GREEK PHILOSOPHY AND
THE ISSUES OF OUR AGE

VOLUME I

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FEELING - THOUGHT LINKAGE AND ITS FORMS IN THE ANCIENT AND MODERN TIMES

The word linkage has been used in the title to stress strongly the idea of a basic inseparability of feeling and thought one from another. But it is not quite satisfactory. All I can attain by using the word linkage is to stick together feeling and thought again, while, as a matter of fact, I would like to emphasize that they form unity that cannot be dichotomized. One needs one word and one concept for both, because, as it seems to me, they constitute one phenomenon. As we will see, I hope, at the very end, this is the Greek way of viewing things – the way I believe to be the right one.

If this remark seems necessary it is because an ordinary and every day approach is to perceive feeling (or emotion) and thought (or reason) as separate, or even quite opposite and conflicting. Moreover, we are accustomed to the term irrationality, a concept rather broad but negative in itself. The realm of affectivity is often included into irrationality and understood as negative as well. This was rightly observed for instance by A. Schopenhauer who wrote: (...) all that which the reason collects under the wide and negative concept of feeling (...) and: (...) All possible efforts, excitements, and manifestations of will, all that goes on in the heart of man and that reason includes in the wide, negative concept of feeling (...)³.

It is frequently stated that the dichotomy of affectivity and rationality originates from David Hume who put both of them into opposition. For example according to H. Buczyńska-Garewicz the opposition between reason and feelings as two different and conflicting axiological sources had been sketched by Hume and has remained ongoing until today³. However, it is not quite true. In reality, Hume states that passions can be contrary to reason only so far as they are accompany’d with some judgment or opinion⁴. Thereby I infer that if two different psychic functions are to be compared at all, they must be of the same nature. If not, neither the comparison nor parallel are possible because they don’t fit.
That is what can be called the principle of Hume and paraphrased as follows: two phenomena can be compared, be in accord or in discord, if and only if their generic nature is the same (and different are their individual natures). Therefore, we are speaking about conflict between feeling and thought, between reason and affectivity in vain. It is either absurd as they can not be in conflict because of their different natures, or, what we call by the names — feeling and thought — are in fact two similar phenomena or two tendencies of the same generic nature but different only in view of particular, individual features and being on the point of disagreement. Again, two solutions are then possible: either they are two equal, let say, tendencies, of the same level and their conflict results in ambiguity, ambivalence or ambidexterity, or they are of different levels, one is stronger and other is weaker. The first point of view is horizontal, the second one vertical. But in both instances we are mistaken, when we call one of forces feeling and the other reason, especially when we understand by these two names two different, that is different in kind and not only in degree, entities.

The phenomenon in question — feeling-thought unity — has an atomic structure. C. G. Jung used a comparison to a molecule. The elements of psychic life, sensation, ideas, images and feelings, are given to consciousness in the form of certain entities, which if one may risk an analogy to chemistry, can be compared to a molecule. I would say: less than a molecule — an atom — because it is indivisible in itself. Thus, when we speak about feeling or thought (or will), this is only by virtue of a merely technical description. But these elements, distinguished for such a purpose, are in fact inseparable, not to be removed or extracted. I would reject for this reason the notion of constituent parthood used by M. C. Nussbaum: the cognitive elements as part of what the emotions “is”. It can be separated so far as this parthood is conceptual but not ontological, because these cognitive or affective elements do not exist by themselves and there are no separate elements in this feeling-thought phenomenon. Feeling and thought understood by and for themselves are only conceptual abstractions or hypostases. And as such they can be used only for a temporary description. But actually there is nothing like pure feeling or pure thought, just as there is no montagne sans valée. They are a single and indissociable phenomenon feeling-thought.

Nowadays we observe a growing interest in the term emotional intelligence. This is the concern of several psychologists and journalists. Now, in order to produce a first element of the comparison between Ancient and Modern times, let me give only some examples of how recent philosophers deal with this topic. After that I will pass on to my second and final point, that is a presentation of
cient Greek standpoint and the comparison of both. What I am going now to refer to will be presented in reverse chronological order. I would like to delineate as well that I will give only few examples of a larger panorama.

In 2001 M. C. Nussbaum wrote: Emotions, I shall argue, involve judgments about important things (...)11, and: (...) I shall argue that emotions always involve belief of an object combined with thought of the object’s salience or importance (...)12. This is, as she acknowledges, a modified Stoic view, according to which emotions are forms of evaluative judgment that ascribe to certain things and persons outside a person’s own control great importance for the person’s own flourishing13. We can be sure that she understands emotions as reasoning or thinking also because, when she refers to an adversary view of emotion, she describes it as a position according to which emotions are on-reasoning movements,” unthinking energies14. Later on, she speaks about their aboutness, their intentionality, their basis in beliefs, their connection with evaluation and she points out that All this makes them [emotions] look very much like thoughts, after all (...)15. She refers to A. Damasio, Descartes’ Error16. According to him emotion/reason distinction is inaccurate and misleading; emotion is not form of intelligent awareness17.

One year earlier, P. Goldie published his book The Emotions. A Philosophical Exploration. Answering the question what emotions are Goldie id: An emotion is complex in that it will typically involve many different elements: it involves episodes of emotional experience, including perception, thoughts, and feelings of various kinds, and bodily changes of various kinds; and involves dispositions, including dispositions to experience further emotional episodes, to have further thoughts and feelings, and to behave in certain ways.18 Goldie describes a conscious person as capable of thought and feelings19. Notion contains, among others, thoughts and: The emotions are intentional. By this I mean that the thoughts and feelings involved in an emotion have a directedness towards an object.20 And, finally: feelings towards is thinking of ith feeling (...), or even more precisely: Feelings towards, as it is thinking of ith feeling, is a sort of thinking of.21 One should be reminded that in reality this endpoint had already been represented by Ch. S. Peirce: Now every emotion is a subject. (...) In short, whenever a man feels, he is thinking of something22.

In 1993 Michel Guérin published his essay on affectivity of thought23. He tails a comeback to Plato, Descartes and Kant. He points out that La pensée émue, non pas au sens où elle mélangerait des motifs rationnels avec des idées provenant de la sensibilité particulière du sujet, mais bien en tant que
le réel s'impose à elle, qu'elle s'en affecte (...) Ainsi, la pensée prend sens depuis l'émotion qui l'anime et dont elle tire ses intérêts. (...) Or, l'intérêt, en tant qu'il témoigne d'une réalité qui importe à la raison, s'accompagne à chaque fois d'une émotion. 24

In 1980 Ronald de Sousa took the rationality of emotions as granted. He dealt with three specific issues, (a) Whether the rationality of emotions is of the cognitive or the strategic kind, (b) what are the object(s) of emotions, (c) What application can be made to emotion of the principle of minimal rationality? 25. De Sousa is interested in another streak of conceiving emotions, in opposition to those who consider them as threats to rationality? 26. He sums up: (...) in terms of the paradigm scenario alone, the emotion (...) is by definition rational? 27.

Here I stop my list of examples? 28. Now we can ask why Nussbaum does speak about emotions as reasoning and not about reason as feeling, why Damasio does say that certain aspects of the process of emotion and feeling are indispensable for rationality and not that certain aspects of rationality are indispensable for the process of emotion and feeling, why Guérin refers to affectivity of thought and not to reflexivity of feeling and why, according to de Sousa, (...) we speak (...) of "reasonable" emotion? 29 or rationality of emotion(s) rather than of emotional reason or emotionality of reason. Is it accidental or deliberate?

This question is relevant because, after all, why opt for this or that solution. Here I can find an illuminating albeit an older example. The book of J. Macmurray. Reason and Emotion was published in 1935? 30 as a collection of a number of lectures about emotional rationality? 31. His position is to be confronted with the intelligence of emotions/emotionality of intelligence position, especially when Macmurray says: The field in which emotional reason expresses itself most directly is the field of art. The artist is directly concerned to express his emotional experience of the world. His success depends upon the rationality of his emotions. It is evident that Macmurray passes without any additional qualification from emotional reason to rationality of emotion. It seems important to know whether Macmurray uses both emotional reason and rational emotion interchangeably or not? 32. To end with, I remind the title of Ribo's book La logique des sentiments. This expression has been borrowed from Auguste Comte. Système de politique positive ou Traité de sociologie, Instituant la Religion de l'Humanité, t. 2, 1852? 33. And what about Greeks? Are they advocates of reasonable emotion or of emotional reason? Neither or, if you prefer, both of them, as I am going to argue now.

One may wonder whether Goldie's step to avoid the over-intellectualization
of emotions doesn’t produce an opposite effect – an over-emotionalization of thoughts. And if yes, how to find an equilibrium? It seems to me that ancient Greek point of view does offer a convenient solution. That is why having presented the issue now I pass on to the second part: the answer. In Greek philosophy the feeling-thought linkage can be observed at two levels – analytic, in Greek language and synthetic, as a psychological model among various Greek thinkers. However, in both cases the solution is not the same for all Antiquity. I start with Homer and Presocratics.

The psychology of Homer is broadly discussed and of Presocratics we know only disparate fragments. But almost always, more for Homer, less for the Presocratics, the scholars agree that such words as ἔθιμος, ἐφνίς, νόος, grasp simultaneously different psychological aspects: feeling, will and thought. This is a well known fact, even for a beginning student of Greek. For this reason Greek terms are difficult to translate because, I would say, of the close connection between what will be perceived in modern languages separately as affectivity and rationality. Concerning Homer the data were collected by several scholars, e.g. by T. Zielinski, Homeric Psychology (1922)35. Now let me only remind the locus classicus concerning noos as non-intellectual: wrath bursts opens the noos in the chest of even very wise people36 and another one pertaining to thumos as intellectual: he (Menelaus) knew in his thumos that his brother was suffering37.

In the Presocratics a good evidence is to be found in Antiphon the Sophist, one of the latest Presocratics. There is a passage from the Oxyrhynchus papyri where we read: (...) καὶ ἔκτι τῶν νοῶν, ἄν τε δεῖ αὐτὸν ἐπιθυμεῖν καὶ δεῖ μη. (...) (DK 87 B 44, A 3). It is obvious that here noos is the subject of epithumein (desire). I add two of rare commentaries. The first one comes from Untersteiner: τῶν νοῶν τοῦ ὥστε in quest’epoca era sentito «come un organo del corpo»38. In the second Mendrick explains: The appetitive function (ἐπιθυμεῖν) here ascribed to noāj might seem surprising, at least from the standpoint of Platonic and Aristotelian psychology. But already in Homer, the νόος is the locus of emotions such as fear, anger, and joy as well as of intellectual functions. (...) And in ordinary language, the association of desire with νόος in the wider sense of “mind” is unproblematic.39 Very well then. But if so, we can ask what about other philosophers anterior to Antiphon but posterior to Homer. Parmenides for example? Do his noos and his noēn grasp the unproblematic and then combined meaning, let me say, affective, volitional, and rational?

On a more synthetic level, a model level, the solution of the issue comes from Plato’s model, or, what is more accurate to say, from his two models of the soul.
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The first one, presented in the Republic, is static and explicit. The second, implicit (because metaphorical) but dynamic, is developed in the Phaedrus. In the well known but often seriously distorted allegory of charioteer and two horses the charioteer is not only rational, but also possesses other psychic functions, such as the ability to perceive and to feel. The mid part of the soul — white horse — is not only (the) affective one (and is not the only one feeling), and the lowest part of the soul — the black horse — is not only desiring one (and is not the only one desiring). Each of three elements is akin to sense, sensation, feeling, thought and desire.

Moreover, in his last dialogue Plato describes the activity of the soul as follows: Yes, very true; the soul then directs all things in heaven, and earth, and sea by her movements, and these are described by the terms — will, consideration, attention, deliberation, opinion true and false, joy and sorrow, confidence, fear, hatred, love, and other primary motions akin to these; which again receive the secondary motions of corporeal substances, and guide all things (...) But here, Plato gives us particular acts of soul without using general category like thought or feeling.

If I may carry on I should say that the changement begins with Aristotle and becomes obvious in Hellenistic philosophy, the fact strange in itself when one thinks that the majority of works on affectivity in Greek philosophy are devoted to Aristotle and to Hellenistic philosophy. Aristotle argues that (...) and the reasoning faculty is a principle controlling not reasoning but appetite and passions; therefore he must necessarily possess those parts. Hence, we see that on the one hand Aristotle distinguishes verbatim three functions, but on the other hand the distinction between them is not elaborated thoroughly. Similar things can be found in Hume, who states that in order to control something the controlling power has to have similarity with what is controlled. Eventually, in Stoics there is an opposition between what is logic and what is alogic. Feeling, pathos in their terminology, is on alogic side. For this lack of reason, feeling must be extirpated, hence a postulate of apathèia. Apathèia is a lack of alogic element in the soul.

Who does contrast the Ancient view with the Modern view, the integrating one with separating one must ask the following question: who is right? and who is wrong? Does Greek language reproduce well the world or not at all? Is it the primitive language that doesn’t befit the psychic world? Are thought and feeling separate phenomena or are they in inseparable union and speaking of them is relevant only in terms of analysis or technical description? I would sustain this
last suggestion because in fact it is difficult to give an example of pure feeling without any content of thought or pure thought with no feeling at all. Or, if one prefers, a pure spontaneity without any reflection, however small its quantity may be, or a pure reflection without any ingredient of spontaneity. I refer again to Descartes' image of no mountain without a valley.

If this is correct, we see how important it is to underline Greek contribution in this respect. The problem is that these facts are often neglected by contemporary philosophers or distorted by classicists. Actually, contemporary philosophers sustaining the integrating position and referring in this matter to Greek philosophers are few. Here is one of them: The only one of the great philosophers who recognized this parallelism between thought and feeling, and who maintained that our feelings could be true or false, was Plato. He insisted on it both in the Republic and in the Philebus. This view of Plato's has usually been treated by commentators as a forgiveable eccentricity in Plato's thought. (...) It seems to me not merely true but of much more profound significance than Plato himself recognized. It is not that our feelings have a secondary and subordinate capacity for being rational or irrational. It is that reason is primarily an affair of emotion, and that the rationality of thought is the derivative and secondary one. (...) As it is not only the issue of historical account, this neglect creates a serious problem. In fact, if we agree that the integrating position is right, we can take advantage of what we learn from the ancient Greeks.

Another point is that this integrating position appears in the early period of Greek philosophy as well as in Homer. A clear distinction between feelings and thoughts or emotions and reason becomes a more general tendency only later, let say after Aristotle. The Ancient perspective is fuller and, as it may be expected, can provide us with efficient tools. If, as some scholars believe, it is true that the divorce of thought and feeling lies at the roots of violence, we can learn from Greeks how to avoid it. Hence, any attempt to understand the early Greek philosophy in this respect has not only a historical value but reveals an anthropological and practical dimension as well.

NOTES

2. A. Schopenhauer, *The world as will and idea*, p. 339. This passage had been taken again by F. Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy* § 16, transl. by W. Kaufmann, Vintage Books, New York 1967, p. 101: (...) All possible efforts, excitements, and manifestation of will, all that
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6. The example of this is the case of Leucippos described by Plato, Rep. 439 e 7 ff.


15. M. C. Nussbaum, Upheavals of thought ..., p. 33.


17. M. C. Nussbaum, Upheavals of thought ..., p. 115. She quoted Damasio’s, Descartes’ Error ..., p. xv: emotions are “just as cognitive as other percepts”. The text in A. Damasio’s book (I quote after a new edition, Vintage, London 2006) runs as follows: Contrary to traditional scientific opinion, feelings are just as cognitive as other percepts. They are the result of a most curious physiological arrangement that has turned the brain into the body’s captive audience. (p. xxv) and: (...) certain aspects of the process of emotion and feeling are indispensable for rationality. (...) Emotion, feeling, and biological regulation all play a role in human reason. (p. xxvii). See also p. 245: (...) feelings are a powerful influence on reason.


19. P. Goldie, The Emotions ..., p. 4. And on p. 16 he speaks about “abuteness or avileness” of the emotions.


23. M. Guérin, L’affectivité de la pensée, Actes Sud, Arles 1993. He uses also the expression “raison sensible” (pp. 19 and if.).
27. R. de Sousa, The rationality of emotions, p. 149. See also R. de Sousa, The rationality of emotion, MIT Press, Cambridge 1987, p. xv where he stresses the distinction proposed in Plato’s Euthyphro (we love something because it is loveable or we call it loveable because we love it – cf. below J. Macmurray’s distinction between object and subject).
28. I could quote many others and among them C. G. Jung because of his statement that The essential basis of our personality is affectivity. Thought and action are only; as it were, symptoms of affectivity (C. G. Jung, Über die Psychologie der Dementia praecox, p. 42 – quote at n.; J. Hillman, Emotion ... , p. 39).
30. Macmurray is not quoted by any of scholars mentioned above. One may wonder whether this omission is not strange given that John Macmurray (1891–1976), was one of the important 20th century British philosophers, perhaps the last of the great Scottish humanists. He is quoted several times by J. Hillman, Emotion ...
31. J. Macmurray, Reason and Emotion, Faber & Faber Limited, London 1935, p. 7. This is the topic mainly of the first chapter Reason in the Emotional Life, pp. 13–65. He writes, pp. 15–16: (...) Our lives belong to a stage in human development in which reason has been dissociated from the emotional life and is contrasted with it, (...) Reason means to us thinking and planning, scheming and calculating, (...) reason is just thinking (...) emotion is just feeling (...) these two aspects of our life are in the eternal nature of things distinct and opposite; very apt to come into conflict and requiring to be kept sternly apart (...). He calls attention, p. 16, to the fact that if so, it can hardly be the whole truth about the stage of human development to which we belong. That is the reason why we wonder whether we are right in dissociating the two aspects of our experience.
32. J. Macmurray, Reason and Emotion, p. 30 [emphasis mine].
33. On the next page he speaks again about Emotional reason that is our capacity to apprehend objective values.
36. Ibid IX, 553–554: ελθέτε ἐν στάθμει, νός πόροι περ ἄγοντος.
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37. *Iliad* II, 409: ὁδε γὰρ κατὰ διμονὸν διδαχθῶν ὡς ἐπικεφαλή.


41. Tran. by B. Jowett, *Laws* 896 e 8-897 a 4: Εἶναι δὲν μὲν ἡ φύση πάντα τὸ κατ’ αὐτόν καὶ γὰρ καὶ βάλλοντας τοὺς αὐτῷ κινήσεως, ἀλλὰ ἐν μιαίνιστι, ἐπικεφαλῆ βουλευόμεθα, δοξάζων ὁμόρρης ἐπικεφαλῆς, καίρους ἐπικοινωνίαν, ἐπικοινωνίαν φιλοσοφίαν, καὶ ἰδίως διὰ τούτων συγγενεῖς ἡ προκοπηγοῦσα κινήσεις τὰς δευτεροχρόνιας αὐτοποιημένους κινήσεις σφαίρας ἔχουσιν τόνον (…).

42. Tran. by H. Rackham, *EE II* 1, 1219 b 40-1220 a 2: δοξήτω δὲ ὁ λογισμὸς ὁ λογισμὸς ἀλλ’ ἐξελθέας καὶ σαρκωμένων, ἀνάγκη δρᾶ τούτ’ ἔχειν τα μέρα. Plato also respects this principle, because in his psychology each of three parts of the soul has similar functions: thinking, feeling and willing.

43. However in her recent book, *Stoicism and Emotion*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago – London 2007, M. R. Graver demonstrates that such an interpretation of Stoic theory of emotions (pathos) is inaccurate. According to this another look, p. 2: The founders of the Stoic school did not set out to suppress or deny natural feelings: rather, it was their endeavor, in psychology as in ethics, to determine what the natural feelings of humans really are (….) not to eliminate feelings as such from human life, but to understand what sorts of affective responses a person would have who was free of false belief. Further, they sought to develop plausible psychological explanations for affective responses (…).


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