

ACCADEMIA NAZIONALE DEI LINCEI

ANNO CDXV - 2018

CONTRIBUTI DEL  
CENTRO LINCEO INTERDISCIPLINARE  
«BENIAMINO SEGRE»

N. 139

---

Convegno

CURIOSITY AND THE PASSIONS OF KNOWLEDGE  
FROM MONTAIGNE TO HOBBS

(Roma, 7-8 ottobre 2015)



ROMA 2018  
BARDI EDIZIONI  
EDITORE COMMERCIALE

GIANNI PAGANINI\*

INTRODUCTION  
HOBBS PHILOSOPHER OF CURIOSITY

*curiosa est omnis amicitia*  
Petarca, *Epistolae de rebus familiaribus*, V 7

ABSTRACT. – After examining the main theses supported by Blumenberg about the modern rehabilitation of curiosity, in this chapter the author focuses on two relevant absences from his book: Montaigne and Hobbes. The absence of the latter is particularly striking, because Hobbes was the most important theorist of curiosity in early modern philosophy, raising it to a typical characteristic of human nature; connecting it to the sciences, culture, and the arts; and making it the basis of methodology, language, and philosophy. It is curiosity and rationality that make man different from other animals; it is curiosity that makes a man different from his fellow men. A new scientific humanism was born with Hobbes when he abandoned the traditional anthropocentric concept based on metaphysical assumptions and founded human superiority on a peculiar *passion* such as curiosity and its consequences. Privileging curiosity meant that Hobbes turned out to be original in comparison to Aristotle, Descartes, and afterwards Spinoza, all of whom neglected or discredited curiosity in their theories of the passions in favor of admiration.

RIASSUNTO. – *Hobbes filosofo della curiosità in contesto.* Dopo aver esaminato le tesi principali sostenute da Blumenberg riguardo alla riabilitazione in epoca moderna della curiosità, l'autore del capitolo si concentra su due rilevanti assenze: Montaigne e Hobbes. La seconda è particolarmente stridente, poiché Hobbes fu il teorico moderno più importante della curiosità, innalzandola a caratteristica tipica della natura umana, connettendola alle scienze, alla cultura e alle arti, e facendo di essa la base del metodo, del linguaggio e della filosofia. Sono la curiosità e la razionalità a rendere l'uomo diverso dagli altri animali; è la curiosità che differenzia un uomo dall'altro. Nacque un nuovo umanesimo scientifico quando Hobbes abbandonò la tradizionale concezione antropocentrica basata su assunti metafisici per fondare la superiorità umana su una *passione* peculiare come la curiosità e le sue conseguenze. Per il fatto di privilegiare la curiosità, Hobbes fu originale anche in confronto con Aristotele, Descartes e successivamente Spinoza, che nelle loro teorie delle passioni trascurarono o screditarono la curiosità a vantaggio dell'ammirazione.

\*Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici - Università del Piemonte Orientale - Via Galileo Ferraris, 116 - 13100 VERCELLI.

*This research is original and has been funded by the Università del Piemonte Orientale.*

## 1. CURIOSITY AND MODERNITY: BLUMENBERG'S THREE THESES

Over the last twenty years the number of studies on curiosity in modern times has grown exponentially and, above all, they have branched out into different fields of specialization: lexicographical studies<sup>1</sup> and broad spectrum conceptual studies<sup>2</sup>, thematic studies (sciences<sup>3</sup>, “wonders”<sup>4</sup>, collecting<sup>5</sup> and “curious” objects<sup>6</sup>, aesthetics<sup>7</sup>), studies of classical sources<sup>8</sup>, of religious and moral judgments<sup>9</sup>, and of gender differences that have characterized curiosity<sup>10</sup>. Perhaps the most recent field of research is that of “female” curiosity and the polemic that developed around this theme between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. Also as regards authors who have dealt with curiosity, the historical overview available today is wider and more detailed.

Despite the above, the only comprehensive, wide-ranging philosophical study still remains Hans Blumenberg's book, *Der Prozess der theoretischen Neugierde* [13], which formed part of a larger project, *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit* [12], whose aim was to embrace the emergence of modernity in a broad sense, encompassing Ancient Times, the Medieval and with projections towards the contemporary. Blumenberg's work had the merit of creating a new “object” in the field of philosophical historiography, but fifty years later even this topic requires rethinking and, indeed, it is surprising that Blumenberg's reconstruction of the emergence of “curiosity” as a theoretical approach has not aroused reactions, as, instead, happened for the part of *Legitimität* which regarded the concepts of secularization and political theology. This volume aims to be an occasion for the rethinking by different voices and from a broader perspective of an important piece of philosophical historiography.

<sup>1</sup>Kenny [24, 25].

<sup>2</sup>Houdard and Jacques-Chaquin [22].

<sup>3</sup>Benedict [11]; Daston [17]; Pomian [34].

<sup>4</sup>Daston and Park [18].

<sup>5</sup>Pomian [34].

<sup>6</sup>Evans and Marr [20].

<sup>7</sup>Krüger [26].

<sup>8</sup>Leigh [27].

<sup>9</sup>Bös [14].

<sup>10</sup>Cottegnies-Parageau-Thompson [16].

First of all it may be useful to illustrate some of the main theses around which the *theoretische Neugierde* revolved according to Blumenberg. There are at least three.

- a) Philosophical curiosity basically coincides with the theoretical impulse towards the natural world and in this context the early modern age is characterized by the rehabilitation of this impulse after that Christianity, starting from Augustine, had counterposed it with a search for interior reality and for God, turning curiosity towards the exterior into a vice, a vain desire or even a sin of pride against the limits set on human knowledge by the higher interest of spiritual salvation.
- b) Modern rehabilitation, following Christian and Medieval criticism, is not the mere resurrection of the ancient ideal of contemplation or even the Greek idea of *polypragmosyne* with its deprecatory characteristics of meddling and scheming curiosity. The difference from the ancient and Medieval world can be clearly seen in Bacon who played a leading role in this rehabilitation process. For Bacon, the theoretical impulse towards knowledge was not only contemplative but was constantly accompanied by the study of useful knowledge and dominion over nature. Curiosity therefore fell within the context of the improvement of the human condition and the Christian tradition was also re-interpreted by Bacon in this sense, because such progress should coincide, at least in part, with the recovery of the paradisiacal existence prior to original sin.
- c) According to Blumenberg, from Bacon to Descartes the history of philosophical curiosity was rapidly expended. Already in Descartes “the expressions *curieux* and *curiosité* have neither pathos nor specificity”, so much so that it can be claimed that the “problem of theoretical curiosity appeared to him to be solved”. Descartes’s interest in the method was aimed at the “regulated process of learning”, which took the place of the “spontaneous” impulse towards curiosity. For Blumenberg the history of curiosity still had a follow-up, but only outside the strictly theoretical nucleus; it impacted the relationship with joy in the Enlightenment and was incorporated in anthropology, with Feuerbach and Freud.

To examine the soundness of these fundamental points (there are others but these are the foundations as regards early modern philosophy) it is useful above all to highlight some evident absences in the albeit vast picture drawn by Blumenberg. Every narrative is obviously selective by nature and, indeed, in *Der Prozess der theoretischen Neugierde* the author can be admired both for the theoretical synthesis and for the breadth of the corpus. Nevertheless, some absences (which are not motivated) seriously impact the structure and compromise (as we will see) the soundness of the founding concepts of the work: we refer first and foremost to Montaigne's and Hobbes's absences. In particular, the study of Hobbes's concept of curiosity allows us to demonstrate (as opposed to Blumenberg's claim) that this topic was at that time anything but expended, that Hobbes's approach was completely different to that of Descartes and that, instead, he established the new anthropological definition of man as a "curious animal". In this way Hobbes laid the basis for a very modern humanism, of a naturalistic type and far removed from the old Renaissance and anthropocentric humanism that had already been discarded by Montaigne.

## 2. THE ABSENCE OF MONTAIGNE

First of all, the exiguous presence of the Renaissance in Blumenberg's book, limited to astronomical discoveries and cosmological speculations to which great attention is paid, speaking at length about Cusano, Copernicus, Bruno and Galileo, is disconcerting<sup>11</sup>. True to his "theoretical" concept of curiosity, an offspring of *contemplatio* and its original celestial meaning, Blumenberg looks upwards, towards astronomical discoveries, but does not see what happened downwards, with the birth of a new anthropology, different from the Medieval one and the anthropocentric one of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The first surprising result of this omission translates into the *total* absence of an author who at the end of the Renaissance was the supreme interpreter of the notion of curiosity in a broader sense than the restricted one adopted by Blumenberg: Montaigne. The author of the *Essays* is given no mention, I do not

<sup>11</sup>On the Renaissance, see Céard [15].

believe through mere forgetfulness, but for reasons relating to the approach Blumenberg takes in the book: a) discussing Montaigne would mean shifting the focus of curiosity from theoretical impulse towards the moral and social dimension which is not considered in *Der Prozess*, above all in the part about modernity, while it is given more attention in the ancient and Christian part; b) Montaigne highlights a dual ambivalence in curiosity: in part it incarnates man's desire for knowledge, and in part it has moral characteristics which make it more of a passion than a mere impulse towards learning. Moreover, from a moral point of view, the passion of curiosity has positive aspects that associate it with a "generosity" of the soul and negative aspects such as a state of perpetual anxiety, perpetual movement and almost avid "lust" that requires regulation.

And, indeed, it is because of this dual ambivalence that Montaigne's study could have represented a fundamental step in Blumenberg's narrative, which as regards passions leaps instead from late Medieval nominalism to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The author of the *Essays* is 'modern' because he removed curiosity from the Christian and Medieval catalogue of 'vices' and placed it in that of *passions*, with all that that implies for the dynamics of the mind: curiosity becomes for him a cognitive activity that reflects the mobile and, in some ways, uncontrollable nature of the mind yet it is exactly for this reason that it can be harmful and dangerous from the moral standpoint<sup>12</sup>. Unlike in animals, to which Montaigne often compares men, human passions have no limits or spontaneous and natural controls but at times require harsh regulation. Montaigne is still not ready for the full naturalization of the passions which would take place in 17<sup>th</sup> century with Descartes, Hobbes and Spinoza, but he is already willing to acknowledge with realism the force of emotions; he no longer insists on suppressing them, as in Christian-Medieval ethics, relegating them to the catalogue of vices. In Montaigne passions are no longer "vices", in the true Christian meaning of this word, but not yet pure natural impulses. More-

<sup>12</sup>Montaigne *Essais* [1: II, 12, 486]: «Mais pour revenir à notre propos, nous avons pour nostre part l'inconstance, l'irresolution, l'incertitude, le deuil, la superstition, la sollicitude des choses à venir, voire, apres nostre vie, l'ambition, l'avarice, la jalousie, l'envie, les appetits desreglez, forcenez et indomptables, la guerre, la mensonge, la desloyauté, la detraction et la curiosité».

over, for him, curiosity is strictly linked to the “anxiety for the future”, a trait that would be valorized by another key player who was left out of Blumenberg’s narrative: Thomas Hobbes.

In the *Essays*, curiosity is therefore located on the border between the emotive and cognitive part of the human soul, placing them in communication, or better, fusing them together, according to Montaigne’s spirit which is in no way dualistic and who could instead be considered an early critic of the dualism that would come after him, with Descartes. The influence of Greek philosophies and, in particular, of Epicureanism, besides the interest in Galen’s medicine which had underscored the links between *animi mores* and *corporis temperamenta*, led Montaigne to see the close connection between mind and body, thoughts and passions, and to observe in curiosity both sides of its dynamic: the intellectual and the passionate.

### 3. THE DOMINANCE OF ADMIRATION: DESCARTES AND SPINOZA

One could object that promoting curiosity from vice to passion signifies only partial rehabilitation, since over passions, however natural they may be, there lies the shadow of being a trouble for the reason, which negatively affects it or, in any case, conditions it. Moreover, it is noted that in the ancient texts, and above all in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* that provided modern thinkers with a reasoned catalogue of passions<sup>13</sup>, neither “admiration” as an expression of the natural desire for knowledge nor curiosity (*polypragmosyne*) as the attitude of a “meddler” or “busybody” who pries into other people’s business are classified as passions: the former because of its exclusively intellectual worth, which is celebrated at the beginning of *Metaphysics*, and the second probably because of its lesser relevance.

The anomaly of curiosity with regard to the world of emotions becomes

<sup>13</sup>Aristotle deals with *polypragmosyne* above all in connection with the problem of politics, because the active citizen “constantly runs the risk of being dismissed not as a patriot but as a busybody”: Leigh [27: pp. 23-24]. For an early modern synthesis of the Aristotelian theory of the passions contained in the *Rhetoric*, see Hobbes *The Whole Art of Rhetoric* [3: V, esp. 451-466]. As in Aristotle, in this re-working of Hobbes’s theory of passions curiosity is not contemplated as, instead, it will then be in the *Leviathan* [8].

even more evident when, with the advent of Cartesian dualism, the determinant causes of passions were transferred, along with imagination, mainly to the material and bodily part of the human compound. The fusion of mind and body which Montaigne had pursued with his refined psychological introspection and on the wave of his appreciation of Greek philosophies (mainly Epicureanism) is definitively eradicated in Descartes's *Passions de l'âme* and gives way to the question (in actual fact never really answered by Cartesians) of the interaction of two opposing substances such as the body and the mind. The mechanistic explanation of passions suggested by Descartes brings to the fore the movement of the animal spirits that affect the pineal gland in which – says Descartes – “the soul resides”<sup>14</sup>, in the sense that it is the point of mind-body interaction. This explanation ends up highlighting the passivity of the emotions that are aroused by the perception of external objects even if Descartes admits that there are “purely intellectual emotions” which “are aroused in the soul solely by the soul itself”: emotions that can be accompanied by passions without being passions in themselves<sup>15</sup>. However, curiosity is never mentioned among these “intellectual” emotions nor is it included in the extremely thorough catalogue of passions in the *Passions de l'âme*, which names six primary passions and many other derivative ones.

Not that the concepts of *curiosité*, *curieux*, and *sciences curieuses* are absent from Descartes's work; they are dealt with above all in the dialogue *La recherche de la vérité*. In general terms, for Descartes, *curiosité* is the same as the “desire to learn” (“curiosité ou désir d'apprendre”)<sup>16</sup>, but this desire must be controlled and mastered according to precise rules (those of the method) in order to avoid both excess and frustration. Indeed, the dialogue *De la recherche de la vérité* begins with the question of curiosity as two of the characters (*Eudoxe* and *Epistémon*) are introduced as “two of the rarest and most curious spirits of this century”. It is *Epistémon* above all, who has studied greatly in all fields, that personifies “insatiable curiosity”: “an incurable disease because curiosity grows with the doctrine”. *Epistémon* (his name derives from the Greek *episteme*, science) takes to the paroxysm and thus to the

<sup>14</sup>Descartes, *Passions de l'âme*, I, 32-34 [2: XI, pp. 352-354].

<sup>15</sup>Descartes, *ibid.*, I, 20; II, 147 [2: XI, pp. 344, 440].

<sup>16</sup>Descartes, *Discours de la méthode* [2: VI, p. 72].



absurd the “natural desire to know” that Aristotle discusses in *Metaphysics*. However, while Aristotelians believed that this desire, being “natural”, could not be frustrated and used this argument to answer the objections of the skeptics, *Epistémon*, the figure of a more modern erudite, transforms the simple desire for knowledge into undifferentiated and limitless curiosity, almost by definition impossible to satisfy. He therefore feels all the frustration that accompanies this kind of curiosity. *Eudoxe*, closer to the Cartesian ideal, refuses to believe that there is such a “universal disease in nature” for which no cure exists. Therefore, he claims that there are “truths that can be found in any topic, to fully satisfy the curiosity of regulated souls”. For him “insatiable curiosity” is solely a pathology of the spirit, just like the unquenchable thirst of a dropsy sufferer who, the more he drinks, the thirstier he gets, is a pathology of the body. Instead of the diseased curiosity of the traditional erudite (*Epistémon*), *Eudoxe* offers *Poliandre* the “healthiest” method to “search for truth” according to Descartes, a method that promises to acquire certain “sciences” safe from doubt, even if limited to strictly fundamental knowledge<sup>17</sup>. The detachment between the two models (insatiable curiosity, regulated knowledge) is even more striking because *Epistémon* does not settle for this truly essential philosophical knowledge invoked by *Poliandre* and limited to the very first truths: “the divinity, the rational soul, the virtues, their compensation”. On the contrary, being “a curious type”, *Epistémon* insists on extending the search to what was often called the “curious sciences”, straying into the occult and magic. Among his desiderata there are – he claims – “the artifices of men, the specters, the illusions, in short, all of the marvelous effects that are attributed to magic,” even if his aim is not that of “using them”, but of preventing, by knowledge, “admiration”<sup>18</sup>. The list of wonders looked for by *Epistémon* is a good summary of what “curiosity” in a pejorative sense represented in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century and it goes without saying that this type of “curiosity” would not be included in the scope of Cartesian research.

Instead, the discourse on admiration is more complex, because it plays an important role in the *Passions de l'âme*, where it takes the place of curiosity.

<sup>17</sup>Descartes, *Recherche de la vérité* [2: X, pp. 499-500].

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.* [2: X, pp. 503-504].

Indeed, “admiration” is given a privileged position in this work: it is the primary passion and also the first of the six “primitive passions” from which all the others originate<sup>19</sup>.

If we accept the definition of curiosity as a “desire to know” provided in the *Discours de la méthode*, and not the pejorative one of the *Recherche*, we can see why it cannot be included in the catalogue of passions: first of all because it is, if anything, an action and not a passion; secondly, because in the dualistic scheme of Cartesian anthropology it coincides with knowledge and thus with thought; it does not depend on the “movement of the spirits” of which passions as such consist and which thus refer mainly to the imaginative and definitively, bodily part of the human compound<sup>20</sup>; thirdly, because the aim of passions is vital, utilitarian (“according to the various ways in which they can harm or assist us”)<sup>21</sup>, while curiosity in a ‘noble’ sense should aim at pure knowledge. The fact that the soul is “touched” by the passions only in its union with the body, distances this pure “desire to know”, which is almost equivalent to thought, from the category of passions and ends up emptying it of any emotional component. On the other hand, if there is a power of the soul with regards to passions, it is only indirect and is exercised by representations usually associated with the “passions we want to have”<sup>22</sup>; it is difficult to imagine, at least in the Cartesian scheme, how the desire to know can translate into a hypothetical passion similar to the others bodily passions and which it can influence.

All of these internal reasons, along with the disparagement that accompanies curiosity in *Recherche*, explain why this affection is not contemplated in the *Passions*. In its place we find *admiration* which is also a highly particular, and primary, passion: it is entirely “cerebral”, that is, it depends solely on the movement of the animal spirits along the folds of the brain, and not also in the blood and heart like all the other passions. It is also the most intellectual as its object is not good or bad in relation to the body but “solely knowledge

<sup>19</sup>Descartes, *Passions de l'âme* II, 53 [2: XI, p. 373].

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 51 [2: XI, p. 371].

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 52 [2: XI, p. 372].

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 45 [2: XI, pp. 362-363].

of the thing we admire”<sup>23</sup>. The “novelty” factor plays an important role in admiration: “les objets des sens qui sont nouveaux”, Descartes says, generate the “surprise”. Also this can be explained, according to Descartes, in physiological and mechanical terms because “new objects” place the animal spirits in such a way that they “touch” softer parts of the brain which have not been affected before<sup>24</sup>. Then, when admiration reaches an “excess”, projecting the concentration of all the animal spirits towards the place in the brain where the impression of novelty is located, we have the almost complete paralysis of the body (“the entire body remains immobile like a statue”) and consequently we have “stupor” (“étonnement”) that is therefore closely linked to admiration of which it represents the extreme and “harmful” degree<sup>25</sup>.

The mechanistic explanation of passions provided by Descartes is completely “modern” just like the basic dualism that underlies it; from this point of view, the dissatisfaction he expresses with the “insufficiency” of ancient knowledge about passions is such that he believes he has to talk about them as if they had never really been studied before<sup>26</sup>. Nevertheless, it is true that the privileged position of *admiration* (first of the six primitive passions, a wholly cerebral and, indeed, intellectual one) is a clear echo of the role that Aristotle had given at the start of his *Metaphysics* to “wondering” (*thaumazein*) as an initial driver in the “search for knowledge” (literally: “philosophize”: *philosophhein*)<sup>27</sup>. However, the transfer of admiration from the spring of philosophizing to the list of passions in Descartes had significant consequences for the Aristotelian model: the Cartesian passion of admiration no longer leads directly to “knowledge” (*sophia*), thus to science and philosophy, as Aristotle claimed, but more modestly falls within a practice of control of the mind-body interactions, in such a way as to regulate and, if possible, make good use of emotions; that is, of the actions of the body that the mind “suffers”. Unlike the Aristotelian “wonder” that leads to knowledge, Cartesian “admiration”, like all of the passions, has only a utilitarian purpose in the

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 70-71 [2: XI, pp. 380-381].

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 72 [2: XI, pp. 381-382]; see II, 53 [2: XI, p. 373].

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 73 [2: XI, 382-383].

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, I, 1 [2: XI, 327-328]. On admiration in Descartes, see Kambouchner [23: I].

<sup>27</sup>Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, I, 2, 982 b 10-15; see also 983 a 14-15.

economy of the relationships between body and mind. The difference between the approach of Aristotle and that of Descartes is the same as that between the search for *truth* and settling for *utility*.

The other great 17<sup>th</sup> century theorist of passions, Spinoza, thinks quite differently but he also includes admiration to the detriment of curiosity. The Cartesian dualism of body and soul and their problematic “union” is replaced by the psycho-physical unity of man within the doctrine of the single substance. Indeed, Spinoza defines emotions as the unity between the affections, that increase or reduce the power of the body to act, and their ideas. Hence, the predominantly passive Cartesian definition of “passion” is abandoned in favor of a dynamic vision of the power of the body to act, not *separately from* but *united with* ideas and, therefore, with thinking. Spinoza shares with Descartes the general principle of the naturalization of passions<sup>28</sup>, which for him also implies their rehabilitation, provided that they are guided towards the correct objective: for Descartes this is fundamentally the conservation of the body while for Spinoza it affects the whole compound of mind and body as attributes of the same substance and aims at strengthening man as a whole.

Nevertheless, curiosity continues to be ignored, also by Spinoza, in book III of *Ethics* which deals with “de origine et natura affectuum”. Curiosity is not mentioned either here or in the definitions of affections (“Affectuum definitiones”) that contain a good forty-eight items. And also Spinoza replaces it with admiration<sup>29</sup>.

Like for Descartes, also for Spinoza it is the “novelty” of the imagined object and its disconnection from the other imaginations that “maintain” the mind on the “contemplation of that object”: these are the aspects that Spinoza includes in his definition of “admiration”<sup>30</sup>. Also as regards admiration, there are however significant changes compared to Descartes. First, unlike Descartes,

<sup>28</sup>Descartes, *Passions de l'âme* III, 211 [2: XI, p. 485]; Spinoza [9], *Ethica* III, Praefatio, pp. 137-138.

<sup>29</sup>Spinoza [9], however, adds, almost contradicting himself, that he does not think he has to enumerate admiration among the affections: *Ethica* III, definitiones, 4 (pp. 147-148) because this “distraction of the mind does not originate from a positive cause”, but only from the fact that there is no cause for which the mind thinks of other things.

<sup>30</sup>Spinoza [9], *Ethica*, definitiones, 4 (pp. 191-192).

for Spinoza admiration is no longer a “primitive or primary affection”, such as joy, sadness and avarice, and it therefore surrenders the privileged position it still held in the *Passions de l’âme*; secondly, *Ethics* unites in a single “affection” the emotions that Descartes had distributed among different, albeit connected, passions: “wonder” (*admiration*) and “astonishment” (*étonnement*). Thirdly, Spinoza defines different types of admiration in a wide series of affections that originate from it, depending on the different emotive tones and the variety of the objects to which they are addressed, as is the case of “consternation”, “veneration”, “horror”, “devotion”. Despite a less relevant presence in terms of importance, admiration, with all of its opposites (“contempt”, “mockery”, “disdain”), still has many ramifications in the emotional life<sup>31</sup>.

It may seem paradoxical that in what has been defined the “age of curiosity” and when curiosity was extending to science, to collecting, to taste for antiques, to contrived techniques, two of the most important philosophers of the 17<sup>th</sup> century did not take it into consideration and, indeed, returned to the paradigm of Aristotelian origin centered around wonder and, therefore, admiration. If we just took into consideration only Descartes and Spinoza (the latter albeit never mentioned in *Der Prozess*), we would have to accept Blumenberg’s verdict, according to which the “theoretische Neugierde” would substantially be expended with Descartes, until – we could add – being trivialized by Spinoza.

#### 4. THE DOMINANCE OF CURIOSITY: HOBBS

In reality, this is not the case because a contemporary of Descartes and Spinoza became an important theorist of curiosity (may I add, never mentioned by Blumenberg in this sense)<sup>32</sup>, raising it to a typical characteristic of human nature, connected to the sciences, culture and the arts, making it the basis of method, language and, therefore, philosophy in general. This author is Thomas Hobbes.

<sup>31</sup>Spinoza [9], *Ethica*, III, prop. 52, scholium (180-181).

<sup>32</sup>Blumenberg takes into consideration Hobbes solely for questions linked to Carl Schmitt’s theory on the theological origins of sovereignty.

This aspect of his thought has not been greatly studied. Hobbes appears very rarely in the histories of curiosity and from this angle the greatest acknowledgement he received was from L. Daston and K. Park, who saw in him the philosopher who understood that “curiosity was not merely one of a host of desires, but rather the archetypal desire”, even if they reprimanded him for a certain “volubility” in dealing with the subject<sup>33</sup>. Even among Hobbes scholars the subject is not dealt with in depth. After the pioneering study of J. Barnouw<sup>34</sup>, only recently have a few scholars studied in depth the ramifications of the subject of curiosity in the theory of passions and in the psychology and philosophy of Hobbes, up to the enucleation of his original definition of man as a curious animal, besides being a rational one<sup>35</sup>.

<sup>33</sup>Daston and Park [18: pp. 304, 307]. Even although he dedicates the first chapter mainly to early modern curiosity, considered as a typical feminine figure (“Singular Things and Timeless Truths. Featuring the *Curiosa*”), Smith [35: pp. 21-53] never mentions Hobbes’s contribution to the philosophical theory of curiosity.

<sup>34</sup>Barnouw [10]. Albeit remarkable and based on a profound knowledge of Hobbes’s texts, the article by Barnouw has two debatable aspects: (a) to depict sense and desire he introduces the category of “emergent property” (522) and as regards endeavor he speaks of “conception of a dynamic unconscious” (523): both of these categories are clearly foreign to the mechanistic structure of Hobbes’s philosophy that has a rigorous causal structure even when he explains behavior aimed at a scope (on this see Paganini [28]); (b) as regards curiosity and deliberation Barnouw underscores the dependence on Aristotle albeit “with important alterations” (p. 528, see also p. 529). In truth, the alterations are so important and radical that the theory of a Hobbes who is more or less neo-Aristotelian is untenable. See, above all, the comprehensive polemic (on physics, cosmology, metaphysics, theology, psychology, ethics) which engaged Hobbes, firm Galilean, with a neo-Aristotelian like White (see my introduction to Hobbes [7: pp. 9-126]; [31]). Strangely, also Tabb [36: p. 22] speaks of curiosity as an “emergent property”; in the same way he claims (20, n. 32) that “Hobbes does not explicate the mechanics of the appetite”, to argue a “non-mechanical aspect of Hobbes’s psychology”. By contrast, it is sufficient to carefully read chapter VI of the *Leviathan* [8] (and many other of Hobbes’s works) to find a mechanical explanation of the origin of appetites and passions that do not require either emergent properties or non-mechanical factors. Of course, one may not be satisfied with Hobbes’s explanation, but should not be wrong about the author’s actual intentions, imagining some sort of Hobbesian emergentism.

<sup>35</sup>See Paganini [30]. Tabb [36] recently took up many of Barnouw arguments, highlighting (*contra* Pettit [33]) the fact that thanks to curiosity man can possess an “active thought” also in the pre-linguistic stage. On the relationship between curiosity, time and anxiety see Zarka [37].

The decisive fact, which the Hobbes scholarship still struggles to understand, is that with the British philosopher curiosity directly enters the anthropologic determinations of the human subject and from this it influences the crucial theme of science and method: it is curiosity and rationality that make man different from other animals; it is curiosity that makes one man different from his fellow men. A new scientific humanism<sup>36</sup> is born with Hobbes who abandons the traditional anthropocentric concept based on metaphysical assumptions (such as the spiritual soul) or essentialist conceptions (such as definitions of types), or on the prerogative of freedom conceived as a kind of indeterminism. In opposition to these old categories, the scholarship in general considers that for Hobbes the very human prerogative, the one from which calculation, science and politics derive is language. Indeed, it is true that this marks the watershed between simple “knowledge” and “prudence” (of which also animals are capable) on the one hand, and, on the other, “science”, which only man has access to<sup>37</sup>.

However, many scholars tend to overlook the fact that language and the rationality to which this gives access require an anthropologic and psychological pre-condition consisting in curiosity and in a special type of curiosity which animals do not possess. From this point of view the *Leviathan* contains a striking definition of man as a rational *and* curious animal, definition which is even more striking because curiosity, considered as a desire to know “how” and “why”, is nevertheless classified among the passions, thus profoundly changing the traditional relationship of opposition or subordination between passions and reason which characterized a thousand years of philosophy. Let us now look at this definition of curiosity as the desire for knowledge, which plays a new and decisive role in Hobbes’s philosophy even although at first sight it does not seem to be highly original:

*Desire to know why, and how, CURIOSITY; such as is in no living creature but Man so that Man is distinguished, not only by his Reason, but also by this singular passion from other Animals;*

<sup>36</sup>See Paganini [29].

<sup>37</sup>For the re-affirmation of language as a main divide see Pettit [33], who briefly refers to the importance of curiosity in distinguishing man from animals (*ibid.*, pp. 26, 90).

in whom the appetite of food, and other pleasures of sense, by predominance, take away the care of knowing causes; which is a Lust of the mind [*Animi concupiscentia*], that by a perseverance of delight in the continual and indefatigable generation of Knowledge, exceedeth the short vehemence of any carnal Pleasure<sup>38</sup>.

To understand the meaning and the relevance of this definition, it has to be considered within the context of the polemic which, before the *Leviathan*, had led Hobbes to challenge two different philosophical theories. Even while they diverged greatly in their metaphysical foundations, these two doctrines converged as they both stressed the privilege of humanity, attributing it to substantial and not only functional features of two human prerogatives (intellect and will), compared to the corresponding ones in animals. The adversaries of these polemics, Descartes and Bramhall, had referred to two profoundly different philosophies (dualism and hylemorphism respectively) for their psychologies, but they had both reserved for man a unique condition, not only for the functions he exercises in knowledge and will, but also for the ontological basis of the respective faculties. Hobbes answered both in a clear and almost inflammatory way, quite briefly in the case of Descartes, rather more at length to Bramhall.

Replying to Descartes, Hobbes's materialism clearly emerges, because for the author of the *Third Objections* – as Descartes reprimands him – ideas are nothing more than products of the imagination; that is “images of material things portrayed in the bodily fantasy”<sup>39</sup>. The polemic touches on many other questions (the knowledge of God, innatism, knowledge of substances, etc.), but very quickly Hobbes goes straight to the heart of the debate. After having stated that “reasoning is nothing other than the conjunction and concatenation of names or denominations using the verb to be”, Hobbes makes the linguistic level of “reasoning” depend on the psychological one of the imagination and this in turn on the ontological level of movement, with a triple reduction that takes language, reasoning, and mind back to their material bases of which they are the expression without any spiritualistic residues:

<sup>38</sup>*Leviathan* [8: VI (35), p. 86].

<sup>39</sup>*Objectiones Tertiae* [6]: the quotation is taken from Descartes's answer [2: VII, p. 181].



If things are so, as they can be [the reduction of reasoning to the conjunction of names] the reasoning will depend on names, the names of imagination, and the imagination probably, this is my opinion, on the movement of the bodily organs and thus the mind will be nothing else but movements of certain parts of the organized body<sup>40</sup>.

This triple reduction has consequences that are briefly but clearly enunciated in the *Third Objections*: the first is that, even although animals cannot deny or affirm because they do not possess “voice and names”, they do have a certain “*cogitatio*” (thought), since the material bases of the “mind” are not different to the human one (“attamen cogitatio similis esse potest in homine et bestiâ”)<sup>41</sup>. Besides denying the existence of spiritual substances, Hobbes therefore also calls into question the Cartesian theory that “thought” (“*cogitatio*”) is the exclusive prerogative of man.

In the polemic with Bramhall the questions are others: freedom, to which Hobbes counterposes causal determinism, the nature of the will and the explanation of the deliberation process. Besides the traditional and humanistic concept of human free will, an important target of polemic is the Aristotelian concept, shared by Bramhall, of the *dianoetike orexis* (“rational appetite”) as exclusive to man and basis of the theory of deliberation, being “desirous reason or reasonable desire” which forms a bridge between reason and passion. This Aristotelian concept of choice (*proairesis*) and, by extension, of deliberation which leads to choice, allowed Bramhall to establish a series of clear distinctions within a hierarchical and axiological scale of values. Bramhall distinguishes between the simply “spontaneous” action and the “voluntary” one, between simple sensitive appetite and real “will”, between animals and man, between “sensual” men and “wise” men. Only the latter items of these pairs have access to a worthy humanity in the full meaning of this word. Against these subtle psychological distinctions Hobbes makes a drastic simplification as he did previously with Descartes. For him, the mechanism of deliberation is fundamentally the same in both man and animals, in “wise men” and

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.* [2: VII, p. 178].

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.* [2: VII, p. 182].

in “sensual men”, and consists in the alternation of appetites and aversions (therefore passions) until the last one prevails and causes will. Necessity and choice can co-exist because action is still free, when it is not hindered, even although will is always caused. Provocatively, Hobbes dwells on the limit case of “the actions of *children, fools or brute beasts*, whose *fancies* [...] are *necessitated and determined to one*” to demonstrate that the lines of demarcation traced by the classic-humanistic tradition have no grounds in his doctrine, which unites will and deliberation, on the one hand, and causality and necessity on the other<sup>42</sup>. Above all these distinctions accepted by Bramhall do not take into consideration the fully mechanistic basis of Hobbes’s psychology, already explained to Descartes and repeated more extensively in the *Leviathan*.

These two polemics offer a conclusion and pose a question.

The *conclusion* is clear: animals feel, imagine, produce a mental discourse, deliberate, desire in a similar way to men not only on the psychological level but also on the metaphysical one, because all of the functions of the mind, human and animal, depend ontologically on movements in the inner parts of the sentient. On this ontological and psychological levels, highlighted by Hobbes’s materialistic reductionism, there is no reason to reserve for man a privileged position, even if at the level of certain particular functions (science, language, politics) the latter is clearly superior to the other sentient beings.

The *question* posed however is just as clear: given that human superiority is undisputable (Hobbes mentions this many times) and since this can no longer be explained by appealing to an immaterial mind (like Descartes) or to a rational appetite (like Bramhall) – this latter represents a particular and certainly desirable case but not the rule for action – what is the origin of human peculiarity from which all of beneficial fruits that animals lack (sciences, arts, techniques, contracts, political states, philosophy, religion, etc.) derive?

<sup>42</sup>This aspect of the detachment of Hobbes from the Aristotelian tradition and his connections with the topic of curiosity is analyzed in more depth in Paganini [30: pp. 235-243]. Unfortunately also recent analyses of the topic of deliberation in Hobbes (see Tabb [36: p. 19]) do not take into account the Aristotelian background to which Hobbes reacted. The result of this decontextualisation is that Hobbes’s polemic can seem excessive and at times paradoxical.

## 5. CURIOSITY AND HUMANISM IN HOBBS

The answer to this question emerges clearly in the *Leviathan*, in which Hobbes also developed an extensive comparison between the respective psychological endowments of man and animals (a subject he had only briefly looked into in the *Elements of Law*<sup>43</sup>, but which he already discussed in the *De motu, loco et tempore*). The answer is the following: the root of human superiority consists in curiosity in general and especially in a particular genre of curiosity which animals lack. Upstream and before reason it is a “passion” – curiosity – that triggers in human beings and only in human beings the acquisition of all of the functions (reasoning such as calculation, translation of the mental discourse into verbal discourse, definitions and sciences, method) and of all of the scientific, juridical, political, technical and religious productions which differentiate them from the animals. With the latter humans share the bases of psychology (sensation, memory, imagination, deliberation, will, but also knowledge, prudence, mental discourse), but starting from “curiosity” (intended in a particular sense, as we will see) man develops procedures that lead him increasingly away from simple “knowledge” and “prudence”.

Therefore we see with Hobbes a thorough revaluation of curiosity after Descartes had excluded it from the catalogue of passions, to the benefit of admiration. Also the latter appears in the *Leviathan*, but it has a fairly ancillary function compared to curiosity<sup>44</sup>. While admiration is moved above all by “novelty” and has, so to say, the function of attracting attention to unusual and rare objects or, if not rare, ones that are difficult to explain, according to Hobbes it is up to curiosity to find the causes, that is, the real nucleus of scientific knowledge.

To understand how Hobbes reached the point of valorizing a typically

<sup>43</sup>Hobbes dealt with curiosity also in the *Elements of Law* [4: I, VIII, 3, 34], but in this section he followed, albeit with some variations, the line of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* – see above n. 27. Moreover, neither in the *Elements* nor in *De motu* does the distinction, made in the *Leviathan*, between the search for causes in general and, specifically, human curiosity, appear. For a comparison between Hobbes and the famous passage of Aristotle on “wonder” see Paganini [30: pp. 251-255].

<sup>44</sup>*Leviathan* [8: VI (38), p. 86]: “Joy, from apprehension of novelty, ADMIRATION, proper to Man, because it excites the appetite of knowing the cause”.

human trait of curiosity, it is necessary to look at his concept of the “Consequence or Train of Imaginations” with which “the succession of one thought to another” is formed (as has been seen, at a psychological and mental level “thought” can be reduced to “imagination”). At first, these primordial associations of thought do no more than reproduce the links and the order in which imaginations occurred, just as at a material level it is “the cohesion of the matter moved” that binds to each other the movements underlying the imaginations. However, as experiences vary, there is the possibility of a certain indetermination that represents a first degree of freedom of association compared to pure and simple causal sequences. At first, this “consequence or train” takes the shape of “Mental Discourse”, of which also animals are capable, consisting in a “TRAYNE of Thoughts”<sup>45</sup>; from this point of view the mental associations present in man are neither causally or qualitatively different from those of animals. However, there are two different types of “trains”: one “*Vnguided, without Designe, and inconstant*”, as in dreams, in idle fantasies or in incoherent conversations<sup>46</sup>; another type, instead, is more constant and regular, as it tends towards the realization of a desire and therefore of an aim or purpose: it is, namely, a “passionate thought”<sup>47</sup>, regulated by a passion which directs and governs it. The “regulated Train of Thought” is therefore teleological as it is aimed at an aim or at a fulfilment of a desire. Hobbes invokes the famous “*respice finem*” and explains that the desire for an object originates the thought of the means which proved to be effective in achieving the aim in the past. Yet also this teleology is in all sentient beings, man and animals alike.

However, there are different types of regulated thought and it is at this point that Hobbes brings in curiosity, in a specific meaning, different to the generic one referred to previously (the search for the “how” and “why”):

The Trayn of regulated Thoughts is of two kinds; One, when of an effect imagined, we seek the causes, or means that produce

<sup>45</sup>*Leviathan* [8: III, (1), p. 38].

<sup>46</sup>*Leviathan* [8: III (2), pp. 38-40].

<sup>47</sup>*Leviathan* [8: III, (3), p. 38]: “Passionate Thought, to govern and direct to itself, as the end and scope of some desire, or other passion”. The Latin text is less effective: “*Passio, quae gubernet et dirigat Cogitationes caeteras ad finem desideratum*” (p. 39).

it: and this is common to Man and Beast. The other is, when imagining anything whatsoever, we seek all the possible effects, that can by it be produced; that is to say, we imagine what we can do with it, when we have it. Of which I have not at any time seen any sign, but in man only; for this is a curiosity hardly incident to the nature of any living creature that has no other Passion but sensuall, such as are hunger, thirst, lust, and anger<sup>48</sup>.

The term “curiosity” appears for the first time in the *Leviathan* here and this particular type of search (from causes to possible effects, irrespective of the immediate utility of the actual object one is interested in at the time) is attributed only to man while the search for the “cause” or the “means” of an effect of direct interest unites man and animals (the example of hunting where dogs also excel is a classical *topos* of animal intelligence dating back to the ancients and referred to by Montaigne, which also Hobbes talks of).

In the immediately subsequent step Hobbes insists on the aspects that in general unite the regulated mental discourse; indeed he seems to return to a broader definition of curiosity, insisting on the fact that it is a powerful incentive in the search for links between causes and effects:

In sum, the Discourse of the Mind, when it is governed by design, is nothing but *Seeking*, or the faculty of Invention, which the Latins called *Sagacitas*, and *Solertia*; a hunting out of the causes, of some effect, present or past; or of the effects, of some present or past cause<sup>49</sup>.

Hobbes therefore identifies not so much in a faculty (whether intelligence or language) but in a “passion” the condition that differentiates a specific kind of regulated thought in man from that, also regulated, in other animals. Then, within the vast series of passions, he selects one in particular, curiosity, and attributes it solely to man, stating that one type of search (from causes to effects) is also an exclusive prerogative of man and is dependent on curiosity, in the strict sense of the word.

<sup>48</sup>*Leviathan* [8: III, (5), pp. 40-42].

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 42.

Apparently, the biggest difference between man and animals regards the nature of the passions of the latter that are “only sensual”, which leaves room to assume that curiosity is, instead, a “mental” passion. This is evidently not a distinction of an ontological or substantial nature (as in Descartes), given the general materialism of Hobbes and the fact that the empirical bases of knowledge (sense, imagination, memory, knowledge, mental discourse, etc.) are common to both man and animals. Hobbes’s distinction is subtler and implies both the idea of a specific pleasure linked to knowledge, and the particular time dimension which characterizes mental pleasures.

It is in this context that the definition of “curiosity” given in chapter VI of the *Leviathan*, mentioned above, must be seen. It takes its place within a meticulous catalogue of human passions that includes “seven simple passions” (*appetite, desire, love, aversion, hate, joy, and grief*), which generate at least another thirty-five or even more derivative passions if one considers also certain variations within some of them. Curiosity is a “lust of the mind” and is closely linked to knowledge of causes; that is, to the constitutive nucleus of science and philosophy. Instead of straying into the frivolous search for “novelty”, curiosity aims at the “generation of knowledge”<sup>50</sup>.

To understand what is meant by “*Pleasures of the Mind*” (as opposed to “Pleasures of sense” or “carnal Pleasure”), we must look to the same chapter of the *Leviathan* which deals with passions or “*Interiour Beginnings of Voluntary Motions*”. “Mental” pleasures, says Hobbes, “arise from the expectation, that proceeds from foresight of the end, or consequence of things”, and are of people who “draweth those consequences”, regardless of the pleasurable or distasteful effect of the sensation. In this sense they produce “joy”, while the “pleasures of sense” are strictly linked to sensation and to the immediate use of a present object<sup>51</sup>, as in the case of hunger and thirst. While the “joy” produced by the former can be “indefatigable” as also the search for knowledge can be, the pleasure of the others is expended within the act, producing satiety and in certain cases even vexation.

In a materialistic philosophy like that of Hobbes, the “mental” cannot be

<sup>50</sup>*Leviathan* [8: VI, (35), p. 86].

<sup>51</sup>*Leviathan* [8: VI, (12), p. 84].

defined by a substantial difference compared to the body or to the “carnal”; it is characterized instead by a different time dimension. While the pleasures “of sense” are located in the dimension of the present, directed towards the moment of immediate utilization, the “pleasures of the mind” are, instead, located in the dimension of the expectation and therefore of the future. As Hobbes says:

The present only has a being in nature; things past have a being in the memory only, but things to come have no being at all, the future being but a fiction of the mind, applying the sequels of actions past, to the actions that are present<sup>52</sup>.

Connecting the “mental” to the time dimension of the future, Hobbes created a link also with all the themes of “power” which is central to his philosophy. This implies that curiosity and mental pleasure related to it are strictly functional to the search for “power”, as “power”, in Hobbes’s acceptance, is the activity projected into a “mental” space par excellence, the space that regards the “future” effects of present causes. “The POWER *of a man* (to take it Universally) is his present means, to obtain some future apparent Good”<sup>53</sup>. In short, curiosity is mainly aimed at “power”, therefore at the possession of “good” not only at the present moment but also in the future. And this future can be foreseen and anticipated only by the mind because by definition it is not present to the sense: it is only “imagined”.

The word “power” to our ears has a strictly political, often manipulative, meaning while for Hobbes it acquired a wider and more positive meaning: for him, it simply indicates the capacity to foresee and to a certain extent control the future effects of causes, or to draw consequences based on definitions. Associated with curiosity, “power” endows theoretical impulse (which Blumenberg spoke of) with a value which is not only contemplative but also practical, to the extent to which knowledge of the causes, therefore curiosity, enables the desired effects to be produced. As we have seen, the investigative aspect of curiosity is anything but overlooked by Hobbes, even although

<sup>52</sup>*Leviathan* [8: III (7), pp. 42-44].

<sup>53</sup>*Leviathan* [8: X (1), p. 132].

with ironic and disenchanted realism in the *Leviathan* he defines science as a “small Power”, because only those that know it can recognize it and, hence, a small minority<sup>54</sup>. In any case, he does not doubt that forecasting and calculating future events, in which human curiosity consists, contributes to the success not only of knowledge as such, but also of its projections into practice. Deliberation, the contract that leads to political association and therefore to peace, and the reasoning on which science is based such as calculation: all these depend on forecasting the future effects of a cause or on developing the consequences of a statement.

Summing up, according to Hobbes, human curiosity is characterized by at least five aspects: (a) it is aimed at a more or less distant goal, rather than at an immediate cause, like the object of desire of an animal is; therefore, curiosity has a more complex and longer-term *teleology*; (b) it is *mental* as it is aimed at the future, which is the mental space par excellence in Hobbes’s ontological monism; (c) its primary object is *power*, that is, the capacity to satisfy one’s appetite not only in the present but even more so in the future; (d) curiosity is *consequentialist* because it draws the effects from the causes (“all the possible effects that can by it [the cause] be produced”), rather than the causes from the effects; (e) it is *conditional* because the modality of the cause-effect link that interests the “curious” is possibility (“possible effects”).

## 6. CONCLUSION

It can be said that with this revaluation and re-thinking of curiosity as specific to man, Hobbes raises the level of the debate that developed from humanism onwards around the theme of “*dignitas hominis*”<sup>55</sup>. In a sort of ideal arbitration between anti-humanistic currents and the humanistic tendencies of modern thought, Hobbes recognized that the former have demonstrated the complete naturalness of anthropology, but accepted that the latter grasped a specific difference of man that is irreducible to the condition of other living beings. “Curiosity” and “industry” identify the *proprium* of humanity.

<sup>54</sup>Leviathan [8: X (14), p. 134].

<sup>55</sup>It is interesting to see how Hobbes discussed and demolished the traditional concepts of “*dignitas hominis*” in *De motu, loco et tempore*, XXXVII, 2 [5: pp. 402-403].



However, it is neither a “faculty” (reason) nor a metaphysical essence nor an immaterial disposition (whether it is the soul or absolute freedom), but a “passion” that together with “industry” triggers a series of operating procedures which, piling up on each other, enable real development and authentic progress of the human condition beyond the purely natural base line. With this concept of curiosity Hobbes placed humanism at the level of modern science: he was thus able to explain what could be called the “natural history” of reason, and to account for the manifold wealth of human experience without invoking metaphysical theories pre-constituted to this history.

To sum up, Blumenberg’s “great” narrative of a consummation of the function of curiosity with the advent of the “methodological” philosophy of Descartes, is patently negated by Hobbes’s considerations. The importance of this ‘rediscovery’ does not only have an intrinsic value for the history of philosophy, it has a more general meaning for the genesis of modernity, as it leads to the notion of curiosity as a “passion” which unites theoretical motivation and emotive power. Hobbes’s curiosity is not only or principally theoretical impulse as in Blumenberg’s vision but also motive power like every passion in Hobbes’s psychological and moral theory.

Hobbes, modern philosopher of curiosity as a passion, overturned what can be called a long tradition of taking emotions as both opposed to reason and rational thought<sup>56</sup>; at the same time, making reference to curiosity, the English philosopher provided the search for reason, the development of language and of science with a strong motivation which is rooted in the entire emotive life of man. Instead of being relegated to the pathologies of the mind or simply removed from the catalogue of passions (as in Descartes and Spinoza) to the benefit of admiration, thanks to Hobbes, curiosity rediscovered its philosophical dignity and centrality, clearly dominating the more ancient and Aristotelian category of “wonder” or “admiration”.

The originality of Hobbes’s position on this point, compared to his great contemporaries, allows him to occupy a key position in the development of modern thinking. On one hand he reconnected to the complexity of Montaigne’s thoughts on passions, which had identified *inter alia* in curiosity and

<sup>56</sup>On the same theme in early modern philosophy see Ebbesmeyer [19: v-ix].

in the “anxiety for the future time” a distinctive characteristic of man compared to animals; on the other, linking curiosity to science, Hobbes overcame the skepticism of the *Essays* which had dismissed science as “*pédantisme*”. While he was willing, with Montaigne, to acknowledge the ambivalence of other human passions which can make man even worse than animals as the latter – unlike man – possess their own natural regulation and measure, in curiosity Hobbes saw mainly its positive nature linked to science that explains the “progress” of humans compared to that of beasts<sup>57</sup>.

\* \* \*

This volume gathers together the papers presented at the international conference held at the Accademia dei Lincei on 7-8 October 2015, coordinated by Gianni Paganini within the framework of his research program (“Hobbes and 17th century radical thought”) carried out at the Centro Linceo Interdisciplinare “Beniamino Segre”. We thank the Directors of the Centro Linceo, formerly Tito Orlandi and now Mario Stefanini, the Scientific Board of the conference (Giuseppe Cambiano, Michele Ciliberto, Paolo Galluzzi, Tullio Gregory, Giorgio Lunghini) and the institutions that supported the event: PRIN “Atlante della ragione”, University of Urbino, Institut d’Histoire de la Pensée Classique (ENS Lyon), Institut Universitaire de France, along with the institutions that sponsored it: Institut d’Études Avancées (Paris) and the Department of Humanistic Studies at the University of Piedmont (Vercelli).

#### REFERENCES

##### *Primary Literature.*

- [1] M. DE MONTAIGNE, *Essais*. Ed. Villey-Saulnier, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris 1999.

<sup>57</sup>On a degenerated form of curiosity induced by anxiety for his own future and coupled with ignorance of the true causes, which goes astray into superstition and idolatrous divination, see Paganini [30: pp. 254-255]. On the connection between Hobbes and Montaigne, now see Ferrari and Gontier [21], Paganini [32].

- [2] R. DESCARTES, *Œuvres de Descartes*. Ed. C. Adam, P. Tannery, Vrin, Paris 1996.
- [3] TH. HOBBS, *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes of Malmesbury. Now First Collected and Edited by Sir William Molesworth*, 11 vols. Gale, London 1839-1845 (reprint Scientia, Aalen 1962-1966).
- [4] TH. HOBBS, *The Elements of Law Natural and Politic*. Ed. with a preface and critical notes by F. Tönnies, Simpkin, Marshall & Co., London 1889.
- [5] TH. HOBBS, *De motu, loco et tempore. Critique du De mundo de Thomas White*. Introduction, texte critique et notes J. Jaquot, H. Whitmore Jones, Vrin, Paris 1973.
- [6] TH. HOBBS, *Objectiones Tertiae cum responsionibus Authoris*. In: C. ADAM, P. TANNERY (eds.), *René Descartes. Œuvres de Descartes*, 11 vol. Vrin, Paris 1996, vol. VII, 171-96.
- [7] TH. HOBBS, *Moto, luogo e tempo*. Introduction, transl. and annotation G. Paganini, UTET, Turin 2010.
- [8] TH. HOBBS, *Leviathan*. Ed. N. Malcolm, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2012.
- [9] B. SPINOZA, *Ethica*. Ed. C. Gebhardt, Carl Winter Verlag, Heidelberg 1925.

*Secondary Literature.*

- [10] J. BARNOUW, *Hobbes's Psychology of Thought: Endeavours, Purpose and Curiosity*. *History of European Ideas*, 10, 1989, 519-545.
- [11] B. BENEDICT, *Curiosity. A cultural history of early modern inquiry*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago 2001.

- [12] H. BLUMENBERG, *Die Legitimität der Neuzeit*. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt/M 1966.
- [13] H. BLUMENBERG, *Der Prozess der theoretischen Neugierde*. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt/M 1973.
- [14] G. Bös, *Curiositas. Die Rezeption eines antiken Begriffes durch christliche Autoren bis Thomas von Aquin*. Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn-München 1995.
- [15] J. CÉARD (ed.), *La curiosité à la Renaissance*. Sedes, Paris 1986.
- [16] L. COTTEGNIES, J. THOMPSON, S. PARAGEAU, *Women and Curiosity in Early Modern England and France*. Brill, Leiden 2016.
- [17] L. DASTON, *Die Lust an der Neugier in der frühneuzeitlichen Wissenschaft*. In: K. KRÜGER (ed.), *Curiositas. Welterfahrung und ästhetische Neugierde in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*. Wallstein, Göttingen 2002, 147-176.
- [18] L. DASTON, K. PARK, *Wonders and the Order of Nature 1150-1750*. Zone Books, New York 1998.
- [19] S. EBBERSMEYER (ed.), *Emotional Minds. The passions and the limits of pure inquiry in early modern philosophy*. De Gruyter, Berlin 2012.
- [20] R.J.W. EVANS, A. MARR, *Curiosity and Wonder from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*. Ashgate, Aldershot 2006.
- [21] E. FERRARI, T. GONTIER (eds.), *L'Axe Montaigne-Hobbes. Anthropologie et politique*. Classiques Garnier, Paris, 2016.
- [22] S. HOUDARD, N. JACQUES-CHAQUIN (eds.), *Curiosité et libido sciendi de la Renaissance aux Lumières*. ENS Editions, Fontenay-aux-Roses 1998.
- [23] D. KAMBOUCHNER, *L'Homme des passions. Commentaires sur Descartes*. Albin Michel, Paris 1995, 2 vol.

- [24] N. KENNY, *Curiosity in Early Modern Europe Word Histories*. Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden 1998.
- [25] N. KENNY, *The Uses of Curiosity in Early Modern France and Germany*. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2004.
- [26] K. KRÜGER (ed.), *Curiositas. Welterfahrung und ästhetische Neugierde in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*. Wallstein, Göttingen 2002.
- [27] M. LEIGH *From Polypragmon to Curiosus. Ancient concepts of Curious and Meddlesome Behaviour*. Oxford University Press, Oxford 2013.
- [28] G. PAGANINI, *Hobbes, Gassendi e la psicologia del meccanicismo*. In: A. PACCHI (ed.), *Hobbes oggi*. FrancoAngeli, Milano 1990, 351-446.
- [29] G. PAGANINI, *Thomas Hobbes e la questione dell'umanesimo*. In: L. BIANCHI, G. PAGANINI, *Le origini dell'umanesimo scientifico dal Rinascimento all'Illuminismo*. Liguori, Napoli 2010, 135-158.
- [30] G. PAGANINI, *Passionate Thought: reason and the passion of curiosity in Thomas Hobbes*. In: S. EBBERSMEYER (ed.), *Emotional Minds. The passions and the limits of pure inquiry in early modern philosophy*. De Gruyter, Berlin 2012, 227-256.
- [31] G. PAGANINI, *Hobbes's Galilean Project. Its Philosophical and Theological Implications*. *Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy*, 7, 2015, 1-46.
- [32] G. PAGANINI, *Hobbes, Montaigne et les animaux moraux*. In: E. FERRARI, T. GONTIER (eds.), *L'Axe Montaigne-Hobbes. Anthropologie et politique*. Classiques Garnier, Paris 2016, 131-150.
- [33] P. PETTIT, *Made with Words: Hobbes on Language, Mind and Politics*. Princeton University Press, Princeton 2008.
- [34] K. POMIAN, *Collectors and Curiosity: Paris and Venice 1500-1800*. Polity Press, Cambridge 1990.

- [35] J.E.H. SMITH, *The Philosopher. A History in Six Types*. Princeton University Press, Princeton 2016.
- [36] K. TABB, *The Fate of Nebuchadnezzar. Curiosity and Human Nature in Hobbes*. *Hobbes Studies*, 27, 2014, 13-34.
- [37] Y.C. ZARKA, *La curiosité chez Hobbes*. In: S. HOUDARD, N. JACQUES-CHAQUIN (eds.), *Curiosité et libido sciendi de la Renaissance aux Lumières*. Ecole Normale Supérieure de Fontenay-St Cloud, Fontenay-aux-Roses 1998, 157-166.