

Wonder in the Age of the *Saeculum*
Spinoza

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WONDER IS TO BE investigated here within the framework of my analyses concerning the transformation of some particular emotions, called *religious* emotions in the early modern period. Habitually, the term “secularization” has come to be used when characterizing the philosophical-cultural processes that took place in the early modern period. In this paper I can only refer to other parts of these analyses in order to clarify what I would like to summarize now by saying I am using this term in the sense the German twentieth-century philosopher Hans Blumenberg established.¹ Earlier, I analyzed the concept pair hope and fear, as well as love, felicity, and generosity. Now I am turning to *wonder*, which is the word that translators of Descartes (1596–1650) and Spinoza (1632–1677) made use of when rendering the Latin-French expression *admiratio-admiration*. The investigation will not extend to the whole of the seventeenth century—I will confine myself to the passage from Descartes to Spinoza—nor will I refer to medieval interpretations of wonder—as I did in earlier papers in connection with other emotions.

It is not a matter of course either that wonder is to be investigated among the passions (emotions), or that it is to be set in the context of religious emotions for that matter. Even Descartes had to overcome considerable difficulties before he was able to assure his reader of some

1. See, for example, my paper “The ‘Secularization’ of Religious Emotions in Spinoza: Hope and Fear, Love, and Generosity,” in *Mededelingen vanwege het Spinozahuis* 89 (Damon, 2007) and “The ‘Secularisation’ of Religious Emotions: Hope and Fear, Love, and Felicity in Spinoza, Descartes, and Hobbes,” in *Religious Emotions*, edited by Wim Lemmens and Walter Van Herck (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2008) 87–104.

sort of legitimacy for his placing wonder among the passions. His basic problem was his own general definition of passion that includes the reference to bodily changes as efficient causes of passion,² whereas he did owe an explanation either of why there are no bodily changes connected to the “passion” of wonder or else why are they so tiny that we are inclined to believe they do not exist at all. In the end he resolves the problem maintaining that there are bodily changes but their proper place is the brain, where bodily processes cannot virtually be observed.³ Although this solution is given only afterwards, when Descartes has already started enumerating and describing the particular passions, he obviously presupposes this when declaring wonder as “the first of all the passions.”⁴ And what is even more he does this on the basis of precisely that property from which it follows that no observable bodily change accompanies it. For it is *not the well-being of the body or the body-mind composite* which wonder aims at—as in the case of the passions in general—but *the knowledge of the thing* we wonder at. As the bodily organ of obtaining knowledge, the brain is and remains effectively concealed from us.

As is well known, Descartes enumerates six primary passions—wonder, love, hate, desire, joy, sadness—and it is within this group of passions that wonder is given first place. However this may be, its state as a passion continues to be uncertain, and in my view this fact explains that its primacy is not so much that of the *first passion* within the system of passions but rather that of something *preceding* the passions, taking *priority* over them. The reason for its precedence is that if the novelty of an object does not capture our attention, we’ll simply contemplate it without any passions; anachronistically speaking, wonder is the general condition of possibility for the passions. This explains the fact that what Descartes accentuates is the fundamentally positive role wonder plays instead of calling our attention to its negative aspects, although the negative aspects are clearly present in his texts: if we wonder too much at an object, this can compromise the use of reason. There cannot be but one antidote against this negativity: knowing everything that can be known.⁵

2. See Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul* (*Les passions de l'âme*, 1649) art. 27.

3. *Ibid.*, art. 70–71.

4. *Ibid.*, art. 53.

5. Even if Descartes himself does not refer explicitly to this layer of meaning, given the general trends of the age, it is obvious that we have to look here for the foundations

From among the positive aspects of wonder there is one that excels the others by far: within the series of the passions deduced from or connected—at least partly—to wonder we arrive after some small steps at what Rodis-Lewis famously called “the late fruit” of Descartes’ philosophy, i.e., the passion—and, for that matter, virtue—of generosity (*générosité*). Already in the second article Descartes makes use of distinctions within or in connection to the concept of wonder. There, we find an element that leads our gaze in that direction: veneration (*vénération*) and scorn (*dédain*) are distinguished from esteem (*estime*) and contempt (*mépris*) by the introduction of the point of view of their respective objects that are or are not—more precisely, that we regard or do not regard—“a free cause capable of doing good and evil.”⁶ Clearly, this point of view guides us already forward to the concept of generosity. We can recognize this immediately as soon as we relate these same passions to ourselves, i.e., we reflect upon the possibility of veneration or contempt of *our own main merit*. For one of the principal parts of Cartesian wisdom (*sagesse*) is being—or at least becoming—aware of what can render just our self-esteem or—so could we translate this tenet in the terminology of wonder—what we are entitled to wonder at in ourselves the most. We cannot really expect from Descartes other sorts of answers than what he in fact gives us to this question: the object of our just self-esteem can only be what renders us capable of doing good and evil: “the exercise of our free will and the control we have over our volitions,”⁷ recognizing and wondering at this capability in us is what renders us generous.

of the religious meaning of wonder too. For wonder as the religious phenomenon of the miracle is almost trivially connected to wondering as a mental property: we take for wonder what we wonder at, because the thing in question does not happen in a law-like manner, i.e., according to the laws of nature. In this sense the argument of Descartes that wavers between the positive and negative aspects of wonder can well be projected behind the context of the cognition in the strict sense of the term to the context of the religious cognition and religious emotions as well: if you have less-than enough inclination to wonder, you will not be sensible to the specific religious phenomena; if you are inclined to wonder more-than-enough, you’ll possibly be superstitious and be ignorant of the laws of nature governing natural events. When Descartes calls our attention to the importance of cognition as a remedy against this extreme he suggests a general critical attitude concerning the objects evoking wonder: “here is no remedy for excessive wonder except to acquire the knowledge of many things and to practice examining all those which may seem most unusual and strange” (*ibid.*, art. 76).

6. *Ibid.*, art. 55.

7. *Ibid.*, art. 152.

Before coming to Spinoza it is worthwhile to briefly draw attention to the astonishing fact that wonder and freedom of the will had already been connected in the thought of the youngest Descartes at the very beginning of his career. What is especially astonishing in this connection—true, only one singular fragment witnesses this—is that the role of mediator is played by the authentic religious concept of wonder: “The Lord has made three marvels: something out of nothing; free will; and God in Man.”⁸ I call this an authentic religious concept because this is not colored, so it seems to me, with any critique from the point of view of a skeptical theory of knowledge. In no way can we rightly interpret this thought as if Descartes regarded the mentioned works of God as wonders because they are not observing any laws, and therefore we can only see rarely creation out of nothing, freedom of the will, or even God in man as pure effects of processes regulated by natural laws. I would favor an interpretation according to which this fragment stands on the one side of the threshold of the period [“Epochenschwelle,” in Blumenberg’s terminology] within the modern history of the concept-pair wonder (i.e., miracle) and wonder (i.e., astonishment), whereas evidently, on the other hand, we have the religious skepticism of Hobbes and Spinoza based on a highly critical theory of knowledge.

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As for the theory of affects in Spinoza it can well be supposed that the basic definitions and descriptions of Descartes’s *Passions of the Soul* were carved in Spinoza’s mind, and that Spinoza’s text presenting the theory was written with at least one eye on Descartes’ text—perhaps even more than the other parts of the *Ethics*. Therefore, to understand the lines of thought of the theory of affects in the *Ethics*, we need to discover the way Spinoza accentuated particular theorems differently from Descartes, and what his reasons were for that differing. One of the first important differences of accent can already be seen at the beginning of the first treatise dedicated to the affects, i.e., the third part of the *Ethics*. Spinoza’s first affect is not wonder, which provides the condition of possibility for the *Cartesian* theory of passion *in the sense of the theory of knowledge*, but desire, the conscious appetite, which provides the condition of possibility of the theory of affects *anchoring it in the ontology* as far as it takes

8. *Tria mirabilia fecit Dominus; res ex nihilo, liberum arbitrium et hominem Deum*. The fragment has been preserved in the collection called *Cogitationes privatae*; see AT X, 218.

over from it the concept of man's essence, i.e., his striving to persevere (*conatus*) in its being. This consideration yields the conclusion that it is not a sort of cognition that provides the point of departure for the Spinozean theory of knowledge, but a highly particular sort of being. At the same time we are given only three basic affects—desire, joy, sadness—instead of Descartes's six primary passions. But why should wonder be left out from the system of "basic emotions," the passion that Descartes may have regarded as the foundation, the condition of possibility for the other passions, however doubtful it might have been if wonder is to be recognized as a real passion?

When looking for Spinoza's reasons for leaving out wonder from his group of primary passions we have evidently to start with the view shared by many that Spinoza in a way rendered Descartes's respective theories more consistent than they were in the works of his predecessor. As for the theory of affect this claim can be accepted without much ado. The proposed geometric order does not really allow for six primary passions, whose inner relations among themselves are far from being elaborated and presented systematically. The ideal of a geometric order invites its author to sketch a theory like that of chapter 6 in Hobbes's *Leviathan*: what we are given here is *stricto sensu* just one basis for the theory, which is called *appetite*, and which expresses and embodies something like a general action-readiness, that its subject is motivated. This basic appetite, in its turn, is capable to function in two opposite directions, to- and from- something. This furnishes us with the essential formula of a theory built on three basic affects, and it is from within this theory that Spinoza begins thinking, even if it remains true that the essential difference of his fundamental metaphysical idea from that of Hobbes hindered him from taking over all that was to be found there.

Concerning the pair of affects, love and hate, as Cartesian primary passions it must have been obvious for Spinoza that they can be deduced from joy and sorrow. Consequently, only wonder remained there to be eliminated. Now we can suspect that Spinoza was not really convinced of Descartes's arguments in favor of wonder's being a passion, and in this way wonder finally fell out by itself as it were. This thesis gains support from the series of the definitions of affect, which close the third part of the *Ethics*, where wonder surprisingly comes to the fore: it is right after the definitions of the three basic affects that wonder comes up together with the definition of disdain deduced from—or better: connected to—

wonder. The definition itself does not help us much in understanding why wonder is given this distinguished place: “Wonder is an imagination of a thing in which the Mind remains fixed because this singular imagination has no connection with the others.” But the explication goes a step further toward the clarification of the issue: Spinoza denies the character of an affect to wonder: “So the imagination of a new thing, considered in itself, is of the same nature as the other [imagination], and for this reason I do not number Wonder among the affects.” This is precisely what we mean when saying Spinoza rendered Descartes’s theory more plausible. At the end of the explication Spinoza himself refers to Descartes to the effect that the reader can think the reason for the high ranking of wonder is nothing but the fact that, after Descartes, this is the usual way of enumerating the affects. “I recognize only three primitive, or primary, affects: Joy, Sadness, and Desire. I have spoken of Wonder only because it has become customary for some to indicate the affects derived from these three by other names when they are related to objects we wonder at.”⁹

I myself think this explication is basically right. At the same time, I can also see another reason why Spinoza treated wonder as well as other affects connected to it in such an ambivalent manner. This reason leads us to deeper layers of Spinoza’s system, his concept of religion, will, and generosity. On the one hand, he denied that wonder and its connected affects had the character of a basic affect—in fact he denied they were affects at all; on the other hand, he appreciated the role they play in human life. For in the remark to proposition 52 we see wonder and the whole subsystem of the affects deducible from it, and—as already mentioned—in the summary of the theory of affect, wonder, even before love, obtains the first place after the primary affects. Therefore we have good reasons to think that Spinoza was uncertain concerning how to interpret wonder: in one layer of the text he attributes an important role to wonder, veneration, and generosity, whereas in another there emerge some considerations that urge him to cut off the thread leading from wonder and veneration to generosity—because generosity is not based on the freedom of the will regarded as illusory—and to reassess wonder. Strangely, the main motivation behind this will be that wonder receives

9. Spinoza, *Ethics*, Book 3, AD4 Expl., in *The Complete Works of Spinoza*, vol. 1, ed. E. M. Curley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985).

a religious dimension for Spinoza—just like Hobbes—and a miracle is what is wondered at.¹⁰

It was proposition 52 in the third part of *Ethics* that gave occasion for Spinoza to make a remark on wonder and its subsystem. The proposition reads: “If we have previously seen an object together with others, or we imagine it has nothing but what is common to many things, we shall not consider it (*contemplabimur*) so long as one which we imagine to have something singular.”

One of the important elements of the devaluation of wonder—which is, of course to be understood only in relation to the importance it had in Descartes—can immediately be seen: the dominant mode of cognition in the text of the proposition to which the *remark* with the definition of wonder is attached is the *imagination*. This is the sort of cognition to be blamed for the inadequate ideas—however it may be true, on the other hand, that as human beings, i.e., finite modes, this must be our first access to the world, and this must even remain the case, imagination must remain our continuous point of reference, even if we possess already some adequate ideas as well. In any case, whenever we wonder, we grasp the world in an inadequate manner. The framework for introducing wonder—be it an affect or not—in Spinoza’s referential universe is the question whether we can see something particular in the considered object. But the trouble with wonder is that whether or not we can see something particular in the considered object, the foundation for the whole “consideration” (*contemplatio*) is inadequate cognition: for every object of our imaginative consideration remains true that we always only *think* we see, hear, etc. the object; our idea may be true but it may also be false.

What is common, what is not proper to something, i.e., what is *not* like the aspect of the thing considered in wonder, are the universals forged by the imagination,¹¹ and not the “common notions” that provide the basis for the reason.¹² With a bit—but really only a bit—of exaggeration we can also say that in the default setting of Spinozist wonder we

10. See my “Schmitt, Hobbes, Spinoza: Die Frage nach dem Wunder,” in *Ethik, Recht und Politik bei Spinoza. Vorträge des 6. Internationalen Kongresses der Spinoza Gesellschaft*, ed. M. Senn and M. Walther (Zürich: Schulthess, 2001) 225–38. See also the contribution by Jianhong Chen above.

11. See Spinoza, *Ethics*, Book 2, P40 Expl. 1.

12. See Spinoza, *Ethics*, Book 2, P40 Expl. 2.

see as proper to the thing in question, which is in reality *not*, even if we cannot so easily answer the question concerning what in general could be really proper to a thing, totally different from everything else. We see this aspect as proper to the thing only because this does not harmonize with our expectation concerning this sort of thing, an expectation based on our habitual beliefs on that sort of thing originating in our life experience from our childhood on. Typically, we will wonder when we see a human whose hair, skin, etc. is differently colored than those humans we are usually in contact with. The soldier will wonder when seeing the vestiges of horses in the sand; he must realize there were peasants who went there with their plough horses, instead of soldiers with their battle horses. However, wonder will arise in another way too, and in this sense we will not be more entitled to maintain the soldier was right than to prefer the peasant. Although we can imagine that this circumstance will bother us so much that we launch a scientific project on it, Spinoza thinks this is far from being a typically human reaction. Wonder is the typical affect of the man of resignation—in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670) Spinoza adds superstition to resignation—and not that of someone always on the quest; it is rather to be avoided than recommended.

That is, even if the remark to proposition 52 does resume something of the Cartesian tree of wonder as primary passion, and even if the ramification of the different affects is characteristically Spinozean,¹³ this

13. Characteristically Spinozean, since even in this scholium has artfully been smuggled the distinction, which seems to be the most important characteristics of the Spinozean theory of affect. Following Moreau (“Spinoza et les problèmes des passions,” in *Les passions à l’âge classique*, edited by P.-F. Moreau [Paris: PUF, 2006] 147–51), we can speak about “objective” and “imitative” affects, where an affect is “objective” if it is evoked in us by the emotion’s normal object, while the “imitative” affect is evoked by the fact that we see others in the grasp of an affect: this fact is enough to make an affect be aroused in us: which affect will be aroused depends on whether or not we have emotionally been preheated, and if yes, in which way. In the Scholium to proposition 52, Spinoza projects these two concepts of affect onto each other, namely when treating disdain (*contemptus*), which is introduced polemically, like wonder itself, and he links it to a similarly branchy tree of connected affects as to wonder itself, i.e., this would be a good argument in favor of treating wonder as a basic affect. “To Wonder is opposed to Disdain, the cause of which, however, is generally this: because we see that someone wonders at, loves or fears something, or something appears at first glance like things we admire, love, fear, etc. (by P15, P15C, and P27), we are determined to wonder at, love, fear, etc., the same thing; but if, from the thing’s presence, or from considering it more accurately, we are forced to deny it whatever can be the cause of Wonder, Love, Fear, etc., then the Mind remains determined by the thing’s presence to think more of the things that are not in the object than of those that are (though the object’s presence usually

fact must not let us forget that the whole story deploys within the realm of the passions *in the Spinozean sense*: the affects linked to wonder—which may be regarded as an affect or only an imagination, as we are told in the 4th definition of affect—are based on inadequate ideas. At the same time the affect-tree of wonder is so branchy that we can even ask ourselves if Spinoza ought to pick out wonder and place it among the primary affects, even if his reason for that move would be different from Descartes's reason. For it is no argument against wonder that it cannot be built on inadequate ideas. Considered from a purely systematic point of view the inadequate ideas deserve as much to be treated by the philosopher of the value-neutral way of looking at the world as the adequate, and the passions as much as the actions: sorrow as primary affect can also exclusively and essentially originate from inadequate ideas, i.e., this affect remains always and essentially a passion. Moreover, if we are planning to describe philosophically how our everyday life is dominated by passions the branchy tree of wonder can prove to be at least as useful as that of sorrow: according to Spinoza, wonder permeates everyday life so thoroughly that we do not even possess enough words to name all the derivative sorts of it: "In this way we can also conceive Hate, Hope, Confidence, and other Affects to be joined to Wonder, and so we can deduce more Affects than those which are usually indicated by the accepted words. So it is clear that the names of the affects are found more from the ordinary usage [of words] than from an accurate knowledge [of the affects]."

It is worth mentioning that Spinoza differs fundamentally from Descartes when in the middle of the scholium to proposition 52, at the beginning of his polemical introduction he refers to those who regard disdain (*contemptus*) as the opposite of wonder, since Descartes himself thinks wonder has no opposite at all. The Cartesian passion parallel to Spinozean Disdain is *mépris*, which is the opposite of *estime* but they are both subsorts of wonder. In Spinoza, however, Disdain has an affect tree similar to and equally extended than that of wonder: "Finally, we can conceive Love, Hope, Love of Esteem, and other Affects joined to Disdain, and from that we can deduce in addition other Affects, which we also do not usually distinguish from the others by any single term." This can even be regarded as an argument in favor of the view that

determines [the Mind] to think chiefly of what is in the object)." (*Spinoza Opera*, edited by Carl Gebhardt, vol. 2, 180–81.)

Spinoza would better render wonder and disdain primary affects just like joy and sorrow.

In Descartes, as we have seen, there is a high and short road to generosity, i.e., such consideration of ourselves, in which we see *correctly*, which we can rightly appreciate in ourselves: this is our free will and its staying under the control of reason. Now it is fascinating to recognize that there is a line in Spinoza as well that leads from the scholium on wonder up to propositions 58–59 where the affects called actions are introduced, one of which is precisely generosity.

Proposition 53 that follows the definition of wonder in proposition 52 speaks embarrassingly about the *distinct* functioning of *imagination*. Notwithstanding this, its main point remains the all-important human gesture of drawing our attention to ourselves. We consider what even the adequate ways of cognition can acknowledge as something particular, proper to each of us, i.e., our own power of acting. “When the Mind considers itself and its power of acting, it rejoices, and does so the more, the more distinctly it imagines itself and its power of acting.” This is a claim problematic enough but does not belong to our topic now, so we can skip it. According to proposition 54, “[t]he Mind strives to imagine only those things that posit its power of acting,” whereas proposition 55 formulates the inverse statement: “When the Mind imagines its own lack of power, it is saddened by it.” When reading these statements we cannot resist the temptation to mean that the power of acting in Spinoza takes over in some way the function Descartes attributed to the free will, namely, to be the basis of our just self-esteem. This feeling seems to be reinforced in the first corollary of proposition 55 where being blamed by others—the opposite of esteem—is linked to sorrow, the opposite of joy: “This Sadness is more and more encouraged if we imagine ourselves to be blamed by others.” The joy stemming from the opposite cause will be called in the scholium to the corollary, “Self-love or Acquiescence in himself [*Philautia vel Acquiescentia in se ipso*; Curley’s rendering is “self-esteem,” which takes us too swiftly to my goal].” This affect is not very far from what the first aspect of Cartesian generosity is: just self-esteem. The second corollary can be understood as referring to the inverse of the second aspect of this generosity: “No one envies another’s virtue unless he is an equal.” Envy, Descartes thinks, can in no way be worthy of the generous, who esteems everyone else for the same reason as he esteems himself: for the free will and its being controlled by reason. In a similar

manner, Spinoza reckons envy finally to sorrow, which means envy is “an affection by which a man’s power of acting, or striving, is restrained.” And so it becomes clear that Spinoza’s treatment of wonder also prepares for the introduction of the concept of generosity, at least indirectly. There is, however, a big difference: instead of referring to the Cartesian free will, Spinoza employs the concept of the power of action, which becomes a quasi-normative concept in Spinoza’s hands.

The treatment of those affects that are not based on the inadequate ideas of imagination but are built on the adequate ideas coming from reason or intellect will be introduced in proposition 58 of part 3, and their main branches are given in the scholium to proposition 59. This classification reflects the one comprising all the affects laid down in the main body of part 3 in the sense that in both cases we have one original affect containing all the other—desire and strength of character, respectively—and these basic affects will be ramified into two—joy and sadness here, tenacity and generosity (Curley’s rendering is “nobility”) there. Tenacity and generosity are both sorts of joy, for, as we saw, sorrow cannot but be based on inadequate ideas; therefore, this affect cannot but be a passion. This classification reflects also the tree of wonder, insofar as Spinoza stresses in all two—or three—cases that what he can provide the reader with are only starting-points of a theory of affect much broader than his own, since there are lots of derivative affects arrived at by way of combination of the primary ones and some derivatives.

In the following I will highlight some important feature of the Spinozean concept of generosity, because, as I mentioned, it will be instructive to see the difference between the Cartesian, clearly stated dependence of generosity on wonder and the Spinozean hidden connection between the same affects. Perhaps only those who look for such a connection will find the approach of his *Ethics* based on Descartes’s *Passions of the Soul*:

By Generosity I understand the Desire by which each one strives, solely from the dictate of reason, to aid other men and join them to him in friendship . . . Those actions, therefore, which aim . . . at another’s advantage, I relate to Generosity. So . . . Courtesy, Mercy, etc., are species of Generosity.¹⁴

14. Spinoza, *Ethics*, Book 3, P59, Schol.

First of all, we have to stress that the basis for joining other human beings to us is what reason tells us, *dictamina rationis*. This means that the basis has nothing to do with the imaginative way of cognition, and therefore neither to wonder. What we wonder at is what cannot be connected to the imaginative universals, i.e., what affected our bodies in an order different from the order of affection in other men's bodies. However, wonder may or may not be connected to these universals; it would not be capable to build up harmonious communities among people, because the contents of the particular universals are different in the respective particular people. In contrast to this, the function of generosity is precisely to take into account the level of affectivity of the community that is to be found among people knowing things adequately, on the basis of the common concepts of reason.

Let us elucidate the differences with an example. Suppose there lives someone somewhere whose vision is extremely sharp, and she can assess the distance between the Moon and the Earth without any computation, purely on an empirical basis, just like normal people assess distances found in everyday life. Her idea of the distance will be inadequate, although it will be true on supposition, because it originates from experience (imagination in Spinoza's sense); therefore, the inner certainty of an adequate idea is missing in it. Her idea would be adequate only if she deduced the Moon-Earth distance from the laws of the movements of the celestial bodies as from common concepts of reason. On the other hand, her fellow human beings with normal visual abilities will wonder at our superhuman being, since she maintains something contrary to all everyday observation that yield in them in the same sort of inadequate ideas—although false, on supposition—as in the supervisory being. This is not difficult to imagine, and indeed necessary that the normal and the supervisory people will have an argument with each other about the right distance, since they will be unable to reconcile the different experiential-imaginative bases that has in the same way stiffened in them long before as unalterable habits. The only way to reconciliation, or the formation of a common conviction, would be if all of them became independent from their experiential-imaginative bases taking as their point of departure the law-like common concepts of reason for their computations leading inevitably to adequate and, to be sure, true ideas. One could argue in a similar manner also in the practical philosophy, as in the case of mercy,

whose one form, alms-giving—being built on inadequate ideas—Spinoza refuses—just as in the later Kant—but whose other form, built on adequate ideas and therefore capable to create unity, community, Spinoza enumerates as Generosity among the active affects.

Summing up my argument I maintain that Spinoza devoted much attention to the Cartesian concept of wonder, both in the sense of being the primary passion mentioned in the first place in Descartes, and in the sense of becoming the capstone of the whole building of the system of passion. In a final analysis, however, his manner of thinking philosophically did not allow for him to adopt either of these solutions: wonder as the foundation gives a gnoseological flavor to the whole theory whereas Spinoza took as his foundation the originally and inalienably individual, proper way of *being*. Moreover, wonder is always based on inadequate ideas. Consequently the affects stemming from it will always and necessarily belong to the realm of passions, and what is even worse, they will provide the basis for the political-theological attitudes of the superstitiously religious people, which makes them the supporters of monarchic political order and false religion. From all of this it follows that none of the active affects—one of which being generosity—can be connected to wonder. This is one consideration against wonder's having a positive role in Spinoza's philosophy, but there is another one as well. Whereas Descartes thinks the basis of our own legitimate self-esteem as well as that of others is the free will controlled by reason, in Spinoza this basis will be the—always individual—power of action realized in actions—in the strict sense of the term within the Spinozean theory of affects—that follow from adequate ideas. The freedom of the will that Spinoza thinks is illusory will be replaced by the cognition and recognition of the necessary order of things. The new, the extraordinary loss of all their charm, the disenchanting of the “secularized” period, becomes perfected, and wonder is born anew.