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PUZZLING DEFORMATIONS IN THE HISTORY OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF EMOTIONS

Zagadkowe przeinaczenia w historii filozofii uczuć

Summary: I begin with a brief and preliminary distinction between three fields: the history of emotions, the history of the philosophy of emotions, and the philosophy of emotions itself. In the main section I examine eight cases of deformation in the presentation (i.e. the reading, not the interpretation) of philosophical theories of emotions across various periods, regions, and schools of thought. I conclude with a few remarks and two final observations: one, more obvious but less significant, concerning the erroneous way in which primary texts in the philosophy of emotions have been read; and another, more significant but less obvious, concerning the implications of such readings for both the history of the philosophy of emotions and the philosophy of emotions. I also suggest that the deformations identified in my paper may be symptomatic of a broader process: the ideologization of emotions.

Keywords: Emotion, History of the Philosophy of Emotions, Deformations of Theories of Emotions.

Słowa kluczowe: uczucie, historia filozofii uczuć, przeinaczenia teorii uczuć.

1. Introduction

The history of the philosophy of emotions is a subfield of the history of philosophy.¹ Yet theories of emotions may be studied from a historical point of

¹ It is not to be confused with the *history of emotions* (or *emotion history*), which appears to belong more properly to the discipline of history (see e.g. W. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*, Cambridge 2001, and R. Boddice, *The History of Emotions*, Manchester 2018). I would prefer to speak of *the history of the philosophy of feelings*, for reasons explained in section 2.3. below. However, I use *the history of the philosophy of emotions* here, insofar as *emotion* is more commonly employed—both within and outside philosophy—as a kind of term of art, or as a metacategory encompassing the whole of affectivity. For instance, the name

view for both historical and philosophical reasons. Although there is no clear-cut distinction between these approaches, we can usually—setting aside borderline cases—discern whether someone is studying as a historian of philosophy or as a philosopher. To offer an example: if a Russell had left behind nothing but his *History of Western Philosophy*, it is unlikely he would have earned a place in the history of philosophy. The same hold within the history of the philosophy of emotions: some authors are historians of philosophy; others are philosophers. However, regardless of their differing motivations for engaging with past thinkers, both are expected to treat their predecessors' views with care, fairness, and intellectual honesty—even when the aim is not historical reconstruction, but rather the advancement of their own research. In short, as with any scholarly work, research in the history of philosophy—whether historically or philosophically motivated—ought to meet standards of integrity. That there is any value in studying the history of philosophy for philosophical reasons has recently been questioned in an extreme, perhaps even provocative way by Sauer, who concludes: 'historical authors were deeply wrong about almost everything, we have statistical reasons for thinking that the best philosophers live now rather than in the past.'² This claim I shall not discuss here.

In what follows, I have no thesis to offer. I shall limit myself to examining eight cases of deformation in the presentation of views on emotions. I did not seek these cases to support or construct a thesis; rather I stumbled upon them in the course of my research. In this sense, they may seem arbitrary—and indeed they are, if *arbitrary* is taken to mean *accidental*. Yet both those responsible for

of a Research Centre at the Max Planck Institute, *Geschichte der Gefühle [History of Feelings]*, is rendered in English as *History of Emotions*. The terms *emotion* and *feeling* are frequently used interchangeably. For example T. Dixon, *The History of Emotions. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford 2023, p. 74: 'While fear, terror, worry, anxiety, and phobias are all related emotions, they are by no means identical with each other, and the most common objects of these feelings have changed over time too.' This is just one example from Dixon who repeatedly—and arguably systematically—uses the terms interchangeably. Further examples abound, such as F. Buscemi, [review of: *What is the History of Emotions?*, (eds) B. Rosenwein & R. Cristiani], "Cromohs" 2019, vol. 22, pp. 168–170], p. 170: '[...] with the history of emotions. If we now take for granted that feelings are so relevant in every aspect of our lives, it is then more important than ever to understand why and how. The history of emotions [...]' See also J. Plamper's book title: *Geschichte und Gefühl: Grundlagen der Emotionsgeschichte*, München 2012. By and large, philosophers of emotion seem to be more careful with terminology than historians of emotion. See also R. Boddice, *The History of Emotions: Past, Present, Future*, "Revista de Estudios Sociales" 2017, vol. 62, p. 12, n. 4, for criticism of 'some historians of emotion [...] casual about eliding the difference between passions, emotions, affects and so on.' I cannot pursue this further here, but it seems to me that the *history of emotions*, insofar as it hinges on the English lexeme *emotion*, is valid—if at all—only for the emotion history of the English-speaking world.

² H. Sauer, *The End of History*, "Inquiry" 2025, vol. 68, no 7 [p. 22 of the online 2022 version].

the deformations and those who were deformed span various epochs, countries, languages, and schools.

By *deformation*, I mean attributing to an author something they did not say—or, in extreme case, claiming they said the opposite of what they actually said. It is important to emphasize that my focus is on the *reading* of sources by commentators—readings which, in all the cases examined, are inaccurate—not on the *interpretation* of those sources. These deformations typically involve either a distortion of the original word or passage on which the interpretation is based, or the extraction of a word or passage from its proper context. They are not examples of problematic interpretation based on accurate readings. For this reason, they are relatively easy to identify.³ This is also why, in what follows, one may encounter what might appear to be *lazy* quotations. But since the concern is with *reading* rather than *interpretation*, it is sufficient to point to the original word or passage, or to the broader context from which it was taken. Had the issue been one of interpretation rather than reading, a much more extensive argument would have been required—likely concluding with just one among several plausible interpretations, as is often the case in philosophical debates. In the cases I examine, differences in philosophical or scientific outlook, language, or historical period between the commentator and the original author are irrelevant, since what is being distorted is the *source itself*—that is, the text on which the interpretation is supposed to rely. Consequently, interpretations that are derived from these flawed readings fall outside the scope of my analysis.

I have found it useful to focus on this issue for two reasons. First, the misreading of another person's text is problematic in itself. To the best of my knowledge, although the cases I examine are relatively straightforward, they have gone largely unnoticed—despite touching on important points in the history of the philosophy of emotions. That said, I regard this aspect as of lesser importance, primarily of interest to those whose research focuses on the specific figures—whether authors or the victims of deformation—I will discuss below. Second, I find that the consequences of these deformations are significant for the history of the philosophy of emotions, and possibly for the philosophy of emotions itself.⁴

³ The section on Hume is the shortest of all, as in this case identifying and demonstrating the distortion is particularly straightforward.

⁴ Since my paper has been misunderstood, I must clarify two points. First, it is not about 'the variability of meanings of terms describing human affectivity' but rather about how certain authors have been read by their interpreters. Second, it does not aim to show 'how the relevant concepts function in the works of the philosophers being interpreted,' but instead demonstrates that some concepts used by original authors have been deformed by others—without any explanation.

2. Exemplification

I have been wondering whether it would be better to start from the beginning and continue up to the last example or rather to begin with my last example and go backwards to end with the first victim of the deformation. I shall try the latter option. My first and second examples differ from the ones that follows them. While the victim of the deformation is a philosopher—as in examples 2.3. to 2.8.—the author of deformation, unlike in those later cases, is neither a philosopher nor a historian of philosophy. The first is a historian of emotions, and the second a neuroscientist. But both are recent examples and demonstrate that deformations in the history of the philosophy of emotions are not produced exclusively by philosophers or historians of philosophy. Without a doubt, a neuroscientist or historian does not, merely by making a historical claim about the philosophy of emotions, become a historian of the philosophy of emotions. Yet in making such a claim, they are nonetheless engaging with the history of the philosophy of emotions.

2.1. Rob Boddice on Alexander Bain

In his review of Plamper's *The History of Emotions* Boddice states: “Alexander Bain announced in *The Emotions and the Will* in 1859 that from now on ‘emotion’ would be the master label for a gamut of ‘feelings, states of feeling, pleasures, pains, passions, sentiments, affections.’”⁵ Two things are important here. First, while the part quoted by Boddice is accurate, his entire sentence is misleading. What Bain actually wrote was: ‘EMOTION is the name here used to comprehend all that is understood by feelings, states of feeling, pleasures, pains, passions, sentiments, affections.’⁶ In other words, Bain did not ‘announce that from now on ‘emotion’ would be the master label for a gamut’ etc. He simply clarified how he was using the term *emotion* within the context of his book. Second, in the third edition⁷ of the work, this sentence no longer appears. In fact, the original opening sentence of the first edition—‘1. MIND is comprised under the three heads,—Emotion, Volition, and Intellect’—was replaced with: ‘1. MIND is distinguished by the three attributes or properties, named FEELING, VOLITION, and INTELLECT.’ Moreover, Bain systematically replaced *emotion* with *feeling* not only in this sentence but also in several other key passages, beginning with the title of the first chapter: ‘Of Emotion in General’ became ‘Of Feeling in General.’ Such a lexical shift clearly warrants comment—especially if one, like Boddice, places great emphasis on specific terminology. For this reason, Boddice’s statement is

⁵ R. Boddice, [review of: J. Plamper, *The History of Emotions: An Introduction*], “Reviews in History” 2015 (review no. 1752).

⁶ A. Bain, *The Emotions and the Will*, London 1859, p. 3.

⁷ A. Bain, *The Emotions and the Will* [3rd ed.], London 1875.

an overstatement, even in relation to the first edition. There, Bain makes no claim that *emotion* becomes a defining label ‘from then on’, i.e. from 1859, as Boddice suggests. And it is an even greater overstatement when considered in light of the changes Bain introduced in the third edition. These changes unequivocally undermine the claim implied by Boddice’s phrase ‘from now on.’ It is clear that this type of deformation can go unnoticed by readers who are not especially attentive to Bain’s original text. In such cases, the unaware reader becomes an unintentional victim of Boddice’s deformation.

2.2. Jaak Panksepp on Descartes

In his much acclaimed and widely quoted *Affective Neuroscience* Panksepp states: ‘Descartes’ faith in his assertion “I think, therefore I am” may be superseded by a more primitive affirmation that is part of the genetic makeup of all mammals “I feel, therefore I am.”’⁸ As it happens, Panksepp must have misunderstood Descartes’ both Latin and French assertions. For Descartes wrote, both in Latin and in French, what Panksepp wanted him to assert. In *Meditationes de prima philosophia* Descartes explains: ‘Res cogitans. Quid est hoc? Nempe dubitans, intelligens, affirmans, negans, volens, nolens, imaginans quoque, & sentiens’,⁹ and even more explicitly: ‘hoc est proprie quod in me sentire appellatur; atque hoc præcise sic sumptum nihil aliud est quàm cogitare.’¹⁰ This statement of Descartes cannot be accidental because he maintained it in a later work: ‘Cogitationis nomine, intelligo illa omnia, quæ nobis consciis in nobis sunt, quatenus eorum in nobis conscientia est. Atque ita non modò intelligere, velle, imaginari, sed etiam sentire, idem est hîc quod cogitare.’¹¹ If so, Descartes’ cogito in his ‘*ego cogito*,

⁸ J. Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience: The Foundations of Human and Animal Emotions*, Oxford 1998, p. 309.

⁹ R. Descartes, *Meditationes de prima philosophia*, p. 28 [‘A thing that thinks. What is that? A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wants, refuses, and also imagines and senses’, tr. J. Bennett]. See also R. Descartes, *Meditations*, [in:] *Œuvres de Descartes*, vol. 9, (eds) Ch. Adam & P. Tannery, Paris 1904, p. 22: ‘une chose qui pense [...] C’est à dire une chose qui doute, qui conçoit, qui affirme, qui nie, qui veut, qui ne veut pas, qui imagine aussi, & qui sent.’

¹⁰ R. Descartes, *Meditationes de prima philosophia*, [in:] *Œuvres de Descartes*, vol. 7, (eds) Ch. Adam & P. Tannery, Paris 1904, p. 29 [‘what is called ‘sensing’ is strictly just this seeming, and when ‘sensing’ is understood in this restricted sense of the word it too is simply thinking’, tr. J. Bennett]. See also R. Descartes, *Meditations*, p. 23: ‘ce qui en moy s’appelle sentir, & cela, pris ainsi précisément, n’est rien autre chose que penser.’

¹¹ R. Descartes, *Principia philosophiæ*, [in:] *Œuvres de Descartes*, vol. 8, (eds) Ch. Adam & P. Tannery, Paris 1905, p. 7 [‘By the word ‘thought’, I understand all those things which occur in us while we are conscious, insofar as the consciousness of them is in us. And so not only understanding, willing, and imagining, but also sensing, are here the same as thinking’, tr. V.R. Miller & R.P. Miller]. See also R. Descartes, *Principes de la philosophie*, [in:] *Œuvres de Descartes*, vol. 9, (eds) Ch. Adam & P. Tannery, Paris 1904, p. 28: ‘Par le mot de penser, j’entends tout ce qui se fait en nous de telle sorte que nous l’apercevons immédiatement par nous-mêmes; c’est

*ergo sum*¹² also comprehends feeling, at least insofar as Latin *sentire* as well as French *sentir*, refer to feeling.

Now, it may be objected that in the three Latin contexts quoted (and also in their French equivalents) Descartes is not explicit in stating that *sentire/sentir* refers to emotions. As a response, it can be observed that for none of the acts listed as *cogitationes*, its object is given. Thus, there is no reason not to include *feeling an emotion* in a class of ‘all those things which occur in us while we are conscious, insofar as the consciousness of them is in us.’¹³ Next, Descartes is explicit about ‘*animi commotiones, sive animi pathemata, & affectus, ut lætitiæ, tristitiæ, amoris, odii, & similibus*’¹⁴ being one of two classes of inner senses (or: feelings) (‘*sensus interni*’).¹⁵ Finally, in *Passions de l’âme*, Descartes not only explicitly speaks about ‘*sentir ses passions*’¹⁶ ou ‘*sentir [...] Tristesse*’,¹⁷ but more importantly, claims that passions are ‘*si proches & si interieures à nostre ame, qu’il est impossible qu’elle les sente sans qu’elles soient veritablement telles qu’elle les sent.*’¹⁸ Accordingly, reading *ego cogito, ergo sum* as not including affectivity, is not a proper reading of what Descartes said.

In a footnote to his statement, Panksepp writes: ‘we probably should not persist in chastising Descartes for giving primacy to “I think, therefore I am.”’¹⁹ In *The Passions of the Soul*, Descartes did accept the primacy of emotions in experience [...].’ Well—better such a remark than nothing. Yet it appears only in a footnote at the end of his book and has had no real impact on how Panksepp’s statement is read. One example of how this inaccuracy is reproduced can be found in Oatley, another highly cited author, who writes: ‘Panksepp has said that Descartes might properly have announced not “I think therefore I am,” but “I feel therefore I am.”’²⁰

pourquoy non seulement entendre, vouloir, imaginer, mais aussi sentir, est la mesme chose icy que penser.’

¹² R. Descartes, *Principia philosophiæ*, p. 7.

¹³ R. Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, tr. V.R. Miller & R.P. Miller, Dordrecht 1991, p. 5.

¹⁴ R. Descartes, *Principia philosophiæ*, pp. 316–318 [‘all the stirrings, or passions, and all the states of the rational soul, such as happiness, sorrow, love, hatred, and similar things’, tr. V.R. Miller & R.P. Miller].

¹⁵ French text (R. Descartes, *Principes de la philosophie*, pp. 45, 311) runs as follows: ‘certaines choses que nous experimentons nous-mesmes, qui ne doiuent point estre attribuées à l’*ame* seule, ny aussi au corps seul, mais à l’étroite ... vnion qui est entre eux [...] les émotions ou les passions de l’*ame* [...] l’émotion à la colere, à la joyè, à la tristesse, à l’amour, &c. [...] Le second [sens interieur] comprend la joye, la tristesse, l’amour, la colere, & toutes les autres passions [...]’

¹⁶ R. Descartes, *Passions de l’âme*, [in:] *Œuvres de Descartes*, vol. 11, (eds) Ch. Adam & P. Tannery, Paris 1909, Art. 33, or Art. 36: ‘sentir [...] cette passion.’

¹⁷ R. Descartes, *Passions de l’âme*, Art. 110.

¹⁸ R. Descartes, *Passions de l’âme*, Art. 26 [‘they are so close and so internal to our soul that it cannot possibly feel them unless they are truly as it feels them to be’, tr. R. Stoothoff].

¹⁹ J. Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience*, p. 420.

²⁰ K. Oatley, *Emotions. A Brief History*, Oxford 2004, p. 69.

An overintellectualizing (or anti-emotionalizing) reading of Descartes' *ego cogito, ergo sum* predates Panksepp's volume by a long way. It has been suggested many times before, especially by authors inclined toward overintellectualization—far too many to name here. I cite Panksepp, however, because he is one of the most influential contemporary authors on emotion²¹ and for that reason, his misreading carries greater weight, as Oatley's example demonstrates. What is also surprising is that, rather than showing greater sensitivity to other emotion-centered thinkers or being inclusive of affective content, Panksepp was among the most explicit in excluding any emotional dimension from Descartes' phrase.²²

(For Descartes' blunder see below 2.6.)

2.3. Karol Wojtyła on Max Scheler

Wojtyła's assessment of Scheler's view on affectivity is negative.²³ However, my point here is not simply that his assessment is negative, but that in making it, he reports Scheler's view inaccurately. Before addressing this, a brief preliminary note is in order.

Scheler's central term for addressing the affective realm is *Gefühl*.²⁴ In their English translation of *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik*—a work Wojtyła constantly refers to and describes as presenting Scheler's system 'in the most masterful way'²⁵—Frings and Funk render *Gefühl* by *feeling*. This translation choice seems to have been self-evident to them, as they make no mention of it in their *Foreword*, where they otherwise discuss 'certain specifics of the translation.'²⁶ Interestingly, this choice aligns with remarks by other prominent thinkers and translators. For example, Jung noted: 'German psychologists have already recommended the suppression of the word *Empfindung* for feeling, and propose that one should use the word *Gefühl* (feeling) for values, while the word

²¹ According to Google Scholar, Panksepp is the second most cited author under the label *emotions*, and his book *Affective Neuroscience* has been cited 13909 times [available at: <https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=pl&user=8BYBejUAAAAJ>, accessed 6.10.2025].

²² One anonymous reviewer objected that 'Panksepp may not have misread Descartes, but simply referred to the popular interpretation of the philosopher.' I find this a rather odd explanation, insofar as the relevant chapter does not engage with popular opinions.

²³ K. Wojtyła, *Wykłady lubelskie*, Lublin 1986, pp. 28–30.

²⁴ See M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik*, Halle a. d. S. 1916, passim.

²⁵ K. Wojtyła, *Wykłady lubelskie*, p. 21. See K. Wojtyła, *The Lublin Lectures*, [in:] K. Wojtyła, *The Lublin Lectures and Works on Max Scheler*, tr. G. Ignatik, Washington, DC 2023, p. 3: 'a system that appeared in many of this author's works, though most principally in the work *Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik* [...].'

²⁶ M. Scheler, *Formalism in ethics and non-formal ethics of values*, tr. M.S. Frings & R.L. Funk, Evanston 1973, p. xiv.

Empfindung should be used for sensation.²⁷ Similarly, Kaufmann observed in a footnote to his translation of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*: "'feeling" is needed to render Gefühl [...]."²⁸ The same choice was made by Anscombe in her translations of *Philosophical Investigations*²⁹ and *Zettel*,³⁰ and by Luckhardt and Aue in their translation of *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*.³¹ Given this, *Gefühl* is more accurately translated as *feeling* rather than *emotion*, especially since the German language has a distinct counterpart for the latter: *Emotion*.³²

Although two English translations of Wojtyła's work are currently available,³³ it is necessary to address the original Polish version, as the deformation in question appears there. As it stands, when reporting Scheler's views, Wojtyła repeatedly uses the Polish term *emocja* (*Emotion*) instead of *uczucie* (*Gefühl*). Given Wojtyła's knowledge of German, this cannot be dismissed as a simple oversight. What is particularly striking is that in Polish *emocja* carried, and arguably still carries, a more negative connotation than *uczucie*. For instance, the phrase *kierowany emocjami* [*guided by emotions*] suggests impulsiveness or irrationality, whereas *kierowany uczuciami* [*guided by feelings*] implies a more balanced or reflective affective attitude. Moreover, *emocja* also has a significantly narrower semantic range than *uczucie*.³⁴

If I am correct that replacing *uczucie* with *emocja* constitutes not only a distortion of the original context but also, more importantly, a reduction—and consequently a devaluation—of Scheler's original view, then Wojtyła has made that view all the more vulnerable to criticism. As a side note—almost a grotesque one, I would say—it is worth adding that in another section (*Emocjonalizm*

²⁷ C.G. Jung, *The Tavistock Lectures. (1935) Lecture I*, [in:] C.G. Jung, *Collected Works*, vol. 18: *The Symbolic Life. Miscellaneous Writings*, tr. R.F.C. Hull, London 1977, p. 30.

²⁸ F. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, [in:] *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, tr. W. Kaufmann, New York 2000, p. 210.

²⁹ See L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe, Oxford 1953, §§ 243., 283., vi, viii.

³⁰ See L. Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, (eds) G.E.M. Anscombe & G.H. von Wright, tr. G.E.M. Anscombe, Berkeley–Los Angeles 1970, e.g. §§ 67., 68.

³¹ See L. Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. 2, (eds) G.H. von Wright & H. Nyman, tr. C.G. Luckhardt & M.A.E. Aue, Oxford 1980. While *emotion* is a rendering of *Gemütsbewegung*, *Empfindung* renders *sensation* (L. Wittgenstein, *Zettel*, § 488.). See also L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §§ 256., 257. for *Empfindung* translated as *sensation*.

³² In *Formalismus ... Emotion* is used only twice: 'geistigen Emotionen' (M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik*, p. 371) *contra* 'geistigen Gefühle' (ibidem, *passim*) and 'eine Emotion' (ibidem, p. 376). By contrast Scheler often uses adjectivally *emotional*, e.g. Part II, V. 8. 'Zur Schichtung des emotionale Lebens.'

³³ See K. Wojtyła, *The Lublin Lectures: Wykłady Lubelskie*, tr. H. McDonald, Lublin–Rome 2020 and K. Wojtyła, *The Lublin Lectures*, tr. G. Ignatik.

³⁴ See R. Zaborowski, *Feeling as a Linguistic Category*, tr. L. Kawalec, "Studia Semiotyczne – English Supplement" 2015, vol. 25, pp. 253–272.

[*Emotionalism*]), Wojtyła applies the adjectival form of *uczucie* (*uczuciowy*) when referring to Kant, while still using *emocja* and its adjectival form (*emocjonalny*) in reference to Scheler. For example: ‘Scheler [...] życia emocjonalnego [...] Kant [...] uczucia zmysłowe [...] Kant [...] przeżycia uczuciowe [...] Scheler [...] przeżycia emocjonalne [...]’.³⁵

(For Scheler’s blunder, see below 2.4.)

2.4. Max Scheler on Plato³⁶

In his fundamental work, Scheler stated: ‘Plato, too, fell victim of the deception of the ancient and historically very effective division of spirit into “reason” and “sensibility”’.³⁷ This is an extremely general assertion, especially given that no reference to any specific Platonic text is provided.³⁸ It is therefore difficult to determine which passage—or passages—Scheler has in mind, or which terms used by Plato he takes to correspond to *spirit*, “*reason*”, and “*sensibility*”. The fact that the latter two are placed in quotation marks makes the meaning even more ambiguous. This is particularly puzzling because Scheler read Greek and even quotes Greek passages just a few pages later in the same book. Since he does not do so here, it is hard to determine precisely what he means by these three terms. The reader is thus left with a vague and negative portrayal of Plato—as a mere ‘victim of the deception.’³⁹ As it stands, one can either reject Scheler’s statement or accept it on trust,⁴⁰ but one cannot assess it against Plato’s actual

³⁵ K. Wojtyła, *Wykłady lubelskie*, pp. 158–159. In McDonald’s (K. Wojtyła, *The Lublin Lectures: Wykłady Lubelskie*, pp. 337–338) translation the difference is wiped out: ‘Scheler [...] emotional life [...] Kant [...] sensorial feelings [...] emotional lived experiences [...] Scheler [...] emotional lived experiences [...]’ Instead, Ignatik’s (K. Wojtyła, *The Lublin Lectures*, pp. 140–141) translation is faithful insofar as the difference has been maintained: ‘Scheler [...] emotional life [...] Kant [...] sensual feelings [...] affective lived-experiences [...] Scheler [...] emotional lived-experiences.’

³⁶ This section is, to some extent, based on R. Zaborowski, *Plato and Max Scheler on the Affective World*, “*Organon*” 2015, vol. 47, pp. 65–81.

³⁷ M. Scheler, *Formalism in ethics and non-formal ethics of values*, p. 166 (tr. M.S. Frings & R.L. Funk).

³⁸ Unlike elsewhere in the same chapter, e.g. for Husserl (p. 171), Windelband (p. 181), Paul (p. 183), Hegel (p. 186), and several others. On the next page M. Scheler, *Formalism in ethics and non-formal ethics of values*, p. 167, alludes to ‘Socratic-Platonic intellectual idealism [...] mistaken at the outset.’ Again no reference is provided. Here I cannot argue against the attribution of the so-called intellectualism to Socrates and/or Plato.

³⁹ It would be too speculative at this point to assess the extent to which this statement—and similar ones made by others (see 2.8. below)—have contributed to a distorted portrayal of Plato’s thought.

⁴⁰ Elsewhere, that is in the essay *The Nature of Philosophy and the Moral Preconditions of Philosophical Knowledge*, [in:] M. Scheler, *On the Eternal in Man*, tr. B. Noble, New Brunswick–London 2010, p. 90, M. Scheler, speaks about ‘Platonic requirement that in philosophy the whole man, not only his isolated intellect or isolated sensibility, etc., should seek participation in Reality.’

writings, since no textual reference is given. Alternatively, one might examine Plato's corpus directly. When one does, however, a far more nuanced picture emerges from the dialogues. Though I cannot explore this fully here,⁴¹ I would note that Plato presents a hierarchical model of affectivity, with several distinct strata clearly distinguished. This is why Scheler's claim that 'no one distinguished the *strata* of the emotional life'⁴² constitutes yet another inaccuracy—and an injustice—to Plato. The passage most commonly cited in this context comes from the *Republic*, where Plato explicitly distinguishes three levels of pleasure and three levels of desire.⁴³ In light of this, Scheler's assertion appears all the more questionable—especially considering that his own hierarchical approach to affectivity was anticipated by Plato's model. Even if this recurrence is purely coincidental, intellectual fairness would require acknowledging its presence in Plato. Scheler's failure to do so—and his implicit denial—renders his deformation of Plato's position particularly striking.

(For other examples of blunder about Plato see below 2.8.)

2.5. Many authors on Hume

Hume has repeatedly been criticized for stating that '[r]eason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.'⁴⁴ The list of those who have reproached him for this claim is long. Let me limit myself to a few examples. First, are Morris and Brown, who observe: 'Having exposed reason's pretensions to rule, Hume inverts the rationalist's ideal of the good person, and concludes that "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them" (T 2.3.3.4/415).'⁴⁵ Next, is Fieser, who writes: 'Reason, he argues, is completely inert when it comes to motivating conduct, and without some emotion we would not engage in any action. Thus, he writes, "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them" (*Treatise*, 2.3.3.4).'⁴⁶ And so on. It is worth noting, however, that one occasionally finds a more nuanced reading. For

⁴¹ See n. 74, below.

⁴² M. Scheler, *Formalism in ethics and non-formal ethics of values*, p. 357.

⁴³ See Plato, *Respublica*, [in:] *Platonis Opera*, vol. 4, (ed.) J. Burnet, Oxford 1902, 580d7–8: τριῶν ὄντων τριτταὶ καὶ ἡδοναὶ μοι φαίνονται, ἐνὸς ἐκάστου μία ἰδίᾳ ἐπιθυμία τε ὡσαύτως [‘The three parts have also, it appears to me, three kinds of pleasure, one peculiar to each, and similarly three appetites and controls,’ tr. P. Shorey].

⁴⁴ D. Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, (eds) L.A. Selby–Bigge & P.H. Nidditch [2nd ed.], Oxford 1978, p. 415.

⁴⁵ W.E. Morris & Ch.R. Brown, *David Hume*, [in:] *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (eds) E.N. Zalta & U. Nodelman, 2023.

⁴⁶ J. Fieser, *David Hume*, [in:] *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. A Peer-Reviewed Academic Resource*.

example Schmitter emphasize that there is ‘at least one sense in which “reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions” (T II.3.3 415).’⁴⁷

But all such criticisms are groundless because they ignore Hume’s proviso. In fact, they are unfair, as omitting the surrounding context distorts Hume’s actual intention. Hume introduces the famous sentence with a crucial qualification: ‘We speak not strictly and philosophically when we talk of the combat of passion and of reason.’ Yet the authors mentioned above fail to consider this proviso and instead read the sentence as if it were a strict and philosophical conclusion. In doing so, they fundamentally misrepresent what Hume intended to convey.⁴⁸

2.6. Descartes on the Ancients

Descartes’ *The Passions of the Soul* famously opens with the following declaration: ‘The defects of the sciences we have from the ancients are nowhere more apparent than in their writings on the passions.’⁴⁹ Since Descartes does not develop or argue for this categorical and absolute claim, one may wonder which *Ancients* he has in mind are. Given that the treatise grew out of his correspondence with Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia,⁵⁰ might seem natural—if one is inclined to be especially charitable—to look there for clarification. In fact, in his letter of 21 July 1645 to the Princess, Descartes mentions one ancient author: Seneca.⁵¹

⁴⁷ A.M. Schmitter, *Hume on the Emotions*, [in:] *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (ed.) E.N. Zalta, 2021.

⁴⁸ It has been objected more than once that I should further develop the section on Hume. As one anonymous reviewer put it, the current version does not address ‘a) how Hume uses the terms “emotion,” “passion,” “affection,” and “sentiment” and what they mean, b) whether Hume uses these terms consistently, as he might provide reasons for various interpretations, c) what interpretative errors researchers make, d) why they make them, e) what follows from this?.’ I must say, I fail to see how answering these questions is directly relevant to my central concern, which is simply to demonstrate that a particular sentence by Hume has been misread and misrepresented. I addressed this issue in greater detail in a paper I presented in 2011—*David Hume on the so-called reason-emotion dichotomy*—at British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies 40th Annual Conference “Emotion”, St Hugh’s College, Oxford. In that presentation, I argued that: ‘[...] Hume’s position is substantial for the analysis of affectivity as such. It lends an essential insight into its dynamic and its relation to what is called rationality and what, to some extent, could be termed *anaffectivity*—given that affectivity is often subsumed under the label of *irrationality*.’ The presentation remains unpublished.

⁴⁹ R. Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, tr. R. Stoothoff, [in:] *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 1, Cambridge 1985, Art. 1.

⁵⁰ See e.g. R. Stoothoff, *Translator’s preface*, [in:] *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 1, Cambridge 1985, p. 325.

⁵¹ See R. Descartes, *Correspondance, juillet 1643 à avril 1647*, [in:] *Œuvres de Descartes*, vol. 4, (eds) Ch. Adam & P. Tannery, Paris 1901, pp. 252–253: ‘[...] L’un de ces moyens, qui me semble des plus utiles, est d’examiner ce que les anciens en ont écrit [...] afin que mes lettres ne soient pas entièrement vuides & inutiles, ie me propose de les remplir dorenavant des considerations que ie tireray de la lecture de quelque liure, a sçavoir de celuy que Senèque [...]’ [‘Of these

In a subsequent letter, dated 4 August 1645, Seneca is again mentioned, this time explicitly in relation to the passions.⁵² Finally, in a third letter, dated 18 August 1645, Descartes refers not only to Seneca—who is the subject of five paragraphs—but also to Epicurus (two paragraphs), Zeno (one paragraph), and Aristotle (one paragraph, the shortest one).⁵³ However, in this letter, no direct reference to the passions is made. Instead, Descartes discusses their views in the context of *the supreme good* [*le souverain bien*]. Moreover, Aristotle is not criticized; on the contrary, the paragraph devoted to him reads: ‘Car Aristote ayant considéré le souverain bien de toute la nature humaine en general, c’est a dire celuy que peut avoir le plus accompli de tous les hommes, il a eu raison de le composer de toutes les perfections dont la nature humaine est capable; mais cela ne sert point à notre usage.’⁵⁴ Epicurus is not criticized either: ‘Enfin Epicure n’a pas eu tort, considerant en quoy consiste la beatitude, & quel est le motif, ou la fin a laquelle tendent nos actions, de dire que c’est la volupté en general, c’est a dire le contentement de l’esprit [...]’.⁵⁵

Therefore, it is difficult to determine whether the *Ancients* referred to in *The Passions of the Soul* are the same as those mentioned in Descartes’ letters to the Princess. If they are not, then we are left with Descartes’ vagueness, generalizations, and a striking lack of precision in making what is intended to be a substantial claim about ‘les sciences [...] defectueuses [...] des Ancients’ with regard to the passions.⁵⁶ If, however, he is referring to the same Ancients in both cases, what then? Then it would appear that Descartes is overstating his case by using the broad label *Ancients* while in fact referring to no more than four philosophers. Moreover, two of them are Hellenistic and one is Roman—in

means, one of the most useful—it seems to me—is for us to examine what the ancients wrote about happiness [...] I don’t want my letters to be entirely empty and useless, I propose from now on to fill them with thoughts that I will draw from reading one book, Seneca [...]’, tr. J. Bennett].

⁵² See R. Descartes, *Correspondance, juillet 1643 à avril 1647*, p. 267: ‘[...] il me semble que Senecue eust deu nous enseigner toutes les principales veritez, dont la connoissance est requisite pour faciliter l’usage de la vertu, & régler nos desirs & nos passions, & ainsi iouir de la beatitude naturelle [...]’ [‘Seneca ought to have taught us all the principal truths we need to know to make the practice of virtue easy and to regulate our desires and passions, and thus to enjoy a natural beatitude.’, tr. J. Bennett]. In her answer of 16 Aug. 1645, Elisabeth mentions Epicurus (see *ibidem*, p. 269).

⁵³ See *ibidem*, pp. 271–278.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 276 [‘Aristotle was thinking of the supreme good of the whole of human nature in general, i.e. the good that can be possessed by the most accomplished of all men; so he was right to make it consist of all the perfections of which human nature is capable. But that ‘meaning’ is not useful to us.’, tr. J. Bennett].

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 276 [‘Finally, Epicurus was thinking about what beatitude consists in and what the motive or end is to which our actions tend; so he wasn’t wrong to say that it is pleasure in general, i.e. contentment of the mind.’, tr. J. Bennett].

⁵⁶ R. Descartes, *Passions de l’âme*, Art. 1.

any case, all three are post-Aristotelian. This point is worth emphasizing because Hellenistic philosophies of affectivity differ significantly from the views of Plato and Aristotle. They also diverge from those of pre-Platonic thinkers, at least insofar as their positions can be reconstructed from their extant fragments. These differences are not minor—they are as substantial as the contrast between *apatheia* and *metriopatheia*.⁵⁷

However, given that in the last of the three letters referred to above Descartes is not critical of Aristotle—and not of Epicurus either—and that there is no explicit mention of the passions, it seems plausible that, when writing Art. 1 of his treatise, Descartes had neither Aristotle nor Epicurus in mind. The only remaining candidate is Seneca, who is explicitly referred to as an *Ancient* and discussed in relation to the passions. This is, of course, a conjecture—but, alas, I see no other way of determining who *the Ancients* of Art. 1 might be. Therefore, Descartes may have meant either four ancient philosophers—or, indeed, only one (Seneca)—at the very beginning of *The Passions of the Soul*. Alternatively, he may have intended the term *Ancients* in a more literal sense: to refer to all of them, either without exception or at least the majority. But who, precisely, would that include? In either case, Descartes' opening sentence in *The Passions of the Soul* appears to be a clear overstatement, and an injustice to ancient philosophers. Their views on the passions cannot reasonably be treated as a single, homogeneous body of thought, merely because they emerged in the same historical period—the one we conventionally call antiquity, which in fact spanned nearly a thousand years.

Now, the very interesting point—and the one that makes me suspect Descartes is guilty of more than an innocuous blunder—is that he ends his treatise with a claim strikingly similar to Aristotle's. He writes: 'Now that we are acquainted with all the passions, we have much less reason for anxiety about them than we had before. For we see that they are all by nature good, and that we have nothing to avoid but their misuse or their excess [...]' and 'know how to put these passions to good use.'⁵⁸ As I see it, Descartes' words are reminiscent, for example, of the following:

[...] this is concerned with emotions and actions, in which one can have excess or deficiency or a due mean. For example, one can be frightened or bold, feel desire or anger or pity, and experience pleasure and pain in general, either too much or too little, and in both cases wrongly; whereas to feel these feelings at the right time, on the right occasion, towards the right people, for the right purpose and in the right manner, is to feel the best amount of them, which is the mean amount [...] (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1106b, tr. H. Rackham).

⁵⁷ On *apatheia* vs *metriopatheia* see Plutarch, *Consolatio ad Apollonium*, [in:] *Plutarchi Chaeronensis Moralia*, vol. 1, (ed.) G.N. Bernardakis, Leipzig 1888, 102d–e.

⁵⁸ R. Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, Art. 211, Art. 212 (tr. R. Stoothoff).

To be more precise, what Descartes and Aristotle share is the *metriopatheia* view, which was also supported, at least in some works, by Plato.⁵⁹ If this is the case, it would suggest that, from Descartes' perspective, some ancient thinkers—though it remains unclear exactly who—held defective theories of the passions, while others, such as Aristotle⁶⁰ and, to some extent, Plato, advanced views that are quite close to his own. This is not the place to explore their similarities and differences in detail. Let me conclude this section by noting that Descartes' statement lacks precision, is inaccurate, and results in an absurdly reductive portrayal of the Ancients.

2.7. Many authors on the Stoics

Another case of persistent deformation is the Stoic view of emotions—although in this case, the Stoics themselves may bear some responsibility for the difficulty in grasping their position. Part of the problem may stem from more or less substantial differences between Zeno, Chrysippus, and other Stoic thinkers.⁶¹ The Stoics—Zeno, in this instance—defined '[p]assion, or emotion [τὸ πάθος]' as '[...] an irrational [ἄλογος] and unnatural [παρὰ φύσιν] movement in the soul, or again as impulse [ὀρμή] in excess. [...]' Chrysippus and others further held 'emotions to be judgments [τὰ πάθη κρίσεις εἶναι] [...]'⁶² Accordingly, 'the wise man is passionless [ἀπαθῆ]'.⁶³ Yet the picture is more nuanced, for '[a]lso they say that there are three emotional states which are good [εὐπαθείας]'.⁶⁴ As I see it, there is something problematic in this formulation, which amounts—at least to a large extent—to evacuating all emotions through one door, only to reintroduce (some of) them through another. If this is not the case, then it must be a linguistic lapse⁶⁵ that could have been avoided, for example by introducing a

⁵⁹ E.g. Plato, *Republica* 619a5–7 and Plato, *Philebus*, [in:] *Platonis Opera*, vol. 2, (ed.) J. Burnet, Oxford 1901, 66a6–8. For more on Plato, see below 2.8.

⁶⁰ For instance, A. Ridley, in *Emotion and Feeling*, "Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society. Supplementary Volume", 1997, vol. 71, seems to hold the view that it is Aristotle who is referred to at the beginning of *The Passions of the Soul*. For, from the statement 'neither Descartes nor Lyons got the ancients quite right' (p. 169), he moves to '[n]either Lyons nor Descartes gets Aristotle right, then [...]' (p. 169). However, he does not explain why this should be the case.

⁶¹ See S. Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*, Oxford 2004, pp. 61–62.

⁶² Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, (ed.) R.D. Hicks, tr. R.D. Hicks, London 1925, VII 110–111.

⁶³ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* VII 117 (tr. R.D. Hicks). See J. Dillon, *Metriopatheia and Apatheia: Some Reflections on a Controversy in Later Greek Ethics*, "The Society for Ancient Greek Philosophy Newsletter" 1978, vol. 27, p. 1: 'for Zeno of Citium and his immediate successors (SVF I 205ff), all pathos was an irrational movement of the soul, a hormone pleonazousa, an 'excessive impulse', which must simply be removed from the soul of the wise man.'

⁶⁴ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* VII 116 (tr. R.D. Hicks).

⁶⁵ R. Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind. From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation*, Oxford 2000, pp. 206–207, argues against 'dispute on *apatheia* [being] merely verbal' or *pathos* being ambiguous.

general category of emotions (πάθη), and then subdividing it into two subclasses: negative emotions to be eradicated (κακοπάθειαι) and positive emotions to be preserved and cultivated (εὐπαθειαι).⁶⁶ I cannot enter here into the extensive debate provoked by this issue.⁶⁷ Let me simply note that if the latter interpretation holds, then the concept of ἀπάθεια is either invalid or must be taken in a significantly restricted sense. Although various—and often conflicting—interpretations have emerged, the prevailing one,⁶⁸ which has taken on a life of its own, holds that the Stoics advocated an uncompromising eradication of affectivity in order to achieve *apatheia* in an absolute sense.⁶⁹ What matters for this inquiry is that the Stoic view of emotions is too often—indeed, in most cases, except perhaps among specialists in Stoicism or scholars focused specifically on emotions in Stoic thought—presented in an overly simplistic way. It is frequently treated as if it were unproblematic, ignoring issues such as those raised above, and as if Stoicism were a doctrine categorically hostile to the realm of affectivity.

2.8. Many authors on Plato

I conclude with what would have been my first example, had I proceeded chronologically: Plato. His views have been subjected to more than one form of deformation. One such example was already discussed in section 2.4., above. Another can be found in Evans, who opens his paper with the claim: ‘Plato, who proposed what may be called ‘the negative view of emotion’ (Evans

⁶⁶ I find it rather odd to understand *eupatheiai* as ‘rational habits’ and *apatheia* as ‘the extirpation of spontaneous emotions’ as does S. Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*, p. 6. T. Dixon, *The History of Emotions*, p. 52, calls the former ‘milder feelings.’

⁶⁷ According to J. Dillon, *Metriopatheia and Apatheia*, pp. 2, 8, ‘the development of the doctrine of eupatheiai in its full form’ makes the Stoic Sage ‘appear very much like the well-moderated Aristotelian gentleman [...] a Stoic eupatheia comes out in practice as being very similar to a properly moderated Platonic-Aristotelian pathos [...]’. S. Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*, pp. 69–70, cites authors (Annas, Irwin, Nussbaum, Brennan) who have tried to rescue the Stoic theory of emotions in various ways. See also M. Pigliucci, *Stoicism*, [in:] *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. A Peer-Reviewed Academic Resource*: ‘As far as the Stoics are concerned, however, it is good to remember that “passion” did not mean what we now mean by that term, and indeed it did not even exactly overlap with the term “emotion” in the modern sense of the word. That is why it is grossly incorrect to say that the Stoics aimed at a passionless life, or at the suppression of emotions. Rather, the Stoics divided the “passions” into unhealthy and healthy ones.’

⁶⁸ See S. Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*, p. 68: ‘Freedom from the emotions (*apatheia*) was in ancient times the best-known Stoic characterization of the conditions of the good life.’ Perhaps in the context of this paper it would be useful to add: *not only* in ancient times.

⁶⁹ Among scholars see e.g. M. Nussbaum, *The Stoics on the Extirpation of the Passions*, “Apeiron” 1987, vol. 20, no 2, pp. 129–177, followed by e.g. J. Hankinson, *Actions and Passions: Affection, Emotion, and Moral Self-management in Galen’s Philosophical Psychology*, [in:] *Passions and Perceptions. Studies in Hellenistic Philosophy of Mind Proceedings of the Fifth Symposium Hellenisticum*, (eds) J. Brunschwig & M. C. Nussbaum, Cambridge 1993, p. 198.

[2001]). According to the negative view, emotions usually affect reasoning for the worse.⁷⁰ Similarly, Zhu and Thagard assert that, for Plato ‘[...] emotion is inferior: emotions are primitive and disruptive to the normal and optimal function of mind. [...] emotion should be under the control of reason for the sake of our normal activities of thought and action.’⁷¹ A third example is provided by Heller: ‘The degrading of feelings and emotions to a low status is not just a byproduct of metaphysics; it belongs to metaphysics’ essential constitution. The model was set by Plato and has been followed ever since.’⁷²

What is characteristic and common to all three authors—or four if one considers Scheler (see 2.4. above)—is that none provides a reference to any passage in Plato’s work, let alone an analysis, that could support such categorial and absolute claims. In Evans, the only reference is to his own work, where he writes: ‘Ever since Plato, many Western thinkers have tended to view emotions as obstacles to intelligent action, or, at best, as harmless luxuries. I call this the negative view of emotion.’⁷³ Again, no reference to any specific passage or work by Plato is provided. Zhu and Thagard, for their part, mention ‘Plato (*Phaedrus*)’ and refer to ‘[t]he metaphor of a charioteer steering a wild horse.’ However, this is an oversimplification—and indeed a distortion—of the well-known allegory in *Phaedrus* (246a–d & 253c–254e), which spans two pages and is far more intricate. To begin with, the allegory concerns two horses, not one, and neither is described as *wild*. Most importantly, Plato does not claim in this allegory that ‘emotion is inferior,’ nor that ‘emotions are primitive and disruptive to the normal and optimal function of mind,’ nor that ‘emotion should be under the control of reason for the sake of our normal activities of thought and action.’ Such a reductive reading is a serious misrepresentation of Plato’s thought.⁷⁴ Finally, Heller also provides no reference. One can only speculate as to the basis on which she made her assertion.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ D. Evans, *The Search Hypothesis of Emotion*, “The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science” 2002, vol. 53, p. 497. He goes on: ‘To the extent that humans can free themselves of emotion, therefore, they can become more rational. Until recently, most philosophers and psychologists have tended to agree with Plato on this matter.’

⁷¹ J. Zhu & P. Thagard, *Emotion and Action*, “Philosophical Psychology” 2002, vol. 15, p. 20.

⁷² A. Heller, *A Theory of Feelings* [2nd ed.], Lanham, MD 2009, p. 1. This is included in *Introduction to the Second Edition*. What she says about Plato in 1st edition of *A Theory of Feelings*, Assen 1979, p. 1, is different: ‘In antiquity feeling was primarily an ethical issue; and the analysis of feelings had always been subordinated to the analysis of virtues. If different virtues were ascribed to different strata of society—as Plato had done—then also different feelings were ascribed to them.’

⁷³ D. Evans, *Emotion. The Science of Sentiment*, Oxford 2001, pp. 31–33.

⁷⁴ For more see e.g. R. Zaborowski, *Plato’s Phaedrus 253e5–255a1 Revisited. A Reappraisal of Plato’s View on the Soul*, “Organon” 2018, vol. 50, pp. 165–207.

⁷⁵ Yet another example of the same tendency is S. Leighton, *The Value of Passions in Plato and Aristotle*, “Southwest Philosophy Review” 1995, vol. 11, pp. 42–56, even if more complex. He claims that in Plato there is ‘a conception of passion and intellect as relatively independent and

Certainly, none of the three is a classicist and, as such, they cannot be expected to be experts on Plato. Nevertheless, I believe that anyone who chooses to refer to a philosopher of Plato's stature ought to read him carefully and avoid propagating inaccurate or unfair readings. There are other scholars who do better in this respect, even if they are not classicists either.⁷⁶ A notable exception to the general trend is Aquinas, who writes: 'Plato held neither with the Stoics, who asserted that all pleasures are evil, nor with the Epicureans, who maintained that all pleasures are good; but he said that some are good, and some evil [...].'⁷⁷ The list of those who have distorted Plato is, speaking generally and approximately, as long as the list of those who have overintellectualized Descartes' *cogito*, or misrepresented Hume's and the Stoics' views on affectivity. But let the above suffice for the purposes of the present treatment.

3. Final Remarks and Conclusions

In the above, I discussed eight cases involving reports of other thinkers' views and focused on the fact that these reports were poorly executed. Because of this, I considered them instances of deformation of theories or views on emotions. It is important to note that these deformations occurred at the level of *reading*, not *interpretation*. Accordingly, they are relatively easy to identify. All eight authors whose views were distorted are philosophers. The distorters include one historian of emotions, one neuroscientist, and three philosophers. In the remaining three cases, where the deformation results from collective authorship, the representative figures I referred to are either philosophers or historians of philosophy. I draw this distinction to emphasize that in the history of the philosophy of emotions such deformations have been committed not only by authors from different epochs, languages, and academic ranks, but also by those from disciplines outside philosophy and its history.

structurally opposed components locked in struggle. Because passions are either simply disruptive or are disposed to be so, intellect must defeat them. [...] a very [sic] negative view of our passions', but in one footnote (n. 16) he is more cautious: 'There is some ambiguity in the text. The main thrust of Plato's argument is directed towards the passions (primarily due to their bodily nature), but at times his attack seems to be on the *bodily* passions. The latter, but not the former, might legitimize certain passions (cf. [*Phaedo*] 81 ff). I don't see that Plato has reconciled these two points of view in this work, but at times appeals to each.' Interestingly, neither the *Phaedrus* nor the *Timaeus* is taken into account.

⁷⁶ See e.g. J. Macmurray, *Reason and Emotion*, London 1935, p. 26, and C.A. Ruckmick, *The Psychology of Feeling and Emotion*, New York–London 1936, pp. 31–32.

⁷⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, tr. The Fathers of the English Dominican Province, New York 1947, Qu. 34, Art. 3. More recently, a neutral position was held by A.W. Price, *Emotions in Plato and Aristotle*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Emotion*, (ed.) P. Goldie, Oxford 2010, pp. 121–142.

One might now ask what the moral of this exemplification is—apart from presenting a *garden of curiosities*. Before answering, let me remind the reader that in this paper *deformation* refers to claiming that someone said something they did not say—or, in extreme case, to claiming that someone said the opposite of what they actually said. The paper addresses deformations in the *reading* of original text, not potentially distorting *interpretations* of those texts. Hence, the first moral is this: there is such a thing as the deformation of sources in the history of the philosophy of emotions. As we have seen in the examples above, the distorters either failed to provide any textual support for their claims, or—if they did cite a passage—they read it out of context. Since this is not a proper way of reading or commenting on a text, the responsibility for the resulting blunders rests with the distorters. If this assessment is correct, then there is no exaggeration, I believe, in calling the above examples—using Scheler’s own words—instances of ‘presuppositions [...] without foundation [...] and, from a historical point of view [...] uncritical assumptions [...] borrowed without scrutiny [...]’.⁷⁸ We may also observe that—perhaps with the exception of Stoicism—the authors whose views were deformed were at the same time targets of the distorters’ criticism. Consequently, it appears that the distorters were not only inaccurate, but also unjust to the authors they attacked. Their misreadings were not incidental but functional: in some cases, they made criticism easier; in others, they made it possible in the first place. Moreover, the distorters did not apply the principle of charity in their readings. Such practices, it seems, do not reflect sound standards of scholarly research. Instead, the claims were often particularly harsh, and made without reference to the relevant passages. When criticism appears at the beginning of a paper or chapter—without discussion or argument—it is all the more aggressive. In some cases, it is true, a proviso is offered—but only in a footnote (e.g. Panksepp; also Leighton) or in a different work entirely (e.g. Scheler).

Next, at least in some example—certainly in 2.2., 2.4. and 2.6., and most likely in 2.3.—the deformation appears to be instrumental in appropriation of a similar view by the distorter, or at least coincides with the presentation of such a view. In fact, the deforming author criticizes a position—after having distorted it—that, in its original form (either as it stands or when read charitably), closely resembles their own. This is striking insofar as the very ideas that the deforming authors reject in their targets often reappear in their own positive accounts.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ M. Scheler, *Formalism in ethics and non-formal ethics of values*, p. 241.

⁷⁹ I would like to be clear about what I am *not* suggesting. In my examples two names appear twice. This was not intentional; I consider it a mere coincidence. More importantly, I do *not*, under any circumstances, mean to imply that an author who distorts the view of others is thereby destined to become a victim of distortion. While such a thing may occur, if it does, it is purely accidental. After all, it would be absurd to think—using my examples—that Descartes’ view was deformed

The exact motivations of the authors in question remain unknown to me. I can only speculate: perhaps they were hasty, negligent, or unfair readers—or perhaps they relied on second-hand accounts upon which they built their interpretations. How could I possibly know their reasons? Maybe a competent psychologist, with sufficient material at hand, could attempt to find out. Alternatively, it might require another paper or a whole book—a more speculative one—to examine the issue carefully. But is the nature of their motivation really important, especially in the absence of a charitable reading? Could it be such as to undermine the very fact of recurrent deformations? I don't think so. In any case, I am not interested in developing a typology or classification of the deformations discussed above. While the unreliability of a commentator's reading is certainly not trivial, it remains a relatively minor issue. After all, we are not bound to depend on anyone's reading; it is typically more prudent to return to the primary sources.

It is true that these deformations occurred independently. However, when considered together, they reveal something quite peculiar—something characteristic of research in the field of emotions. I have presented only eight such cases, to be sure. But insofar as they span various epochs, languages, and disciplines, and involve well-known figures—no longer 'solitary thinkers'⁸⁰ reading only for themselves—they are representative, as a body of evidence, of misreadings, oversimplifications, and deformations within the history of the philosophy of emotions.

The aims of this paper are fourfold. First, to prevent the continued reproduction of such distortions; second, where possible, to rectify the representations of the views of the authors discussed; third, if needed, to stimulate further research aimed at clarifying the meaning of ambiguous passages and contexts; and fourth, even if this sounds banal, to urge a more attentive—and, for that matter, more critical approach to reading those who read others, especially in the context of the history of philosophy of emotions. Given the importance of the figures discussed, a new and more accurate reading of their views may significantly impact how the history of the philosophy of emotions is both perceived and constructed. For, as is well known, theorists of emotion remain far from agreement—not only about what emotions are, but even about how the category of emotion should be understood. Misrepresentation at the level of textual reading does nothing to resolve these foundational disagreements. On the contrary, it adds yet another layer of confusion—one that is both unnecessary and, crucially, avoidable. Therefore, a more careful and accurate reading of Plato, the Stoics, Descartes, Hume and others—not all of whom are discussed in this paper—would contribute

because he had deformed the views of the Ancients, or that Scheler's was *because* he had treated Plato unfairly.

⁸⁰ S. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, [in:] *Kierkegaard's Writings*, vol. 6, tr. W.V. Hong & E.H. Hong, Princeton 1983, p. 6.

to a general improvement of both the history of philosophy of emotions and of the philosophy of emotions itself, assuming one accepts that the latter depends on or at least benefits from the former.⁸¹ Even if it may be too speculative at this stage to assess how much these and similar practices have shaped our current understanding of the relevant thinkers' views—and of emotions more generally—I believe it is reasonable to say that their influence has been significant. If one remains unconvinced, and consider it irrelevant whether such distortions are harmful, then let them continue to deform and falsify the history of the philosophy of emotions—or, more trivially, stop doing it. As the eight cases above suggest, reductionism and devaluation have largely—but not exclusively—been in-house problems, emerging from within the field itself before spreading beyond the philosophy of emotions. This is puzzling, given that authors known as experts on emotion are typically expected to advance, not undermine, the very field they represent.

Let me conclude with the following observation. It seems to me that the authors who deformed their predecessors' views—particularly philosophers and a certain non-historian—could very well have refrained from engaging with those views. But they did not. And the consequences are far from harmless. Affectivity is especially prone to ideologization because, as Ben Ze'ev notes, 'emotions express our most profound values and attitudes,' and 'revealing them may disclose our innermost, private emotions, thereby making us more vulnerable.'⁸² The same may apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to theories of emotions themselves. Most likely, the kinds of deformations found in the history of the philosophy of emotions have few parallels in other fields of research. A more fitting analogy may be found in politics, religion, or any domain where ideology tends to prevail. The suggestion that there may be a connection between the ideologization of emotions and the prevalence of distortions in the philosophical treatment of emotions—as discussed in this paper—is offered here only as a hint.⁸³

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⁸¹ I leave that point aside.

⁸² A. Ben Ze'ev, *The Subtlety of Emotions*, Cambridge, MA 2000, p. 183.

⁸³ Investigating how this happens—if it happens at all—and to what extent, is beyond the scope of this paper.

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