie, et non pas un mouvement de votre cœur, et je n'en tire que l'avantage que j'en dois tirer. (111)

On the eve of their marriage, the Princess echoes the "estime" and "reconnaissance" that her betrothed felt immediately when he saw her for the very first time. She acts according to her "devoir," but never admires Monsieur de Clèves. In other words, her feelings for him stem from duty and from the lessons that she has learned from her mother, but not from the involuntary surprise necessary to initiate passion. The involuntary nature of admiration's initiation of the passions is further emphasized by the narrator's indication that Mlle de Chartres herself, "ne savait que répondre, et ces distinctions étaient audessus de ses connaissances" (111). Madame de Chartres alone understands the bind she has created for her daughter in betrothing her to a man with noble blood whom she cannot love. In the only other passage to contain multiple instances of admiration in close succinction, Madame de Chartres reveals a much clearer understanding of her daughter's true lack of "passion," and the perilous situation this creates for her:

> *Madame de Chartres admirait la sincérité de sa fille, et elle l'admirait avec raison, car jamais personne n'en a eu une si grande et si naturelle; mais elle n'admirait pas moins que son cœur ne fût point touché*, et d'autant plus, qu'elle voyait bien que le prince de Clèves ne l'avait pas touchée, non plus que les autres. Cela fut cause qu'elle prit de grands soins de l'attacher à son mari, et de lui faire comprendre ce qu'elle devait à l'inclination qu'il avait eue pour elle, avant que de la connaître, et à la passion qu'il lui avait témoignée en la préférant à tous les autres partis, dans un temps où personne n'osait plus penser à elle. (112, emphasis added)

Madame de Chartres "admires" both her daughter's sincerity and her *lack* of passion. This could certainly be read in the traditional Cartesian context of "subite surprise," but since Madame de Chartres raised her daughter to behave and "feel" in exactly this way,

with unambiguous sincerity, "surprise" seems unlikely. Further, the narrator elaborates that "elle l'admirait avec raison." In the case of Madame de Chartres, admiration appears to be a form of neutral observation mixed with reasoned approbation: lacking the surprise attributed to Monsieur de Clèves, Madame de Chartres's reaction to her daughter's sincerity contains approval, but also a reasoned analysis of the next strategic step to be taken.

The reappropriation of admiration to assess the *absence* of passion underscores its neutrality: Madame de Chartres admires her daughter's lack of admiration, but her subsequent actions prove that the individual ideals that Madame de Chartres has taught her daughter may not ultimately be compatible with the societal pressures that surround them. As Kuizenga comments, there is a fundamental disconnect between the Princess's education in the ways of individual passion and the expectations placed on her by her mother and by society: she has been taught to marry for love, but must in fact marry for strategic alliances at court.[36] In "The Power of Confession: The Ideology of Love in *La Princesse de Clèves*," Jane Marie Todd explains that the inconsistency between Madame de Chartres's actions and her espoused ideologies on love arises out of necessity and "panic": "the mother is obliged to bow to the code of the court when seeking a husband for the princess, since alliances depend not only on questions of birth, wealth, and rank, but also on all the complicated political intrigues and personal animosities that structure

[36] Kuizenga, "The Princesse de Clèves: An Inimitable Model?," 79.

courtly life."[37] In the conclusion to Patrick Henry's volume *An Inimitable Example: The Case for the Princesse de Clèves*, John Lyons goes a step further, suggesting that in fact, "one might even refer to Mme de Chartres herself as an 'inimitable example,' for after this idealized relationship with her mother there are no other examples of an entirely satisfactory love object."[38] In other words, as Todd says, "specular, maternal love is the model for 'true,' monogamous, heterosexual love."[39] It is for this reason that the Princess will choose to confide her passion for Nevers to her husband. After losing her mother, she seeks a replacement confessor, and her estime for her husband allows her to believe he will make a good confessor.

Immediately following Mme de Chartres's admiration of her daughter's sincerity and dutifully polite indifference toward her husband, the marriage ceremony takes place almost as an afterthought:

> Ce mariage s'acheva, la cérémonie s'en fit au Louvre; et le soir, le roi et les reines vinrent souper chez madame de Chartres avec toute la cour, où ils furent reçus avec une magnificence admirable. (112)

The marriage itself occurs in three words, with very little detail on the ceremony. Just as the reader is meant to admire everything surrounding the Princess upon her arrival at court, rather than the specific details about her beauty, the emphasis in this marriage is placed on its individual and social importance to the characters involved. In marrying

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[37] Jane Marie Todd, "The Power of Confession: The Ideology of Love in La Princesse de Cleves," in *An Inimitable Example: The Case for the Princesse de Clèves*, ed. Patrick Henry (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 230.
[38] John D. Lyons, "Epilogue," in *An Inimitable Example: The Case for the Princesse de Clèves*, ed. Patrick Henry (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 239.
[39] Todd, "The Power of Confession: The Ideology of Love in La Princesse de Cleves," 230.

Mademoiselle de Chartres, Monsieur de Clèves becomes her husband, but without conquering her heart, he maintains his status as her desirous, admiring lover:

> Monsieur de Clèves ne trouva pas que mademoiselle de Chartres eût changé de sentiment en changeant de nom. La qualité de son mari lui donna de plus grands privilèges; mais elle ne lui donna pas une autre place dans le cœur de sa femme. Cela fit aussi que pour être son mari, il ne laissa pas d'être son amant, parce qu'il avait toujours quelque chose à souhaiter au-delà de sa possession; (112-113)

M. de Clèves's status as husband and would-be-lover makes him unable to move beyond his initial admiration for the Princess. While he loves her, he has incomplete access to her, and thus incomplete knowledge of her: she remains an admirable, unknown object to be won over.

The Duc de Nemours and the Birth of the Princess's Passion

The many instances of admiration already cited occur in the first pages of the text, before the Duc de Nemours has reappeared at court. The emotional stalemate between the Princess and her new husband has *nothing* to do with passion for someone else, and everything to do with an absence of involuntary admiration for M. de Clèves. From the moment that the Princess first sees the duc de Nemours, however, the difference in her reaction to his presence as compared with that of her husband is striking. They first meet at a ball given in honor of the engagement of the duc de Lorraine and the King's daughter, an occasion that requires everyone to be at their visual "best."[40] Madame de

[40] "The balls and the court festivals function as markets where individuals gain and lose value. Courtiers agree to participate in these gatherings in hopes of deriving a profit. During the course of these assemblies, the woman facilitates circulation; it is she who will ultimately determine the value of the 'objects' placed on the market, 'objects' understood here as reputation, value,

Clèves and the duc de Nemours are described as the "best of the best" in this milieu of visual perfection, and they are thus equally admired by those present at court:

> *Lorsqu'elle arriva, l'on admira sa beauté et sa parure*; … Elle se tourna, et vit un homme qu'elle crut d'abord ne pouvoir être que monsieur de Nemours… Ce prince était *fait d'une sorte*, qu'il *était difficile de n'être pas surprise* de le voir quand on ne l'avait jamais vu, surtout ce soir-là, où le soin qu'il avait pris de se parer augmentait encore l'air brillant qui était dans sa personne; *mais il était difficile aussi de voir madame de Clèves pour la première fois, sans avoir un grand étonnement*.
> *Monsieur de Nemours fut tellement surpris de sa beauté,* que, lorsqu'il fut proche d'elle, et qu'elle lui fit la révérence, *il ne put s'empêcher de donner des marques de son admiration.* (115, emphasis added)

As with the initial descriptions of the Princess, the description of these two perfect individuals is mediated through judgment: after spending all day preparing, the Princess is admired, and the care that Nemours has taken to "adorn" himself augments his usually "brilliant air." As Lyons comments, the details (the color and style of their dress, their coiffeur, their specific movements) are not important, since it is the overall effect of their appearance on each other and on others that matters.[41] As the Princess gazes at Nemours, the narrator says, using a passive structure, "il *était difficile de n'être pas surprise* de le voir quand on ne l'avait jamais vu." There are many ways that this impersonal, yet grammatically feminine, statement could be interpreted. The first implication is that,

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friendship, passion, and so forth. It is the woman's function to determine the rising value or the bankruptcy of each of these objects, all merchandise at hand having to undergo her inspection. However, the woman's position is problematic because she, too, is an object bearing a particular value, and as such she must expose herself to the covetous glances of others. In the bourgeois economy of love, the marketplace plays an essential role for it is the only place wehre exchange values are determined. Human emotions lose their use value and constantly need to be *shown* in order order for them to acquire meaning. What good is it to be loved if that love is not openly declared? This is perhaps the most crucial issue raised in *La Princesse de Clèves*."Desan, "The Economy of Love in La Princesse de Clèves," 106.

[41] Lyons, *Before Imagination: Embodied Thought from Montaigne to Rousseau*.

upon seeing Nemours for the first time, the Princess felt "surprise," just like everyone else. The word "difficile," however, suggests that she is actively struggling to accomplish something that does not happen spontaneously. Equally plausible, therefore, is the reading that the Princess, *unlike* the other courtiers and with great difficulty, *was able* to suppress her surprise upon seeing him. This ambiguity may even be intentional, as it leaves the reader in a position of incomprehension. Does the Princess admire Nemours or doesn't she? And what are her *true* feelings amid what she forces herself to do?

The narrator quickly shifts attention to the Princess's equally surprising effect on Nemours and anyone else who might be seeing her for the first time: "*il était difficile aussi de voir madame de Clèves pour la première fois, sans avoir un grand étonnement*." Again, the impersonal nature of the statement raises questions as to its relevance to Nemours, but the parallel construction of the comparison and its placement in the context of their initial meeting suggests that these two characters were struck with "surprise" upon seeing one another. The Princess, being inexperienced, is unable to recognize the passions stemming from her surprise. Nemours's passions, on the other hand, take on a life of their own, as he feels "étonnement" that leads to a loss of self-control and an uncharacteristic "display" of admiration: "*Monsieur de Nemours fut tellement surpris de sa beauté,* que, lorsqu'il fut proche d'elle, et qu'elle lui fit la révérence, *il ne put s'empêcher de donner des marques de son admiration.*" Surprise is a *fait accompli* for Nemours, but he still has a chance to resist *étonnement.* As with the Princess's "surprise," Nemours seems to struggle against his *étonnement*. This word choice and his resistance to *étonnement* is critical when we recall the Princess's initial meeting with Monsieur de

Clèves: "Il fut tellement *surpris* de sa beauté, qu'il ne put cacher sa *surprise*; et mademoiselle de Chartres ne put s'empêcher de rougir en voyant *l'étonnement* qu'elle lui avait donné" (97). In describing Monsieur de Clèves, the narrator uses direct actions: "il fut surprise… il ne put cacher sa surprise… l'étonnement qu'elle lui avait donné." The resistance implied by "il était difficile" is entirely absent and the *étonnement*, which, Descartes informs us, is a paralysis of admiration, is already in full force for Monsieur de Clèves upon first sight of the Princess. As Lyons says, "La marque involontaire pose un problème," and Nemours himself elsewhere espouses the importance of privacy in declarations of love.[42] Taken together, the impersonality of the narrator's assessment of their mutual surprise, and Nemours's inability to hide his nascent admiration, as he would normally do, places admiration somewhere between an involuntary passion of surprise, and a controllable, communicable physical manifestation. It is worth noting that, in a world where dissimulation is everything, Nemours's unprecedented inability to control the physical manifestations of his "surprise" puts him at a disadvantage,[43] though perhaps not the disadvantage that he would have expected. His physical display of admiration allows the Princess time to understand what has transpired and react to protect herself. In other words, the Princess is only able to control any demonstration of her own admiration because Nemours communicates his first.

This first meeting is orchestrated by "le roi et les reines" after witnessing the two young courtiers dancing together. The public nature of this first exchange of "surprise" is

[42] Lyons, "L'Économie Des Marques Dans La Princesse de Clèves," 329.
[43] See Norbert, *The Court Society*.

augmented by its setting at the ball. Nemours's noticeable admiration is echoed by the rest of the court as they see Nemours and the Princess dancing together for the first time:

> Quand ils commencèrent à danser, il s'éleva dans la sale un murmure de louanges. Le roi et les reines se souvinrent qu'ils ne s'étaient jamais vus, et trouvèrent quelque chose de singulier de les voir danser ensemble sans se connaître. (115)

The rarity and singularity of Nemours and the Princess provoke "marks" of admiration in Nemours, and "murmurs" of praise in the court at large.[44] Unlike The Princess's first meeting with Monsieur de Clèves, which takes place in isolation from the court and is known only through retelling, this first meeting with Nemours occurs before a public audience. The implication is clear: at court, actions are noticed, making dissimulation critical. The narrator describes Nemours as a master of this dissimulation until the arrival of the Princess. As the ball continues, his actions continue to betray his ongoing admiration which, although born prior to officially meeting the Princess, continue well beyond confirmation of her identity:

> La reine les interrompit pour faire continuer le bal; monsieur de Nemours prit la reine dauphine. Cette princesse était d'une parfaite beauté, et avait paru telle aux yeux de monsieur de Nemours, avant qu'il allât en Flandre; *mais de tout le soir, il ne put admirer que madame de Clèves*. (116)

The narrator's description of this dance scene transforms admiration into a form of ongoing attention that entirely occupies Nemours.

Despite Nemours's clear demonstrations of "admiration," the narrator attributes only "growing surprise" to the Princess: "Le lendemain la cérémonie des noces se fit;

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[44] For a discussion of Lafayette's use of "jamais" to inscribe timelessness to emphasize objective rarity in the novel, see Beasley, *Revising Memory: Women's Fiction and Memoirs in Seventeenth-Century France*, 231–2.

madame de Clèves y vit le duc de Nemours avec une mine et une grâce si admirables, qu'elle en fut encore plus surprise" (119). At this point, a crucial question begs to be asked: does the Princess in fact "admire" Nemours? The reader cannot know because the passion is never attributed to her: the Princess's dissimulation of admiration extends through the narration to the reader. This suggests that whether her surprise is in fact "admiration" is not as important as her reluctancy to enter into the social exchange of admiration. This places us squarely at the crossroads between private, internal, Cartesian admiration and it's social, communal aspects in La Rochefoucauld. By keeping her own (unconfirmed) admiration private and fleeing the outward manifestations of Nemours's admiration, the Princess effectively refuses the social "mépris" that such exchanges might earn her.

The Princess's *Aveu* and Retreat: Escaping Admiration

Before proceeding, it seems worth recalling La Rochefoucauld's maxims pertaining to admiration:

> Nous aimons toujours ceux qui nous admirent; et nous n'aimons pas toujours ceux que nous admirons. (Max. 294)
>
> Nous ne louons d'ordinaire de bon cœur que ceux qui nous admirent. (Max. 356)
>
> L'envie d'être plaint, ou d'être admiré, fait souvent la plus grande partie de notre confiance. (Max. 475)

The Princess simply does *not* fit this model. As she herself says in the letter to Madame Sablé cited earlier in this chapter, Lafayette resists that notion that *amour-propre* directs all human passion and action. The Princess does not love her husband, even though his

"admiration" for her is clearly established; she seems to admire Nemours and perhaps even love him, despite the lack of any explicit declaration of either. Further, from the first moment that the Princess meets Nemours, she attempts to flee situations that would allow any potentially mutual admiration to be confirmed – either for each other or for society at large. The Princess's decision to avoid the ball given by the maréchal de Saint-André in order to please Nemours, but without his knowledge, would support this theory of avoidance.

The Princess, however, seems to be the only exception to La Rochefoucauld's all-encompassing *amour-propre*. Her desire to escape societal admiration fails because those around her continue to admire her, even in her absence: the idea of her and her reputation are enough to attract admiration. For this reason, the Princess's singular actions rarely have the effect she intended and often increase the admiration of others. While her intention in avoiding the ball was to please Nemours, she did not anticipate the extent to which her absence would be noted and analyzed. This increased attention creates even greater interest in her relatively unknown qualities. Thus removing herself from the ball raises questions, making her enigmatic and increasing awareness of her suprising, admirable qualities. Further, this growing attention seems to alert the Princess to her own admirability and increase her discomfort in her dealings with Nemours.

While the term "admiration" appears multiple times in the first and fourth parts of the novel, the term is virtually absent in the second and third parts, where little "newness" appears. "Admiration," however, returns in full force with the *aveu*, which M. de Clèves has unwittingly prompted his wife to make in the second part of the novel:

> la sincérité me touche d'une telle sorte, que je crois que si ma maîtresse, et même ma femme, m'avouait que quelqu'un lui plût, j'en serais affligé sans en être aigri. Je quitterais le personnage d'amant ou de mari, pour la conseiller et pour la plaindre. (148)

M. de Clèves confides that his reaction to such a singular confession would be equally rare. His confidence "surprises" the Princess and prompts her to seek in him the escape that she has been unable to find from her passion for Nemours. The notion that dominates the third and fourth parts of the novel is thus *repos*: the Princess must take surprising actions in order to guarantee her repos. But just as she was unprepared for the admiration that her appearance at court would attract, the Princess does not anticipate the circulation of and admiration for her private *aveu* to her husband. Thus the Princess's attempts to retire from the admiring eyes of the court in fact draw them toward her.

The *aveu* itself suggests multiple times that the Princess wishes to withdraw from the perils of courtly life:

> Il est vrai que j'ai des raisons de m'éloigner de la cour, et que je veux éviter les périls où se trouvent quelquefois les personnes de mon âge. … Quelque dangereux que soit le parti que je prends, je le prends avec joie pour me conserver digne d'être à vous. Je vous demande mille pardons, si j'ai des sentiments qui vous déplaisent, du moins je ne vous déplairai jamais par mes actions. Songez que pour faire ce que je fais, il faut avoir plus d'amitié et plus d'estime pour un mari que l'on en a jamais eu; conduisez-moi, ayez pitié de moi, et aimez-moi encore, si vous pouvez. (219-20)

The Princess persists in her declarations of "estime" and "amitié," while admiration for her husband, let alone passion, is still absent. Further, M. de Clèves's response, full of admiration for his wife's sincerity, is itself uniquely admirable:

> Ayez pitié de moi, vous-même, Madame, lui dit-il, j'en suis digne; et pardonnez si dans les premiers moments d'une affliction aussi violente qu'est la mienne, je ne réponds pas, comme je dois, à un procédé comme le vôtre. *Vous me paraissez*

> *plus digne d'estime et d'admiration que tout ce qu'il y a jamais eu de femmes au monde*; mais aussi je me trouve le plus malheureux homme qui ait jamais été. Vous m'avez donné de la passion dès le premier moment que je vous ai vue, vos rigueurs et votre possession n'ont pu l'éteindre: elle dure encore; je n'ai jamais pu vous donner de l'amour, et je vois que vous craignez d'en avoir pour un autre. (220)

As the Princess reveals her passion for another man, she bridges a gap that has separated her from her husband. M. de Clèves's response starts with feelings he has expressed throughout the text – "vous me paroissez plus digne d'estime et d'admiration…" – but it is quickly qualified with the word "mais," which signals an abrupt shift in direction: M. de Clèves admires her *aveu* and continues to feel "passion" for her, but his admiration as her perpetual *amant* is necessarily diminished with this new knowledge of her inclination for Nemours. As signaled by the transformation in the word "jamais" from the superlative "ever" in "vous me paraissez plus digne d'estime et d'admiration que tout ce qu'il y a jamais eu de femmes au monde; mais aussi je me trouve le plus malheureux homme qui ait jamais été," to the negative "never" in "je n'ai jamais pu vous donner de l'amour," the Princess's admirable singularity and unattainability is transformed into a constant reminder of his own inability to inspire admiration or love in his wife. M. de Clèves declares that his "passion" is as strong as ever, but the word *admiration* disappears from his declarations:

> vous m'estimez assez pour croire que je n'abuserai pas de cet aveu. Vous avez raison, Madame, je n'en abuserai pas, et je ne vous en aimerai pas moins. Vous me rendez malheureux par la plus grande marque de fidélité que jamais une femme ait donnée à son mari. (223)

The juxtaposition of happy and sad combines to create marked preterition in this passage: M. de Clèves speaks in repeated negatives ("je n'abuserai pas" twice and "je ne vous en

aimerai pas moins") that underscore the risk that the Princess has run in avowing her passion for Nemours.

The Princess and the narrator both allude multiple times to the singularity of her *aveu*, building upon the earlier judgment of her entrance at court. First, through free indirect speech, the narrator allows the reader into the Princess's most intimate concerns immediately following her *aveu*:

> Elle trouva qu'elle s'était ôté elle-même le cœur et l'estime de son mari, et qu'elle s'était creusé un abîme dont elle ne sortirait jamais. Elle se demandait pourquoi elle avait fait une chose si hasardeuse, et elle trouvait qu'elle s'y était engagée sans en avoir presque eu le dessein. La singularité d'un pareil aveu, dont elle ne trouvait point d'exemple, lui en faisait voir tout le péril. (226)

The vocabulary employed by the narrator contains multiple references to gambling: in addition to the overall loss and the "hole" that she herself has created, the *aveu* is described as "hasardeu[x]," "singulier" and "perilleu[x]." In other words, the Princess believes that she has acted directly against her own self-interest. Later, as the Princess's passion for Nemours becomes known in anonymous terms throughout the court, she recognizes herself in the narrative, based solely on her own declared singularity. Accusing her husband of divulging her secret, she voices the inner fears previously shared by the narrator:

> —Ah! Monsieur, reprit-elle, il n'y a pas dans le monde une autre aventure pareille à la mienne; il n'y a point une autre femme capable de la même chose. Le hasard ne peut l'avoir fait inventer; on ne l'a jamais imaginée, et cette pensée n'est jamais tombée dans un autre esprit que le mien. (242)

While self-admiration seems to lie at the heart of this self-declared singularity, it must be taken in the context of the Princess's continual, gradual movement away from the court

and away from admiration. Through the Princess, Lafayette deliberately appropriates the self-aggrandizing speech that lies at the heart of the *Maximes*, in order to show that it is indeed possible to escape the inexorable pull of admiration and the passions that follow it.

In this moment of *aveu*, the Princess had hoped to curtail the dangers inherent in her passion for Nemours. As Desan comments, the avowal was to be an end to passion:

> For all but Mme de Clèves, any declaration of love has two distinguishable moments: speech and action. However, this artificial distance between the avowal and the act is untenable in the nobiliary mentality within which Mme de Clèves wishes to conduct herself. For her, the avowal *is* an act: speech and action.[45]

Misunderstanding the effect of her *aveu*, the Princess inadvertently alters the passions at work in the court. On the one hand, M. de Clèves's desire to know the identity of the Princess's *amant* engenders a jealous obsession that will ultimately consume him. On the other hand, M. de Nemours's witness and circulation of the contents of the *aveu* make it a public matter that in fact earns the Princess, or at least her anonymous acts, even greater admiration. Upon witnessing this avowal, Nemours, like M. de Clèves, expects actions to follow:

> Il s'abandonna d'abord à cette joie; mais elle ne fut pas longue, quand il fit réflexion que la même chose qui lui venait d'apprendre qu'il avait touché le cœur de madame de Clèves le devait persuader aussi qu'il n'en recevrait jamais nulle marque, et qu'il était impossible d'engager une personne qui avait recours à un remède si extraordinaire. Il sentit pourtant un plaisir sensible de l'avoir réduite à cette extrémité. Il trouva de la gloire à s'être fait aimer d'une femme si différente de toutes celles de son sexe; enfin, il se trouva cent fois heureux et malheureux tout ensemble… Ce prince était si rempli de sa passion, et si surpris de ce qu'il avait entendu… En revenant il tourna la conversation sur l'amour, il exagéra le plaisir d'être amoureux d'une personne digne d'être aimée. Il parla des effets

[45] Desan, "The Economy of Love in La Princesse de Clèves," 117.

> bizarres de cette passion et enfin ne pouvant renfermer en lui-même l'étonnement que lui donnait l'action de madame de Clèves, il la conta au vidame [de Chartres], sans lui nommer la personne, et sans lui dire qu'il y eût aucune part; *mais il la conta avec tant de chaleur et avec tant d'admiration que le vidame soupçonna aisément que cette histoire regardait ce prince*. (226-27, my emphasis)

The vocabulary used to describe Nemours's reception of the avowal is firmly rooted in the "gloire" he seeks to win: "engager," "l'avoir réduite à cette extrémité," "la gloire à s'être fait aimer d'une femme si différente." While the narrator suggests that his recounting of the avowal was accidental, it is equally plausible that his *amour-propre* prompted him to act in his own self-interest: circulating the Princess's avowal ensures that it will have an afterlife in its retelling, garnering greater admiration for both the anonymous declarer, and the fortunate subject of her passion. Thus, even *without* labeling this divulgence a deliberate act of sabotage, since publicizing this story implicates either M. or Mme de Clèves, Nemours's *amour-propre* prompts him to act on his admiration for the rarity of Mme. de Clèves's *aveu*. Based on her mother's teachings, the Princess believes in the very Cartesian notion that, while she cannot control the physiological aspects of her *passions*,[46] she can control her response to them. Yet thus far, her attempts to become master of her passions and to control how others perceive her at court have resulted in still greater admiration for her "singularité." As the Princess reveals her

[46] As Serge Doubrovsky summarizes in his article, "La Princesse de Clèves: une interpretation existentielle,": "le sage cartésien sait que, dans la passion, il y a toujours un element de passivité, car, à l'origine, la passion est une affection corporelle, purement determinée par le flux des esprits animaux. L'homme n'a donc aucun contrôle sur cet aspect physique de sa nature. Mais, grâce à un dressage rigoureux et systématique de ce que les psychologues modernes appelleraient nos réflexes conditionnés, 'il n'y a point d'âme si faible qu'elle ne puisse, étant bien conduite, acquérir un pouvoir absolu sur ses passions' (Serge Doubrovsky, "La Princesse de Clèves: Une Interprétation Existentielle," *Table Ronde* 138, no. June (1959): 40.).

passion for another man, she surprises not only her husband but, inadvertently as the story becomes known in anonymous terms, the entire court.

M. de Clèves, on the other hand, suffers from the incomplete avowal made by his wife. After a brief absence, Monsieur de Clèves returns convinced that he has discovered the identity of the man she loves. When she again insists that he not push her to reveal the man's name and content himself with the rarity of her *aveu*, he angrily replies:

> vous avez attendu de moi des choses aussi impossibles que celles que j'attendois de vous. Comment pouviez-vous espérer que je conservasse de la raison? Vous aviez donc oublié que je vous aimois éperdument, et que j'étois votre mari? L'un des deux peut porter aux extrémités; que ne peuvent point les deux ensemble! Hé! que ne font-ils point aussi! continua-t-il. Je n'ai que des sentiments violents et incertains dont je ne suis pas le maître: je ne me trouve plus digne de vous; vous ne me paroissez plus digne de moi; je vous adore, je vous hais; je vous offense, je vous demande pardon; je vous admire, j'ai honte de vous admirer; enfin, il n'y a plus en moi ni de calme ni de raison. (263-4)

In this loss of "calm and reason", the Prince goes from an excessive Cartesian *admiration* for the Princess – an *étonnement* that persists due to her perpetual status as an *amant* whose love must be earned – to a complete disruption in the basis for their relationship: he moves beyond his admiration for her and fixates instead on his admiration for her *aveu*. The last part of his internal struggle is particularly telling, for it signals a simultaneous *admiration* for the rarity of her *aveu*, and a complete contempt for his own unavoidable, uncontrollable *passion*. This internal struggle gradually kills the Prince de Clèves. In his final words to the Princess, Madame de Lafayette effects a complete reversal of *admiration*:

> 'Vous m'avez éclairci trop tard; mais ce me sera toujours un soulagement d'emporter la pensée que vous êtes digne de l'estime que j'ai eue pour vous. Je

> vous prie que je puisse encore avoir la consolation de croire que ma mémoire vous sera chère, et que, s'il eût dépendu de vous, vous eussiez eu pour moi les sentiments que vous avez pour un autre.' Il voulut continuer, mais une foiblesse lui ôta la parole. Madame de Clèves fit venir les médecins; ils le trouvèrent presque sans vie. Il languit néanmoins encore quelques jours et mourut enfin avec une constance admirable. (284-5)

In the space of only four sentences, the Princess goes from *admirable* to "digne de l'estime" and M. de Clèves becomes *admirable* in death. The question remains, however, whether the Princess herself finds him admirable. Since this final assessment comes from the narrator and seems to apply more generally to a societal approval – perhaps mixed with surprise – of his "constance." As Ellen McClure observes in her article, "Cartesian Modernity and the Princesse de Clèves," the memory of and admiration for her dead husband allows the Princess to escape the "reason" that would have her marry Nemours:

> By preserving her husband's place in the world, she is able to escape, at least partially, the pressing immediacy of the passions that surround her… By remembering her husband with such insistence, the princess has, in a sense, created an object that is strong enough to impress itself… upon her heart, and, by implication, upon the world that she inhabits.[47]

Just as "étonnement" fixates the admirer on the surprising object and prevents progression away from admiration and toward knowledge, the Princess's guilt and sadness fixates her on her duty to her husband in death as much as it did in life, if not more so.

> *La douleur de cette princesse passait les bornes de la raison*. Ce mari mourant, et mourant à cause d'elle et avec tant de tendresse pour elle, ne lui sortait point de l'esprit. Elle repassait incessamment tout ce qu'elle lui devait, et *elle se faisait un crime de n'avoir pas eu de la passion pour lui, comme si c'eût été une chose qui eût été en son pouvoir*. Elle ne trouvait de consolation qu'à penser qu'elle le

[47] Ellen McClure, "Cartesian Modernity and the Princesse de Clèves," *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 29 (2007): 80.

> regrettait autant qu'il méritait d'être regretté, et qu'elle ne ferait dans le reste de sa vie que ce qu'il aurait été bien aise qu'elle eût fait s'il avait vécu… Elle sentait néanmoins une douleur vive de s'imaginer qu'il était cause de la mort de son mari, et elle se souvenait avec peine de la crainte que monsieur de Clèves lui avait témoignée en mourant qu'elle ne l'épousât; mais toutes ces douleurs se confondaient dans celle de la perte de son mari, et elle croyait n'en avoir point d'autre. (286-7, my emphasis)

The Princess's pain is "beyond the edge of reason." The narrator offers one possible motivation for the Princess's refusal of Nemours: in life, her husband determined the reasoned decision to avoid Nemours's admiring gaze, let alone his love; after his death, reason would have allowed her to accept Nemours's affection, but her "pain" overcomes this reason.

The Princess's regret for her husband's life, and her own role in his death, is as strong as any duty that she felt during their marriage, and she mistakingly judges that regret to be the sole source of her pain: she truly believes that she has forgotten Nemours. This regret, however, impacts her reason without being able to affect the leanings of her heart, which she realizes when she sees Nemours for the first time several months after her husband's death:

> Quelle *passion* endormie se ralluma dans son cœur, et avec quelle violence! Elle s'alla asseoir dans le même endroit d'où venait de sortir monsieur de Nemours; elle y demeura comme accablée. Ce prince se présenta à son esprit, *aimable* au-dessus de tout ce qui était au monde, *l'aimant* depuis longtemps avec une *passion* pleine de respect jusqu'à sa douleur, songeant à la voir sans songer à en être vu, quittant la cour, dont il faisait les délices, pour aller regarder les murailles qui la refermaient, pour venir rêver dans des lieux où il ne pouvait prétendre de la rencontrer; enfin un homme digne d'être *aimé* par son seul attachement, et pour qui elle avait une inclination si violente, qu'elle *l'aurait aimé*, quand il ne *l'aurait pas aimée*; mais de plus, un homme d'une qualité élevée et convenable à la sienne. Plus de devoir, plus de vertu qui s'opposassent à ses *sentiments*; tous les obstacles étaient levés, et il ne restait de leur état passé que la *passion* de

> monsieur de Nemours pour elle, et que celle qu'elle avait pour lui. (289-90, my emphasis)

As if in a dream, the Princess physically places herself in the same space as Nemours as she imagines herself retracing his passion-driven steps. The narration contains multiple references to "songer" and "rêver," and the lexical field of love and passion ("passion," "aimer," and "sentiments") is opposed to the "devoir" and "vertu" that held the Princess back in her lifetime. The absence of admiration in this passage goes hand-in-hand with an absence of the immediately visible: Nemours came to look at walls and to dream of seeing someone he had no hope of actually seeing. The Princess, however, upon seeing Nemours again for the first time after the death of her husband, experiences a new surprise that recalls, in almost Proustien fashion, her supressed surprise at the ball. This second instance of "surprise," however, occurs in the absence of Nemours, so rather than hide her surprise, the Princess allows herself to feel it in its entirety. In other words, a mere glimpse of Nemours has created an entire sequence of memories, imaginings and projections into the future.

In this atmosphere of passion and love, a happy conclusion to the novel seems likely. What, then, happens in the final pages to prevent such a happy conclusion? La Rochefoucauld offers one potential answer to this question. The speculative sentence, "un homme digne d'être aimé par son seul attachement, et pour qui elle avait une inclination si violente, qu'elle l'aurait aimé, quand il ne l'aurait pas aimée," seems to be a direct response to Maxim 294: "Nous aimons toujours ceux qui nous admirent; et nous n'aimons pas toujours ceux que nous admirons." Nemours is worthy of being loved

simply by virtue of his "attachement." Admiration in the *Princesse de Clèves* is unquestionably linked to surprise, but love does not follow in the cynical fashion proposed by La Rochefoucauld. M. de Clèves admires Mlle de Clèves from the first moment he sees her, while she never returns either his admiration or his love. The Princess seems to admire Nemours, but does everything in her power to suppress that admiration. By leaving the Princess's admiration and love enigmatic, Lafayette reverses La Rochefoucauld's directional association between love and admiration: the Princess does not love her husband, despite his declaration of admiration; both Nemours and M. de Clèves love the woman they admire; the Princess's admiration is implied, as is her love, but the lack of confirmation calls the uni-directional, one-to-one relationship proposed by La Rochefoucauld into question.

Upon seeing Nemours for the first time after her husband's death, she realizes that she has not forgotten Nemours, but rather mistaken her pain as originating solely from M. de Clèves's death. As the Princess remembers her "attachement" to Nemours, and his to her, she also remembers that this "attachement" caused M. de Clèves's death:

> [E]lle ne trouvait guère moins de crime à épouser monsieur de Nemours qu'elle en avait trouvé à l'aimer pendant la vie de son mari. Elle s'abandonna à ces réflexions si contraires à son bonheur; elle les fortifia encore de plusieurs raisons qui regardaient son repos et les maux qu'elle prévoyait en épousant ce prince. Enfin, après avoir demeuré deux heures dans le lieu où elle était, elle s'en revint chez elle, persuadée qu'elle devait fuir sa vue comme une chose entièrement opposée à son devoir.
> Mais cette persuasion, qui était un effet de sa raison et de sa vertu, n'entraînait pas son cœur. Il demeurait attaché à monsieur de Nemours avec une violence qui la mettait dans un état digne de compassion, et qui ne lui laissa plus de repos; (290-91)

The Princess realizes that protecting her virtue may not be enough to keep her from accepting Nemours's love: her own self-interest is necessary to "fortify" her resolve to avoid Nemours. The transposition of Pascal in this passage is certainly noteworthy: "Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas" (Br. 277). While Pascal's "cœur" has almost nothing to do with the romantic "cœur" to which Lafayette refers, the notion that reason can effect certain changes, but not others is critical:

> vous m'avez inspiré des sentiments qui m'étaient inconnus devant que de vous avoir vu, et dont j'avais même si peu d'idée, qu'ils me donnèrent d'abord une surprise qui augmentait encore le trouble qui les suit toujours. …vous avez vu que ma conduite n'a pas été réglée par mes sentiments. (295-6)

"Conduite" belongs to the realm of reason, while "sentiments" belong to the heart. Prior to knowing Nemours, the Princess used only her reason; and her inexperienced heart thus experienced "surprise" upon seeing him. In the context of the passage, this "surprise" seems to have very few of the layers of admiration that Descartes associated with the term. The second half of the sentence, however, points to a more complex, veiled presence of admiration: the surprise caused by Nemours "augmentait le trouble qui suit toujours [les sentiments]." While admiration is not explicitly present, Cartesian admiration is implied by the association between surprise and "feelings." In this context, admiration is a feeling that creates "trouble," and more importantly, trouble that "always follows" surprise. While the Princess recognizes the dangers of passion and has always been able to turn away from them, the surprise (and perhaps admiration) associated with first seeing Nemours completely destabilized her "reasoned" avoidance of passion: reason has been able to direct the Princess away from Nemours, but her "attachement" to

him remains in her heart. Perhaps it is her own inability to control her heart that enables the Princess to be certain that Nemours's love will only be temporary:

> J'avoue… que les passions peuvent me conduire; mais elles ne sauraient m'aveugler. Rien ne me peut empêcher de connaître que vous êtes né avec toutes les dispositions pour la galanterie, et toutes les qualités qui sont propres à y donner des succès heureux. Vous avez déjà eu plusieurs passions, vous en auriez encore; je ne ferais plus votre bonheur; je vous verrais pour une autre comme vous auriez été pour moi… (302)

In addition to Nemours's "natural disposition for *galanterie*," the Princess speculates that both Nemours and M. de Clèves were motivated in their passion for her by their love for "the hunt." The fact that she did not return his admiration, passion, or love, the Princess suggests, is what qualified M. de Clèves to be the only man capable of loving someone forever. The fear of losing their mutual "attachment" is what prompts the Princess to physically separate herself from Nemours:

> je ne saurais vous avouer, sans honte, que *la certitude* de n'être plus aimée de vous, comme je le suis, me paraît un si horrible malheur, que, quand je n'aurais point des raisons de devoir insurmontables, je doute si je pourrais me résoudre à m'exposer à ce malheur. … Les hommes conservent-ils de la passion dans ces engagements éternels? Dois-je espérer un miracle en ma faveur et puis-je me mettre en état de voir certainement finir cette passion dont je ferais toute ma félicité? Monsieur de Clèves était peut-être l'unique homme du monde capable de conserver de l'amour dans le mariage… peut-être aussi que sa passion n'avait subsisté que parce qu'il n'en aurait pas trouvé en moi. Mais je n'aurais pas le même moyen de conserver la vôtre: je crois même que les obstacles ont fait votre constance. Vous en avez assez trouvé pour vous animer à vaincre; et mes actions involontaires, ou les choses que le hasard vous a apprises, vous ont donné assez d'espérance pour ne vous pas rebuter. (301)

Both Nemours and M. de Clèves had *enough* hope of attaining the Princess's love to make pursuing her worthwhile. Being assured of victory over her heart, however, they would soon lose interest. Fearing her ability to overcome the guilt and duty that should

separate her from Nemours, the Princess thus gives an additional justification for her retreat: her *inability* to resist a shared passion that she is sure Nemours will allow to fade in the future, while she will not. Citing introductions by Jean Mesnard and Philippe Sellier in "Mme de Lafayette et la condition humaine: Lecture pascalienne de La Princesse de Clèves," Francis Mathieu argues convincingly that Nemours's character is based largely on the Pascalian notion of "divertissement":

> Mme de Lafayette place immédiatement son roman sous le signe du divertissement pascalien. Les premiers paragraphes de La Princesse de Clèves peuvent être lus comme une ouverture codée, dans laquelle la romancière met en oeuvre d'astucieux procédés métanarratifs, grâce auxquels le texte parle de lui-même. Tout comme la cour est désignée comme le lieu privilégié du divertissement dans l'édition de Port-Royal (Misère de l'homme 314).[48]

In other words, in the absence of the pursuit that follows upon admiration, the Princess believes that Nemours's passion will fade, while hers will remain constant:

> ce que je crois devoir à la mémoire de Monsieur de Clèves seroit foible, s'il n'étoit soutenu par l'intérêt de mon repos; et les raisons de mon repos ont besoin d'être soutenues de celles de mon devoir; mais, quoique je me défie de moi-même, je crois que je ne vaincrai jamais mes scrupules, et je n'espère pas aussi de surmonter l'inclination que j'ai pour vous. Elle me rendra malheureuse, et je me priverai de votre vue, quelque violence qu'il m'en coûte. (303)

In this short farewell address to Nemours, the Princess uses "je" ten times, "mon/ma/mes" six times, and "moi" once – not to mention the repeated use of first person reflexive verbs. By contrast, the memory of Monsieur de Clèves and "l'inclination que j'ai pour vous" are both mentioned only one time. By emphasizing the "je" over the

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[48] Francis Mathieu, "Mme de Lafayette et La Condition Humaine: Lecture Pascalienne de La Princesse de Clèves.," *Cahiers Du Dix-Septième* 12, no. 1 (2008): 65. See also Marie-Madeleine Pioche de la Vergne, Comtesse de Lafayette, "Introduction," in *La Princesse de Clèves*, ed. Philippe Sellier (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1999). See also Lafayette, *La Princesse de Clèves*, 1980.

"nous" or "vous", the Princess reclaims passions that have become public for her own private use. She removes herself from the exchange of passions, thus preserving whatever passions she may feel intact.

This linguistic reappropriation of the passions communicates Lafayette's response to the hopelessness of La Rochefoucauld's *amour-propre*. By retreating, the Princess acts unquestionably in her own self-interest. Yet she also removes herself from the exchange of admiration, negating any potential benefit that might be sought out of *amour-propre*. Re-read in the context of admiration, the Princess's final act of semi-self-isolation,[49] which effectively re-locates admiration within the private sphere of individual emotions, precludes any potential to move beyond: neither greater knowledge of Nemours nor further contemplation of his physical attributes are possible, and what remains is a private passion that they alone have confirmed for one another.

Recalling the Cartesian definition of admiration, the absence of physical and spiritual advancement in the soul's understanding of an object leads to a state of permanent, excessive admiration: *étonnement*.[50] This undesirable state of fixation leads to a limited perception-based appreciation for the admired object. In other words, moving beyond admiration in the Cartesian sense requires a quest for greater knowledge of the unknown, and failure to do so leads to stupefied fixation. Whether we subscribe to the

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[49] Donna Kuizenga points out that the Princesse's self-isolation at the end of that text is less complete than it might have been, and that this partial withdrawal generates less scrutiny. In her attempts to avoid admiration, this partial withdrawal removes her from the admiring eyes of the court without attracting additional admiration (Kuizenga, "The Princesse de Clèves: An Inimitable Model?," 82).

[50] Descartes, *Les Passions de L'âme*, 1649.

Cartesian notion of admiration as an initiator of movement toward greater understanding and subsequent passions, or the La Rochefoucauldian notion of admiration as an exchanged passion that increases an individual's social standing, the inability to move forward in their passions preserves the Princess's inclination for Nemours and his admiration for her. As Sellier concludes in his examination of Port-Royal's influence in *La Princesse de Clèves*:

> Effectivement, jusqu'aux toutes dernières pages du roman, Mme de Clèves demeure en proie à l'agitation et à l'incertitude, puisque la violence des passions entraîne 'infailliblement'[51]. La narratrice étant si convaincue de ce principe, comment se fait-il que son héroïne ne s'abandonne pas à son penchant? [La réponse de La Rochefoucauld] consiste à équilibrer une passion par une autre, et à produire ainsi un renoncement apparemment vertueux. Comme les 'scrupules du passé', le 'devoir' ne suffit pas à maîtriser la violence de l'inclination, la narratrice prête à Mme de Clèves les 'craintes de l'avenir', le souci du 'repos', c'est-à-dire une passion narcissique mêlée de crainte, de paresse et d'un mépris secret pour Nemours.[52]

Alluding to the epigraph of the 1664 edition of the *Maximes*, "Nos vertus ne sont, le plus souvent, que des vices déguisés," Sellier highlights the La Rochefoucauldian "equilibrium" of the Princess's final decision: duty and sadness alone would not have allowed her to overcome her penchant for Nemours, but self-interested *repos* will. The other possible answer Sellier highlights is the Princess's Pascalian necessity for "repos" and isolation. The Princess ultimately ensures her *repos* by removing herself from the unavoidable societal exchange of admiration, but in so doing she simultaneously fixes her undeclared admiration for Nemours and, many have argued, tests the fixedness of his

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[51] Sellier sees here the influence of the *Maximes* and directs his reader to Maxime 293: "… pour vous délivrer des extravagances où m'emporterait infailliblement une passion dont je ne suis plus le maître…"

[52] Sellier, *Port-Royal et La Littérature*, 2:211.

passion for her.[53] Her parting words to Nemours pledge "eternal feelings" for him, which implicitly contrast the ephemeral love she supposes him to feel for her:

> Ayez cependant le plaisir de vous être fait aimer d'une personne qui n'aurait rien aimé, si elle ne vous avait jamais vu; croyez que les sentiments que j'ai pour vous seront éternels, et qu'ils subsisteront également, quoi que je fasse. (304)

This eternal declaration has a significant effect on Nemours. For the final time in the novel, the narrator ascribes "étonnement" and "admiration," placing them alongside "joie" and "tristesse" to describe monsieur de Nemours and monsieur de Chartres, who are shocked by the Princess's decision:

> [Monsieur de Chartres] revint trouver monsieur de Nemours, qui était si plein de joie, de tristesse, d'étonnement et d'admiration, enfin, de tous les sentiments que peut donner une passion pleine de crainte et d'espérance, qu'il n'avait pas l'usage de la raison. Le vidame fut longtemps à obtenir qu'il lui rendit compte de sa conversation. Il le fit enfin; et monsieur de Chartres, sans être amoureux, n'eut pas moins d'admiration pour la vertu, l'esprit et le mérite de madame de Clèves, que monsieur de Nemours en avait lui-même. (305)

The comparison between M. de Nemours's "passionate" admiration, which precludes reason and occurs simultaneously with his joy, sadness, and *étonnement*, and M. de Chartres's neutral admiration for the Princess's virtue, *esprit* and merit underscores the different levels of approval associated with the term. Admiration as a passion is associated with Nemours's conflicting emotions, but also with M. de Chartres's neutral evaluation of the Princess's inherent "virtuous" qualities. Thus, as the Princess leaves the

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[53] For a summary of many critical approaches taken to analyzing the Princesse's actions and motives throughout the novel, see Patrick Henry, "Introduction," in *An Inimitable Example: The Case for the Princesse de Clèves*, ed. Patrick Henry (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 1–12; and Nancy K. Miller, "Emphasis Added: Plots and Plausibilities in Women's Fiction," in *An Inimitable Example: The Case for the Princesse de Clèves*, ed. Henry Phillips (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 15–38.

court for the final time, the reader sees a mixture of Cartesian neutrality in the face of something "rare and extraordinary" alongside the more reasoned social, collective judgment that has determined the Princess's status at court since the beginning of the novel.

Escaping Admiration

Over the course of the novel, the Princess learns that the only way to permanently control her passions is to quietly remove herself from the court. Donna Kuizenga describes the Princess's retreat as "cut[ting] through the very bases on which courtly society is founded":

> In this sense, Mme de Clèves's examples of virtue are inimitable. But they are also inimitable because the discourse of patriarchy has no words for its own undoing. More powerful than the confession, this action is one without a maxim.[54]

Since both Nemours and the Princess kept their passion hidden, the Princess's decision to withdraw from the court – rather than marry Nemours – after her husband's death goes largely unnoticed. The convent thus becomes a sort of private museum for her passion: it will dwell there intact and remain entirely hers. For Joan DeJean the convent represents,

> a 'corner of the world' [for the woman writer] in which, as 'mistress of herself,' she can enjoy the privileges of anonymity… the actual as well as the utopian 'elsewhere' that seventeenth-century French women novelists delimited as the estate of *écriture feminine*.[55]

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[54] Kuizenga, "The Princesse de Clèves: An Inimitable Model?," 83.
[55] Joan Dejean, "Lafayette's Ellipses: The Privileges of Anonymity," in *An Inimitable Example: The Case for the Princesse de Clèves*, ed. Henry Phillips (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), 70.

Perhaps the Princess's motives for her retreat are best explained by the reaction of Nemours upon learning that the death of M. de Clèves will *not* clear the way for his happiness as he had hoped:

> j'aurais pu concevoir l'espérance de passer ma vie avec vous; ma destinée m'aurait conduit à aimer la plus estimable personne du monde; j'aurais vu en elle tout ce qui peut faire une adorable maîtresse; elle ne m'aurait pas haï, et je n'aurais trouvé dans sa conduite que tout ce qui peut être à désirer dans une femme? Car enfin, Madame, vous êtes peut-être la seule personne en qui ces deux choses se soient jamais trouvées au degré qu'elles sont en vous. Tous ceux qui épousent des maîtresses dont ils sont aimés, tremblent en les épousant, et regardent avec crainte, par rapport aux autres, la conduite qu'elles ont eue avec eux; *mais en vous, Madame, rien n'est à craindre, et on ne trouve que des sujets d'admiration*. N'aurais-je envisagé, dis-je, une si grande félicité, que pour vous y voir apporter vous-même des obstacles? (299-300)

This imaginary scenario, recounted using the past conditional rather than the present conditional, expresses impossibility, thereby communicating Nemours's capitulation, even as he yet again acknowledges the Princess's singularity. Whereas M. de Clèves married Mlle de Chartres in the hopes of making her love him, Nemours already has her love and longs to possess her entirely and permanently. In this capitulation, Nemours subtly shifts the Cartesian use of admiration to communicate not involuntary surprise, but rather a purely evaluative assessment of the Princess's virtuous qualities. This shift is critical, for it reflects Lafayette's empowerment of the Princess and of the term: no longer victim of her uncontrollable, unanticipated passion for Nemours, nor of her lack of passion for her husband, the Princess is able to refuse Nemours's admiration and his desire to move beyond it.

The Princess's final retreat guarantees her *repos* by allowing her to escape the admiring gaze and self-interested exchanges in court society, a very Pascalian conclusion to this Cartesian, La Rochefoucauldian, "Lafayettian" novel:

> ayant trouvé que son devoir et son repos s'opposaient au penchant qu'elle avait d'être à lui, les autres choses du monde lui avaient paru si indifférentes qu'elle y avait renoncé pour jamais; qu'elle ne pensait plus qu'à celles de l'autre vie, et qu'il ne lui restait aucun sentiment que le désir de le voir dans les mêmes dispositions où elle était. (310)

After years of longing hopelessly to convince the Princess to reconsider her self-isolation, Nemours's passion finally weakens:

> Enfin, des années entières s'étant passées, le temps et l'absence ralentirent sa douleur et éteignirent sa passion. Madame de Clèves vécut d'une sorte qui ne laissa pas d'apparence qu'elle pût jamais revenir. Elle passait une partie de l'année dans cette maison religieuse, et l'autre chez elle; mais dans une retraite et dans des occupations plus saintes que celles des couvents les plus austères; et sa vie, qui fut assez courte, laissa des exemples de vertu inimitables. (313)

This confirms for the reader the Princess's fears that Nemours's passion would be short-lived and leave her broken-hearted. Her decision to withdraw from the court and Nemours allows the Princess to preserve the passion that she and Nemours declared to one another in their only private conversation. She thus fulfills her self-imposed duty to her husband, while protecting herself from potential heartache, and ensuring her own *repos* .

The Princess de Clèves is a fitting conclusion to this study of admiration. From start to finish, Lafayette's use of admiration incorporates elements of individual Cartesian surprise, and the socially-driven Pascalian quest for glory. Lafayette responds to La Rochefoucauldian *amour-propre*, acknowledging society's self-interested motives, but

offering the Princess as an "inimitable example" of "virtuous" escape. The Princess ensures her own *repos* by escaping the admiring gaze of society and, in so doing, preserving intact her own passion for Nemours and the memory of his passion for her. In the end, Lafayette offers a Pascalian solution to La Rochefoucauld's inescapable circle of *amour-propre*:

> … tout le malheur des hommes vient d'une seule chose, qui est de ne savoir pas demeurer en repos dans une chambre. (Br. 139)

By choosing to be "alone in a room" – be it at home or in the convent – the Princess acts out of individual, not social, *amour-propre*. Without denying La Rochefoucauld's notion that mankind involuntarily and unavoidably serves his own *amour-propre*, Lafayette offers an alternative kind of self-interest: the Princess resists the social pull of admiration, passion and social reputation to create a model of *amour-propre* worthy of imitation. The final words are therefore troubling: this *amour-propre* that is worthy of imitation is in fact "inimitable." Perhaps the answer to this contradiction lies in admiration itself. The reader is meant to "admire" the Princess's sense of duty and commitment to her own *repos* in the Cartesian sense of "awe-inspired surprise." But to admire in an evaluative sense would again place the Princess in the social exchange of admiration that Lafayette has allowed her to escape. In this sense, Lafayette's final word – the only instance of "inimitable" in the entire novel – allows the reader to "admire" the Princess's actions and perhaps even understand her motives, but he or she can never incorporate them as a social example to be followed: they are inimitable.

Conclusion

This study began with the basic premise that admiration was a central term in the literature of seventeenth-century France. This centrality arose from a complex social, political, and academic climate that was focused increasingly on individual greatness and societal approval, and influenced by both the philosophical and scientific explorations of the period. Prior to the seventeenth century, admiration appeared in a variety of contexts, including the following from the *Trésor de la langue française*:

> mil. XII[e] : 'sentiment de ravissement suscité par les hautes qualités d'une pers.' (*Dialogue Grégoire lo pape,* éd. Förster, 16-17 : Li saintismes hom Equices par nom, es parties de la contreie Valeire, par lo merite de sa uie ahier tres toz ilokes astoit euz de grand ammiration**.** [... pro vitae suae merito apud omnes illic magnae admirationis habebatur])
>
> 1209 'sentiment de stupeur, d'effroi' (RENCLUS DE MOILIENS, *Miserere,* éd. van Hamel, 60, 4 ds T.-L. : Tout son cuer li a esmëu De pëur, d'amiration**,** Quant est en recordation Ke il a si grant faim ëu Dou bel fruit ke il a vëu)
>
> 1319-40 'action de s'étonner' (WATRIQUET DE COUVIN, *Dits,* éd. Scheler, 258, 862, *ibid. :* Ce fu droite amiracion De resgarder celle merveille)[1]

Even when associated with the "hautes qualités d'une personne," admiration contains an inherent quality of "étonnement" or "stupeur," as the notion of "ravissement" suggests being transfixed or transported with joy.

According to the *Dictionnaire du moyen français*, while the term "admiration" remained associated exclusively with "surprise," "étonnement," and "l'inattendu," its corresponding verb, *admirer*, appeared in the texts of fourteenth-century French

[1] "Admiration."

chroniclers Jean Froissart and Georges Chastellain in an evaluative context that resembles twenty-first century uses of the term: "[Souvent en cont. nég. ou restrictif à propos d'un adversaire] *Admirer qqn.* 'Avoir une haute idée de [quelqu'un], faire cas de, estimer.'"[2] As the definition suggests, all of the examples of "admiring an individual's greatness" occur in a negative context. They evoke an absence of admiration that seems to situate the term somewhere between an evaluation of greatness and an ignorance of the unacknowledged greatness of an adversary, or a failure to even see such greatness:

> [les victoires des Anglais les ont rendus si orgueilleux] que il ne prisent ne *amirent* nulle nation fors la leur (FROISS., *Chron.* R., VIII, c.1375-1400, 161).
>
> ...li contes de Flandres à che commenchement n'*amiroit* et ne doubtoit les Gantois que trop petit, et les pensoit bien tous à sousmettre (FROISS., *Chron.* R., X, c.1375-1400, 51).
>
> ...li contes ne faisoit que ung peu à plaindre, se il avoit un petit à porter et à souffrir, car il avoit esté si presumptueux que il n'*amiroit* nul seigneur voisin que il eust, ne roi de France ne aultre (FROISS., *Chron.* R., X, c.1375-1400, 239). Cils
>
> Phelippes, à ce qu'il monstre, est plains de grant orgoel et presomption et petitement *amire* la majesté roial de France (FROISS., *Chron.* R., X, c.1375-1400, 280).
>
> Vous vous estes fondé du père et trop fié en luy ; et sur le frain de son amour, vous n'avez *admiré* le fils. (CHASTELL., *Chron.* K., t.5, c.1456-1471, 170).[3]

These instances convey that while "admiration" certainly appeared in French texts long before Descartes's *Traité des passions de l'âme*, his classification of the term as the first of the primary passions, and as an involuntary "subite surprise de l'âme" solidified its association with individual surprise for the extraordinary unknown in the middle of the

[2] "Admirer," 2012.
[3] Ibid.

seventeenth century. Yet, the third edition of *Le Robert*'s *Dictionnaire historique de la langue française* defines the seventeenth century as admiration's point of transition from "surprise" to "approbation":

> Ses sens en français sont parallèles de ceux d'*admirer*, celui de 'surprise' (v. 1190) et 'objet d'étonnement' (1548) disparaissant au XVII^e^ siècle. Le sens modern, apparu très tôt (mil. XII^e^ s., *ammiration*, in *T.L.F.*), se développe en français modern… Le sens premier, conforme à celui de *admirer* et *admiration* jusqu'au XVII^e^ s. est 'étonné, stupéfait' et (XV^e^ s.) 'qui exprime la crainte, l'étonnement.' La valeur moderne se développe au XVII^e^ s. (1636, des personnes; 1690, de l'expression).[4]

The *Trésor de la langue française* further elaborates that, "Au sens d'étonnement, *admiration* est considéré comme vieilli et appartenant à la [langue] [classique]. Déjà à cette époque, mais surtout à l'époque [moderne] s'ajoute à cette [notion] d'étonnement celle de plaisir devant ce qu'on juge beau, bon ou grand."[5]

This study has considered some of the many transitions that allowed admiration to first be categorized as a term of individual surprise and newness by Descartes and the dictionaries of the period, only to subsequently become evaluative and communally determined in texts by Pascal, Lafayette and La Rochefoucauld. By considering the shifting definition and constant importance of admiration in some of the most well-known philosophical, theatrical and fictional texts of seventeenth-century French literature, this study has shown admiration to be variously associated with surprise, passion, desire, honor, ambition, amour-propre, contemplation, emulation, reputation, and even salvation. What makes admiration unique and worthy of such a study is precisely

[4] Rey, "Admiration," 23.
[5] "Admiration."

this malleability. The Latin origins of the word *admirari* – to look upon with wonder – allows it to conform with little resistance to the individual interpretations of each individual author considered in this study. Thus, admiration can be an involuntary initiator of the passions for Descartes, a reaction to greatness for Corneille, an evaluative desire for Pascal, and an assessment of outward appearances for La Rochefoucauld and Madame de Lafayette. Each of these authors works within the basic, etymological definition of admiration: "to look upon with wonder." But the question of who is looking and what constitutes and creates "wonder" is clearly open to interpretation, as is its subsequent impact on the body and on the soul.

*

The questions surrounding human admiration that we have considered continue to play an important role in today's society, and undoubtedly always will. Questions of how, why, what and whom mankind admires are central to determining societal values, cultural identities, and even international misunderstandings. Considering the element of "surprise" that underlies our attribution of "admiration" today can help us to understand mankind's media-driven fascination with some of the most horrible acts of the modern period. Further, as mankind continues to expand into the virtual, questions of evaluative admiration may once again recede out of the public, communal sphere and into the private and even the anonymous. Much like the Duc de Nemours secretly "admiring" the Princesse de Clèves from afar, virtual communities create infinite opportunity to observe and admire without being seen, a one-way admiration that eliminates the need for mutual, shared admiration. As Paul Bénichou concludes in *Morales du grand siècle*:

> Le sentiment d'une vie plus pleine, d'une condition plus facile, le rejet naturel de l'angoisse accompagnent intimement, et de façon presque consciente, la pensée des grands siècles. La misère, au contraire, ne laisse à l'esprit d'autre refuge que l'humilité, le désaveu de la nature…A mesure que la vie était apparue plus facile, l'affirmation barbare de soi faisait place à la réhabilitation générale de la qualité d'homme. La satisfaction, attirant à elle le prestige usurpé de la violence, suggérait l'idée d'une humanité réconciliée avec elle-même et retrouvant tout son prix dans chacun de ses membres… Le nom même d'humanité désigne, en même temps que la qualité d'homme, le sentiment qui porte à respecter cette qualité partout où elle se trouve… Le grand siècle, trop souvent admiré ou combattu pour les seules puissances de contrainte qu'il renferme, témoigne déjà en faveur d'une conception de l'homme civilisé qui n'a cessé de se fortifier et de s'élargir après lui, que notre temps [1940] prétendrait en vain rejeter, et qu'il appartient à un avenir peut-être plus proche qu'il ne semble de sauver et d'approfondir encore.[6]

Bénichou suggests that looking to the "grand siècle" to understand mankind's progress toward "civilized" living conditions and human relationships allows him to understand the potential for its "rejection" that had begun to threaten in the increasingly modern, fragmented, and unjust society that Bénichou witnessed during and after his 1940 mobilization. Yet, Bénichou emphasizes, it threatens in vain. The notion of human greatness that arose out of seventeenth-century France will triumph.

This study has suggested ways in which admiration parallels the human journey outlined by Bénichou: as seventeenth-century man became increasingly convinced of the triumphant power of human greatness, his admiration shifted away from spontaneous surprise and toward contemplative, comparative evaluation of not just greatness, but the superior and the superlative. While the determination of whom and what to "admire" remains relative and individual in the twenty-first century, the heavy societal influence

[6] Bénichou, *Morales Du Grand Siècle*, 307–308.

that influences our admiration of the superior and the desirable creates an important link to the seventeenth-century understanding of "admiration" considered in this study.

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