

## Emotional sensations and the moral imagination in Malebranche

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### Abstract

This paper explores the details of Malebranche's philosophy of mind, paying particular attention to the mind-body relationship and the roles of the imagination and the passions. I demonstrate that Malebranche has available an alternative to his deontological ethical system: the alternative I expose is based around his account of the embodied aspects of the mind and the sensations experienced in perception. I briefly argue that Hume, a philosopher already indebted to Malebranche for much inspiration, read Malebranche in the positive way that I here describe him. Malebranche should therefore be acknowledged as a serious influence on Enlightenment philosophy of sensibility.

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*Briefly, man's life consists only in the circulation of the blood, and in another circulation of his thoughts and desires. And it seems we can hardly use our time better than in seeking the causes of these changes that happen to us, thereby learning to know ourselves.*

– Nicolas Malebranche<sup>1</sup>

In one of his *Philosophical Letters*, first published in 1731, Voltaire paints a rather damning picture of Malebranche:

M. Malebranche, of the Oratory, in his sublime hallucinations, not only allowed the existence of innate ideas but was certain that all we perceive is in God and that God, so to speak, is our soul.<sup>2</sup>

Voltaire's interpretation of Malebranche is simply wrong. Firstly, Malebranche quite explicitly *rejected* the existence of innate ideas – it was one of his key criticisms of the Cartesian account of knowledge. To this end Malebranche devoted a chapter of Book III of his magnum opus, *The Search after Truth*.<sup>3</sup> Secondly and more subtly, Malebranche does not hold that we perceive *all*

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<sup>1</sup> Malebranche 1997, 90.

<sup>2</sup> Voltaire 2003, 52.

<sup>3</sup> See Malebranche 1997, 226-27. For commentary see Schmaltz 1996, 96-99, and Jolley 1988.

things in God. Granted, all the *truths* of the external world we gain through our pure perceptions of eternal ideas found in God. But in his single-sentence dismissal of Malebranche, Voltaire entirely ignores the internal world of the embodied mind: a world of sensations, passions, and, I will demonstrate, sympathy or compassion.

Malebranche's epistemological system splits our means of experiencing the world into two distinct classes: pure perceptions of ideas<sup>4</sup> and sensations or sentiments. These latter terms, *sensations* and *sentiments*, refer to the same type of thing throughout Malebranche's works, and they are typically translated and treated in Anglophonic literature as 'sensations' – I follow suit. The class of sensations can be further divided into two subclasses: perceptual sensations such as colours and flavours, pleasures and pains; and emotional sensations such as joy and sadness. In this paper I demonstrate the ways in which Malebranche distinguishes these two types of sensations, and why such distinctions are important to his system. In doing so I emphasise a point about Malebranche's mind-body dualism that is often ignored by those who seek to characterise negatively positions such as his: sensations and passions are demonstrative of an embodied mind.<sup>5</sup>

I explore Malebranche's theory of perception and the passions, and near the end of the paper I note some of the theory's influences on David Hume's works. My aim is to demonstrate one of the ways in which Hume utilised Malebranche's theory of the passions and the mind's natural inclination towards compassion, arguing that despite notable incompatibilities in their ethical commitments the two philosophers have more in common than is often acknowledged. Key to understanding this commonality is Malebranche's account of mind-body interaction; I therefore explain at some length his treatment of sensory perception, the imagination, and the passions. In the first section I describe what Malebranche calls pure perceptions. These are acts properly attributed to the disembodied or meditative mind whose purpose is to provide the mind with eternal truths about the intelligible world. Since Malebranche is primarily concerned with attaining truths, his emphasis on pure perceptions of ideas is resonant

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<sup>4</sup> I do not offer an interpretation of Malebranche's theory of ideas here. It should suffice to know that, for Malebranche, ideas are intelligible representations of objects perceived externally by the mind; in many respects, they are similar to Plato's Forms. By virtue of their being external and abstract they are what give rise to our purely objective knowledge; they differ from sensations not only ontologically but epistemologically – ideas are not *thoughts*; rather they are *thought of* (see below).

<sup>5</sup> I use the term "embodied" in a qualified sense throughout this paper. On Malebranche's system a mind and a body are metaphysically distinct, since they are composed of different substances which do not causally interact. But the mind and body are intimately connected, both functionally and phenomenologically: actions of the mind and body correspond with one another, and the movements of the body give rise to sensations in the mind. (This is explained in more detail below.) It is with this sense that the term "embodied mind" is employed.

Forthcoming in H. Martyn Lloyd, ed., *The Discourse of Sensibility: The Knowing Body in the Enlightenment* (Springer).

throughout the *Search*. The fact that it is through pure perception that we discover truths sees Malebranche write of sensory perception rather negatively: since perceptual sensations do not afford us access to eternal and necessary truths, they are not very helpful in our intellectual investigations into the world. I then compare this pure perception with Malebranchean sensory perception, explaining the practical, scientific<sup>6</sup> function of perceptual sensations before linking them with their physical counterparts in the body's sensory organs and brain: depending on circumstances, perceptual sensations arise due to the senses or the imagination. Next I turn to the passions and the emotional sensations they provide. In the penultimate section I show some of the implications of the ways in which the imagination and the passions influence one another. These implications lie dormant in Malebranche's work, but they are demonstrative of some of the positive contributions to life on the part of the passions, the imagination, and sensory perception, all of which can be considered as activities of the embodied mind. In the final section I offer a kind of case study of Malebranche's positive influence on Enlightenment notions of sensibility: I demonstrate that Hume noticed these implications in his own reading of Malebranche and adapted them to his own purposes. Readers should note, however, that the discussion of Hume is brief and suggestive rather than detailed; this is not a paper about Hume. Rather, by explicating his theory of the passions, I hope to show that Malebranche deserves mention amongst the great influencers of the Enlightenment era not necessarily as a target or deluded theologian, but as a thinker whose theory warrants positive and serious reading.

### Pure perceptions and the disembodied mind

In Malebranche's system the mind or soul, an immaterial and unextended entity, is a very malleable creature. It is capable of changing in an indefinite (perhaps infinite) number of ways depending on what is acting upon it. Different stimuli – different ideas in God or, less directly, objects in the world<sup>7</sup> – trigger or correspond with different modifications of the mind. These modifications come in two forms: pure perceptions (*pures perceptions*) and sensations (*sensations* or *sentimens*). The former are concerned with truth (defined below); the latter, with the body.

Malebranche claims that it is because of the body that we fall into error in our understandings, as our attention is pulled away from the eternal truths revealed in intelligible,

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<sup>6</sup> As we will see below, for Malebranche, the sciences do not yield truths of the same kind as does metaphysics or theology.

<sup>7</sup> Note that for Malebranche the body is an object in the world in the same way as are rocks and trees: see the discussion on passions below.

pure perceptions of ideas. The mind's union with its physical vessel renders it the slave of the body.<sup>8</sup> Malebranche's pessimism in the *Search* towards the corruptibility of the mind by the body is motivated by the objective of the work: since truths are reached by means of pure perceptions, the seeker of truth – the intellectual mind – should 'be awakened from its somnolence and make an effort to free itself' from the burdens of the body.<sup>9</sup> In other words, it is when the mind is as disembodied that is able to perceive truths.

It is important to note that for Malebranche all thought is some type of perception;<sup>10</sup> the mind's modifications being different ways of perceiving.<sup>11</sup> The 'understanding' (*l'entendement*) is the faculty of mind that receives all of its different modifications, where by a 'faculty' of the mind Malebranche simply means a capacity.<sup>12</sup> With respect to thought, ideas are not found *within* the mind: they are rather *thought of* or *perceived by* the mind, since to 'see nothing is not to see; to think of nothing is not to think'.<sup>13</sup> Ideas are perceived within God's pure intellect, to which our minds are intimately connected. (On this point, one must concede, Voltaire did get Malebranche right.)

In pure perception we are able to perceive an eternal idea clearly and intelligibly. These pure perceptions do not make an impression on the mind, nor do they sensibly modify it.<sup>14</sup> Yet without *sensing* our pure perceptions, we are still aware of them through what Malebranche calls inner sentiment (*sentiment intérieur*) or consciousness (*conscience*). The different modifications of the mind 'cannot be in the soul without the soul being aware of them through the inner sensation it has of itself – [modifications] such as its sensations, imaginings, pure intellections, or simply conceptions, as well as its passions and natural inclinations'.<sup>15</sup> In effect, pure perceptions are means of perceiving ideas which render those ideas intelligible. It is through a pure perception of a triangle that we are able to deduce its mathematical properties; all 'spiritual things, universals, common notions, the ideas of perfection and of an infinitely perfect being, and generally all its thoughts when it knows them through self-reflection' are perceived by means of pure perceptions.<sup>16</sup> It is through pure perception, then, that we are able

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<sup>8</sup> Malebranche 1997, xxxv.

<sup>9</sup> Malebranche 1997, xxxix.

<sup>10</sup> Simmons 2009, 105-29.

<sup>11</sup> Malebranche 1997, 2.

<sup>12</sup> Malebranche 1997, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Malebranche 1997, 320.

<sup>14</sup> Malebranche 1997, 2. Our minds are, however, modified by way of 'pure intellections'. A discussion of what this entails will take us too far from our present topic, but for a detailed and careful analysis see Jolley 1994.

<sup>15</sup> Malebranche 1997, 218.

<sup>16</sup> Malebranche 1997, 16.

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to perceive abstract ideas, as well as relations between ideas (judgements) and relations between those relations (inferences).<sup>17</sup> In Malebranchean epistemology judgements and inferences, just like ideas themselves, are not *made* so much as *perceived*: they are themselves pure perceptions.<sup>18</sup> Judging is perhaps best understood as perceiving two ideas through the same pure perception or modification of mind, thereby yielding a perceived relation between those two ideas. To judge that *two times two is equal to four* is to notice a relation of equality between the idea of *two times two* and the idea of *four*. Inferring is the act of perceiving relations between two judgements: as we judge that *six is greater than four*, we infer that it is also greater than *two times two* (by virtue of the previously noticed relation between *two times two* and *four*). Such relations between ideas define Malebranche's notion of truths:

Now, truths are but relations of equality or inequality between these intelligible beings (since it is true that twice two is four or that twice two is not five only because there is a relation of equality between twice two and four, and one of inequality between twice two and five).<sup>19</sup>

It is through pure perceptions of ideas, then, that we gain any truths about the intelligible world. Interestingly, a truth is not found *in* an idea, but rather in the mind's own pure perception of two ideas. Malebranche further distinguishes between three kinds of truths: truths as relations between ideas (such truths metaphysically necessary); as relations between ideas and corresponding things in the world; and finally relations between different things in the world.<sup>20</sup> What pure perception offers is a means of intelligibly perceiving or thinking of things – a way of making sense of the world outside the human mind.

Due to the fact that these pure perceptions attend only to the ideas present in the intellectual realm, independently of anything material,<sup>21</sup> they are in no way dependent upon the body. When the mind knows objects by pure perception alone, 'without forming corporeal images of them in the brain to represent them',<sup>22</sup> it perceives them as purely abstract and

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<sup>17</sup> See Malebranche 1997, 7-11.

<sup>18</sup> Malebranche 1997, 7.

<sup>19</sup> Malebranche 1997, 617-18.

<sup>20</sup> Malebranche 1997, 433. It is to this first species of truth – the eternal and necessary truths of the intellectual realm – to which Malebranche's use of "truth" typically refers in the *Search*. Throughout this paper I follow Malebranche's use of the term, though exceptions will be noted.

<sup>21</sup> See Malebranche 1997, 16-17. The relationship between corporeal images and perceptions is explained below.

<sup>22</sup> Malebranche 1997, 198.

universal. But because abstract thoughts neither rely upon nor excite the body, the mind views them as remote and struggles to apply itself to them.<sup>23</sup>

The seeker of eternal and necessary truths, then, is burdened by his body. This pessimistic perspective on the state of man resonates throughout Malebranche's work. Yet it would be a mistake to say on Malebranche's behalf that its union with a body is entirely detrimental to the human mind. Abstract truths often do not reflect the here-and-now situations in which we (in our bodies) find ourselves, and to which we must react. In fact it is not, strictly speaking, our bodies which lead us to error and away from truth: it is rather the will that leads the mind astray, conceding to sensible pleasures (and maintaining a cautious vigil against pains) before seeking epistemic clarity.<sup>24</sup> Indeed it is not only in its union with the intellectual realm of God, but also its union with the material body, that a mind can be considered a complete person: Malebranche refers to the mind and body as 'the two parts of man'.<sup>25</sup> The next section is therefore an exploration of the practical, world-centric side of Malebranchean epistemology and science: perceptual sensations and sensory perception, the activities of the embodied mind.

### Perceptual sensations and the embodied mind

Competing with pure perceptions for our attention are our perceptual sensations, which 'make a more or less vivid impression' on the mind.<sup>26</sup> Examples include colours, flavours, heat/coldness, hardness, and pains.<sup>27</sup> They can be further distinguished as affective<sup>28</sup> or non-affective sensations: affective sensations such as heat and pains draw our attention directly to the body, while non-affective sensations such as colours are sensed as if in external objects so that those objects can be distinguished from one another.<sup>29</sup> Both types of perceptual sensation act much like alarm bells that ring in the presence of objects (or changes in the body) in order to draw the attention of the mind 'to preservation of its machine'.<sup>30</sup> Such perceptual sensations

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<sup>23</sup> Malebranche 1997, 59; cf. 213.

<sup>24</sup> This is explained in the following section.

<sup>25</sup> Malebranche 1997, 52.

<sup>26</sup> Malebranche 1997, 2.

<sup>27</sup> A pain, here, is taken to be that which comes with a physical wound or a headache. The sort of 'pain' that accompanies or constitutes emotional sensations is considered below.

<sup>28</sup> 'Affect' implies sensible pleasure or pain. Sensations accompanying wounds to one's body, headaches, or orgasms would all be considered affective sensations.

<sup>29</sup> Malebranche 1997, 55. Malebranche does not dwell on this distinction as he realises that degrees of affect can vary across occasions; that is, it is not simply the case that some sensations are affective while others are not. See Malebranche 1997, 57-58.

<sup>30</sup> Malebranche 1997, 200.

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are bestowed upon us so that we can maintain the welfare of our bodies without having to draw too much of our attention to them and away from our pure perceptions of eternal ideas – at least that is their original, pre-lapsarian function. On Malebranche’s account of the human being the ‘goods of the body do not deserve the attention of a mind’ whose priority should always be to seek out truth. Sensations therefore provide indications of the presence of goodness or badness with respect to the body, in relation to the object impacting upon it:

The mind, then, must recognize this sort of good without examination, and by the quick and indubitable proof of sensation. Stones do not provide nourishment; the proof of this is convincing, and taste alone produces universal agreement.<sup>31</sup>

In the pristine and peaceful Garden of Eden such perceptual sensations would be entirely reliable. Unfortunately in our post-lapsarian state we find ourselves in a hostile and volatile world, our bodies in constant danger from snakes, swords, and stubbed toes. Our attention is drawn more and more to the states of our bodies and we strive to attain good and avoid evil, with which we associate sensations of pleasure and pain respectively.<sup>32</sup> In this context “good” means good for the body: in fact Malebranche maintains that what is good for the body is more often than not detrimental to the mind.<sup>33</sup> As he reminds us, we do not experience sensations in order to perceive truths, but only so that we can preserve our bodies.<sup>34</sup> To make matters worse, this pull towards worldly pleasures leads us to falsely associate perceptual sensations (especially less affective sensations such as colours and tastes) with the perceived objects’ causal relationships with the body. In other words, we fall into error when we judge worldly objects according to the sensations they evoke in the mind:

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<sup>31</sup> Malebranche 1997, 21.

<sup>32</sup> Malebranche 1997, 21. This correlation is also explained in Malebranche’s quite questionable advice on raising children: he recommends against rewarding children with sensible pleasures as this will corrupt their motivations to learn and behave properly, steering attention towards bodily pleasures rather than reason. On the other hand, sensible punishments are justified in cases when children cannot be convinced through their own reason, as pain will impede children’s enjoyment of vice and prevent the mind from being enslaved by the body. See Malebranche 1997, 127-29.

<sup>33</sup> See Malebranche 1997, 62-63.

<sup>34</sup> Malebranche 1997, 24.

When, for example, we see light, it is quite certain that we see light; when we feel heat, we are not mistaken in believing that we feel heat, whether before or after the fall. But we are mistaken in judging that the heat we feel is outside the soul that feels it...<sup>35</sup>

The problem with judging that our perceptual sensations are qualities of perceived objects rather than modifications of the soul is that we begin to look for truths in those sensible qualities. We fall into error when we believe our sensations provide us with some truthful information about the nature of ideas. As Steven Nadler explains, our perceptual sensations, taken as the sensory qualities of colours, heat, and the like, 'possess no representational content, and contain no element of truth regarding the external world'.<sup>36</sup> That is, they cannot tell us anything about the nature of ideas – what real qualities they have – and as such prove quite useless in the search after truths. As we saw in the previous section, truths (relations between ideas) are perceived through pure perception, an undertaking of the mind insofar as it can disembody itself, so to speak. It seems that since perceptual sensations provide no truths they are not helpful to metaphysical enquiry. Malebranche offers a simple example of a perceptual sensation's potential to mislead:

...different objects can cause the same sensation of color; plaster, bread, sugar, salt, and so on, have the same sensation of color; nevertheless, their whiteness is different if one judges it other than through the senses. Thus, when one says that flour is white, one says nothing distinct.<sup>37</sup>

A quality or property that triggers a perception of whiteness is something common across these otherwise unique materials, yet it is incorrect to say that such a relation is a truth. The fact that two materials evoke sensations of whiteness in no way explains or demonstrates a nature necessarily common to them both. This commonality 'is obscure because the same sensation of whiteness can be linked to objects with very different internal configurations':<sup>38</sup> the likeness is merely contingent, even arbitrary. At best we could qualify the common quality of whiteness as of the third species of "truth". The truths perceived between eternal ideas, by contrast, are immutable and necessary ('immuables & necessaires') as are the ideas themselves.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Malebranche 1997, 23.

<sup>36</sup> Steven Nadler 1992, 23.

<sup>37</sup> Malebranche 1997, 442.

<sup>38</sup> Schmaltz 1996, 58.

<sup>39</sup> Malebranche 1997, 618.



On the other hand, what sensations do provide are ‘natural judgements’ (*jugements naturels*) which ‘are quite correct, if they are considered in relation to the preservation of the body’, even if they are ‘quite bizarre and far removed from the truth’.<sup>40</sup> Despite the fact that perceptual sensations do not represent real qualities of the world, they prompt us to react immediately, and typically appropriately, to the objects we encounter.<sup>41</sup>

Alison Simmons has recently argued that many Malebranche scholars have misread his position on sensations. Since Malebranche disallows sensations any representational content, they claim, he must likewise deny that sensations have any intentionality.<sup>42</sup> But as Simmons explains, a Malebranchean sensation, by virtue of being a way of thinking (as defined above), is certainly *about* or *of* something; it does more than simply add ‘a bit of phenomenological panache’ to an otherwise pure perception.<sup>43</sup> I agree with Simmons that Malebranchean sensations are non-representing yet intentional modes of the mind: they are ways of perceiving ideas, as are pure perceptions. However, I want to demonstrate the similarities between the intentionality of pure perceptions and that of perceptual sensations in a different way to Simmons. The explanation I offer revolves around the relationship between the body and the mind. My main claim is that perceptual sensations allow for perceptions of relations which in some ways resemble eternal truths, but are ultimately contingent, rather than immutable and necessary. This contingency is due to the fact that such a relation is not between two ideas, but between an idea and the body throughout which the sensitive mind is embedded. Recall from above the second kind of “truth” that Malebranche identifies: truth as a relation between idea and thing. This kind of truth, lacking the metaphysical necessity possessed by an eternal truth *qua* relation between ideas, is of greater interest to the natural scientist than it is to the metaphysician. (The same is true of the third kind of truths, truths as relations between things in the material world.) Thus the sensations that afford us such *scientific* truths are useful to the embodied mind insofar as it interacts with the material world. To better grasp this claim, an explanation in Malebranche’s terms of the psycho-physiology of sensory perception and imagination may prove helpful. This is offered in the two following sections.

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<sup>40</sup> Malebranche 1997, 60.

<sup>41</sup> Here Malebranche is echoing Descartes’ position in his *Sixth Meditation*.

<sup>42</sup> Simmons 2009, 105.

<sup>43</sup> Simmons 2009, 110.

## The psycho-physiology of perception

Like Descartes, Malebranche is concerned with accounting for the physiological processes of the body as fundamental aspects of perception. However, armed with occasionalism on the one hand, and on the other the correct observation that the biology and physics of his time is inadequate to develop an accurate and complex neurophysiology,<sup>44</sup> Malebranche is less concerned with demonstrating the exact psycho-physiological pathway from object in the world to perception by the mind than with the functional relations between each step in the overall process of perception. His occasionalism calls for a rejection of metaphysical causal forces between the two substances of which we are comprised (extension and mind, or matter and thought).<sup>45</sup> So although Malebranche's physiology is incomplete, it can be read with an air of flexibility, a certain neurobiological agnosticism.

This flexibility, however, should not be taken as full liberty of explanation. Malebranche holds that there is an intimate, important connection between the composition of the body and the sensations of the soul. The matter constituting the body 'has to be flesh, brain, nerves, and the rest of a man's body so that the soul may be joined to it. The same is true of our soul: it must have sensations of heat, cold, color, light, sounds, odors, tastes, and several other modifications in order to remain joined to its body'.<sup>46</sup> This is backed up in the earlier chapters of Book I of the *Search*, where Malebranche paints a picture of the two substances as resembling one another in their modifications and capabilities. While he clearly states that it should only be taken figuratively, Malebranche relies heavily on a functional comparison between the different properties of either substance:

Matter or extension contains two properties or faculties. The first faculty is that of receiving different figures, the second, the capacity for being moved. The mind of man likewise contains two faculties; the first, which is the *understanding*, is that of receiving various *ideas*, that is, of perceiving various things; the second, which is the *will*, is that of receiving *inclinations*, or of willing different things.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Malebranche 1997, 49-50; see also Sutton 1998b, 107.

<sup>45</sup> While this claim is straightforward enough for present purposes, debates continue over exactly how we should interpret Malebranche's doctrine of occasionalism. Nadler provides a good explanation of Malebranchian occasionalism in his article, 'Occasionalism and General Will in Malebranche', and offers a brief review of competing interpretations in his postscript to that article. Both pieces can be found in Nadler 2011.

<sup>46</sup> Malebranche 1997, 200.

<sup>47</sup> Malebranche 1997, 2.

Forthcoming in H. Martyn Lloyd, ed., *The Discourse of Sensibility: The Knowing Body in the Enlightenment* (Springer).

It is thus understandable that there would be a close relation between the body's sensory system (composed of the sensory organs, the brain, the nerves linking them and the animal spirits<sup>48</sup> running throughout the nerves and brain) and the faculty of understanding. Thus while the mind and body are separate entities on an ontological level, on a functional level they are interdependent and (almost) unified: what goes on in the body affects what is perceived by or in the mind, and the volitions of the mind determine many of the motions of the body. (I say *almost* unified because, of course, the body often moves of its own accord, and it is not possible that there are any subconscious regulatory systems on the part of the mind which could account for these movements. Indeed, Malebranche does subscribe to the view of the body as sophisticated machine, capable of self-movement in a physically predetermined or dispositional sense.)<sup>49</sup>

What happens in the process of (visual) perception can be described in the following way. First, the body encounters an object in the physical world – let's say an apple. The apple transmits rays of light in all directions, and these rays of light vibrate in such a way that they produce pressures in the various parts of the eyes.<sup>50</sup> Animal spirits agitated by these pressures then flow through the nerves of the eyes to the brain. If the object is novel, the animal spirits etch traces representative of, but not resembling, the object impacting on the senses. These images are no more than traces in the brain made by the animal spirits, and as a more forceful current cuts a more defined river into a landscape, in the same fashion 'we imagine things more strongly in proportion as these traces are deeper and better engraved' by the force and repetition of animal spirits passing through them.<sup>51</sup> If an object of the same type has been perceived previously through the sensory organs, the animal spirits will retrace those traces. The flow of animal spirits over these traces is essentially what triggers the mind's perception of an idea (of apples in general), complemented by sensations of redness, waxiness, shininess, and the other visual attributes, as determined by a natural judgement such as perspective and relation of size to the body.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, whenever brain traces are involved, sensations must also occur. This combination of pure perception of an abstract idea with particular sensations

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<sup>48</sup> These are 'merely the most refined and agitated parts of the blood' which 'are conducted, with the rest of the blood, through the arteries to the brain,' where 'they are separated from it by some parts intended for that purpose' (Malebranche 1997, 91).

<sup>49</sup> See Malebranche 1997, 98; cf. Jolley 1995.

<sup>50</sup> Malebranche 1997, 723-24.

<sup>51</sup> Malebranche 1997, 134. Here we can see an example of similarity between Malebranche and Hume: 'A greater force and vivacity in the impression naturally conveys a greater to the related idea; and 'tis on the degrees of force and vivacity, that the belief depends...' (Hume 2000, 98; cf 67.)

<sup>52</sup> See Malebranche 1997, 33-36 and 43-44.

gives us the means to perceive the apple both as a member of a class of objects (*an* apple) and as a unique world object (*this* apple).

The involvement of the body in perceiving ideas representative of objects in the world necessitates the experience of perceptual sensations alongside pure perceptions. It is due to the internal movements of the body, then, that we experience perceptual sensations at all: this is what Malebranche means when he says that 'the union of soul and body...consists primarily of a mutual relation between sensations and motion in the organs'.<sup>53</sup> But what about the perceptual sensations we experience during episodes of imagining? Are they different to those of sensory perception? How do they rely on the movements of the body if there is nothing impacting upon the sensory organs to trigger the movements of the animal spirits? Malebranche's answers to these questions, detailed in the next section, involve situating the imagination itself within the body.

### The psycho-physiology of imagination

For Malebranche, one of the helpful tools provided by the body is the imagination. While it is often referred to as a faculty of the mind, Malebranche warns us that such talk of faculties is purely a *façon de parler*: in the opening chapter of the *Search* he refers interchangeably to the 'faculties' and 'properties' of the substances. And in the second *Elucidation* he explains that to talk of the mind's faculties is to talk of the functional states of the mind:

It should not be imagined that the soul's different faculties...are entities different from the soul itself. ... It is really the soul, then, that perceives, and not the understanding conceived as something different from the soul. The same is true of the will; this faculty is but the soul itself insofar as it loves its perfection and happiness, insofar as it wills to be happy, or insofar as...it is made capable of loving everything that appears to it to be good.<sup>54</sup>

Likewise with imagination: it is a 'faculty' of the mind insofar as it denotes an epistemological function or process. Its role is to make present to the mind material beings 'when in fact they are absent', which it does 'by forming images of them, as it were, in the brain'<sup>55</sup> – that is, by directing the animal spirits to previously etched brain traces.

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<sup>53</sup> Malebranche 1997, 20.

<sup>54</sup> Malebranche 1997, 560. Malebranche again clarifies his position on faculties in his reply to the *First Objection* in the tenth *Elucidation*, 622-24.

<sup>55</sup> Malebranche 1997, 17.

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One can immediately conceive of situations in which the imagination could be helpful: the Descartes-inspired Malebranche posits geometry as the obvious example to demonstrate this fact. He explains that ‘those who begin the study of geometry conceive very quickly the little demonstrations one explains to them...because the ideas of square, circle, and so forth, are tied naturally to the traces of the figures they see before their eyes’.<sup>56</sup> In other words, the imagination works much like a sketchpad allowing the mind to dress up an algebraic equation in sensible qualities. Here Malebranche echoes Descartes’ account of the imagination in his *Sixth Meditation*:

When I imagine a triangle, for example, I do not merely understand that it is a figure bounded by three lines but, at the same time, I also see the three lines with my mind’s eye as if they were present; and this is what I call imagining.<sup>57</sup>

And this position is justified by Descartes in his earlier, unfinished methodological text, *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*. Talking of solving geometrical equations, he states:

The problem should be re-expressed in terms of the real extension of bodies and should be pictured in our imagination entirely by means of bare figures. Thus it will be perceived much more distinctly by our intellect.<sup>58</sup>

Malebranche restates this rule in terms of focus of attention, claiming that the imagination acts as a powerful influence over the animal spirits (when it is correctly controlled), such that ‘the mind is made more attentive without a wasteful division of its capacity and is thus remarkably aided in clearly and distinctly perceiving objects, with the result that it is almost always to our advantage to avail ourselves of its help’.<sup>59</sup> So for the purposes of practising geometry, the imagination helps us to understand problems in familiar (though non-truth-providing) forms. An appropriate analogy would be to consider the sensible images of the imagination in crude cartographical terms: an image may be quite helpful in drawing attention to particular aspects of the idea, but only when considered, so to speak, not to scale.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Malebranche 1997, 104.

<sup>57</sup> Descartes 1984 vol. 2, 50.

<sup>58</sup> Descartes 1984 vol. 1, 56; emphasis removed.

<sup>59</sup> Malebranche 1997, 419; see also 132; and Sutton 1998a, 115-46.

<sup>60</sup> Of course the imagination can only aid the geometrically inclined mind in relatively simple procedures. Imagining shapes is not a *better* means of practising mathematics than is algebraic geometry:

One point should be carefully noted: for Malebranche (for Descartes too, in fact) the imagination is typically restricted to the recombination of previously perceived sensible qualities (and their corresponding ideas). This is a limit of the body: the animal spirits find difficulty in etching new traces in the brain unless they are forced to do so by the violent effects of sensory impressions.<sup>61</sup> In the absence of such forceful impressions, they retrace old brain traces, 'because the animal spirits [find] some resistance in the parts of the brain whence they should pass, and being easily detoured crowd into the deep traces of the ideas that are more familiar to us'.<sup>62</sup> The phenomenological result of this is that our imaginary perceptions seldom appear as vivid or familiar as our sensory perceptions: an imagined foghorn will not be louder than the song of a bird sitting outside one's window. But a distinction through vivacity is far from exact, and at base sensory and imaginary perceptions are of the same epistemological nature. Hence Malebranche's claim that the difference between proper sensory perceptions and our somewhat dimmer imaginary perceptions is one of degree.<sup>63</sup>

It is therefore by way of our minds' embodiment that we are able to perceive worldly objects, either by their impacting on the sensory organs resulting in the etching of new brain traces by the animal spirits, or through recollection of their sensory attributes by the retracing of prior etchings. In either case the movements of the animal spirits in the brain dictate what kinds of perceptual sensations will appear to the mind. But the animal spirits do not exist merely for the mind's perceptions through its body; indeed they are the body's means of protecting and guiding itself without the authority of the willing mind. The spirits flow throughout the entirety of the body, causing physiological changes which themselves trigger more sensations in the mind. Following Descartes, in particular his *Passions of the Soul* of 1649, Malebranche talks at length of these processes of the passions in Book V of the *Search*. Complementing these passions are the emotional sensations of the mind whose jobs differ

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With the mind neither hampered nor occupied with having to represent a great many figures and an infinite number of lines, it can thus perceive at a single glance what it could not otherwise see, because the mind can penetrate further and embrace more things when its capacity is used economically. (Malebranche 1997, 209)

Malebranche also mentions that it is by way of the pure understanding that we can accurately perceive a figure of a thousand sides (Malebranche 1997, 16), hinting at Descartes' own distinction between the intellect and the imagination: see Descartes 1985 vol. 2, 50-51. Hume adopts a very similar standpoint towards geometry through sensory perception to the one we find in the two rationalists, though of course he discards the notion of necessary truths perceived in rationalistic ideas: see Hume 2000, 50-52.

<sup>61</sup> Malebranche 1997, 88.

<sup>62</sup> Malebranche 1997, 135.

<sup>63</sup> Malebranche 1997, 87. This view echoes through Hume's comparison of impressions and ideas: see Hume 2000, 7-10; and Hume 2007, 15.

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from those of the perceptual sensations. The passions and their emotional sensations are explored in the following section.

### Passions and emotional sensations

Malebranche oscillates between two uses of the term *passion*: at times he talks broadly of passions as the movements of the animal spirits within the body alongside the sensations they trigger, while at others he talks more narrowly of *les passions de l'âme* merely as the sensations or impressions that incline the mind towards loving its body and anything useful to its preservation, with the former use of the term standing as the 'natural or occasional cause of these impressions'.<sup>64</sup> For the sake of clarity I will maintain a terminological distinction between passions as seven-part psycho-physiological processes (to be explained below),<sup>65</sup> and the sensations that contribute to those processes, referring to each as passions and emotional sensations respectively.

Fully-fledged passions are sequential and occurrent: they involve seven different elements, each one leading to the next. The first step is the mind's perception of an object and its relation to us *qua* body-and-mind composites. This causes, second, in the will an impulse towards the object if it appears good or an aversion if it appears evil. The third element found in episodes of passions is an accompanying sensation of, say, love, aversion, desire, joy, or sadness. These affective sensations correspond with the fourth element, a redirection of the blood and animal spirits to the 'external' parts of the body such as the facial muscles and limbs. That is, the physiological changes which characterise passions such as anger or joy (frowns or smiles) are the direct causes of a violent rerouting of agitated animal spirits to specific parts of the body correlated with the experience of particular emotional sensations. The fifth element is a feedback sensation from the body to the mind whereby it experiences the flow of agitated animal spirits throughout the body, since the motions of the body and mind are reciprocal. The sixth element comes in the form of another sensation of love, aversion, joy, desire, or sadness caused by disturbances in the brain due to the highly agitated animal spirits.

We should pause here to consider this sixth element. Malebranche's distinction between this particular emotional sensation and that which appears as the third element is important: the sixth element is caused by the animal spirits in the brain rather than by an impulse of the will. It is also likely to be much livelier than an emotional sensation caused by a

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<sup>64</sup> Malebranche 1997, 338.

<sup>65</sup> See Malebranche 1997, 347-52.

judgement. As Susan James explains, the 'workings of our "machine", as Malebranche calls it, strengthen our passions, and in doing so heighten our consciousness of harmful or pleasurable states of affairs'.<sup>66</sup> It seems that Malebranche is offering an explanation of our tendencies to overreact when we find ourselves in passionate states: indeed we certainly cannot claim that men are free from the dominance of the passions.<sup>67</sup>

The seventh and final element of any passion is 'a certain sensation of joy, or rather of inner delight, that fixes the soul in its passion and assures it that it is in the proper state with regard to the object it is considering'.<sup>68</sup> That is, every passion – whether it is one of anger, joy, sadness, or love – will produce a positive emotional sensation because of the fact that it demonstrates the harmony between mind and body. Malebranche cites the pleasure that accompanies sadness evoked by theatrical performances as evidence of this last element: 'this pleasure increases with the sadness, whereas pleasure never increases with pain'.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, this pleasure will occur even in those cases in which the object of a passion appears to be missing (we might call these 'moods').

The emotional sensations found in episodic passions are similar to the affective perceptual sensations of pleasure and pain, and they should be classed as sensations proper because, like colours and odours, they are ways of perceiving objects (*via ideas*). Yet they are distinguishable from other sensations in that they go beyond the concerns of the body alone: they also point to the very important relation between body and mind. They are likewise distinguishable as they are always preceded by some judgement on the part of the mind.<sup>70</sup> We can say then that passions hold dual intentionality. On the one hand, their elements typically point out various relations between the object considered and the perceiving agent; on the other, thanks to the final 'inner delight' felt in each of the passions, they draw our attention to the fact that our minds are very much embodied.

In the next section we will explore the interaction between the imagination and the passions. We will see that, for Malebranche, the passions not only play a significant role in the preservation of the body, but that they are also crucial aspects of social interaction.

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<sup>66</sup> James 1997, 113.

<sup>67</sup> Malebranche 1997, 346.

<sup>68</sup> Malebranche 1997, 349.

<sup>69</sup> Malebranche 1997, 201.

<sup>70</sup> Malebranche 1997, 201.



### Imagination and the passions

Passions share many similarities with sensory perception and imagination: all three involve activity of animal spirits and brain traces, and all three correspond with types of perceptions which can be called sensations. Malebranche explains that on the occasions when our animal spirits are unusually active, the two types of perceptions (sensory perception and imagination) can come much closer to one another:

However, it sometimes happens that persons whose animal spirits are highly agitated by fasting, vigils, a high fever, or some violent passion have the internal fibers of their brains set in motion as forcefully as by external objects. Because of this such people *sense* what they should only *imagine*, and they think they see objects before their eyes, which are only in their imaginations.<sup>71</sup>

Considering that passions are episodes of ‘extraordinary motion in the animal spirits’,<sup>72</sup> one important implication concerns the influence of the passions and the imagination on one another: if an imagining is adequately vivid, and if its object is something that warrants a response by way of a passion, then we should experience proportionately vivid emotional sensations. This is especially true when imagining objects we conceive of as possessing bodily good, ‘for the imagination always increases the ideas of things that we love and that are related to the body’.<sup>73</sup> Equally, if we are suffering a passion and our animal spirits are highly aroused, we will imagine things with much greater force than we would were we in a calmer state. And with respect to the cause of a passion, there is no clear distinction – or reason to distinguish – between a sensed object and an imagined object. In Malebranche’s example, a man can experience the same sort of passion, with the same intensity, whether he is insulted by someone or merely imagines being insulted.<sup>74</sup> Malebranche describes in the following story the reaction of the man who has been potentially insulted by another:

But nature has provided well for him [the victim of insult], for at the prospect of losing a great good, the face naturally takes on aspects of rage and despair so lively and unexpected that they disarm the most impassioned men and, as it were, immobilize them. This terrible and unexpected view of death’s trappings painted by the hand of nature on the face of an unhappy man arrests

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<sup>71</sup> Malebranche 1997, 88.

<sup>72</sup> Malebranche 1997, 337.

<sup>73</sup> Malebranche 1997, 262.

<sup>74</sup> Malebranche 1997, 349.

the vengeance-provoking motion of his enemy's spirits and blood... As a result of this, he [the potential offender] is mechanically taken by impulses of compassion, which naturally incline his soul to accede to motives of charity and mercy.<sup>75</sup>

Here two passions are at play, both of which occur for the protection of their bearers' bodies. However, they both also perform strong social roles: the first passion of rage includes elements which communicate something of the pain of the insulted man to the one who potentially insulted him; the second passion of charity and mercy reflects something of the suffering of the insulted man. The result of this clashing of passions is a sort of nullification of each passion. Importantly, all this communication of passions occurs mechanically, likely by a kind of natural judgement; there is no need to explain the episode in terms of deliberation or activity of the will.<sup>76</sup> This point is very important for Malebranche's account of the passions as it bestows upon them the status of natural peacekeepers in cases of social interaction such as this.

This tendency towards sympathy provides the bedrock for something like a natural ethics in a Malebranchean world. In the next section I will explore this notion in more detail. In doing so, I hope to draw out a common thread between Malebranche and Hume: the latter, I will argue, very likely read Malebranche in the sort of way that I am here describing him.

### Natural ethics and sympathetic impulses: Malebranche's influence on Hume

Malebranche sees the coupling of the imagination and passions as dangerous for the mind: it draws our attention away from the discovery of eternal truths (and the 'true good' of God) and leads us to spend too much time worrying about the body. However, there is reason to believe this is not the whole story: lurking behind the dim warnings of the body's influence over the mind is a more positive account of the operations (and co-operations) of the imagination and the passions. Malebranche has available an alternative to his theocentric moral theory offered in the *Treatise on Ethics* of 1684, though his commitment to theodicy sees him underplay this theme and instead place the onus of moral decision-making solely on the rational mind. Yet Malebranche could have perhaps put this view forward as a sort of consolation, a natural ethics, had he anticipated (and conceded) Hume's treatment of occasionalism as a 'superfluous'

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<sup>75</sup> Malebranche 1997, 351.

<sup>76</sup> Though Malebranche mentions that it is the will which judges that the utterances perceived by the soon-to-be attacker are insulting, he need not claim that it is the will which triggers the passion itself. Indeed he maintains that it is a judgement *qua* perception that triggers our passions, and perceptions are matters for the understanding, not the will *per se*. See Malebranche 1997, 351.

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account of causation.<sup>77</sup> The consolatory view rests on three elements of Malebranche's philosophy. First, the influences of the imagination and the passions on each other largely determine the behaviour of the impassioned, as we saw above. The second element is implied in Malebranche's description of the differences and similarities between particular sensations across different minds. Malebranche tells us that all men have the same nature and share the same perceptions of ideas, thus all persons share a common inclination towards happiness and the avoidance of pain and evil (though we cannot be sure that we all perceive the same sensations in the same way).<sup>78</sup> Finally, Malebranche emphasises that all men experience a natural inclination of friendship or compassion felt towards other men. This inclination of sympathy is always joined to the passions and is the strongest natural union found between God's works.<sup>79</sup> It is a concern of the embodied mind rather than the pure intellect:

This compassion in bodies produces a compassion in the spirits. It excites us to help others because in so doing we help ourselves. Finally, it checks our malice and cruelty. For the horror of blood, the fear of death – in a word, the sensible impression of compassion – often prevents the massacre of animals, even by those most convinced that they are merely machines, because most men are unable to kill them without themselves being wounded by the counterblow of compassion.<sup>80</sup>

That we share common passions and sympathise with other creatures (human or animal) is evidenced in the various perceivable modifications of the bodies (particularly the faces) of those with whom we interact, as we saw in the previous section.<sup>81</sup> Malebranche has no reason to claim that this sort of sympathetic reaction is restricted to real-life situations; comparable imagined situations could just as easily conjure passions in the imaginer. Thus we can feasibly utilise the imagination *in order* to stir up passions of joy or sadness so that they can operate as immediate feedback systems with respect to the scenarios we imagine. If we are faced with a situation in which our actions will affect other persons, we can use the affective feedback

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<sup>77</sup> Hume 2000, 107-108; see also Hume 2007, 67; and Kail 2008b, 55-80.

<sup>78</sup> Malebranche 1997, 238-39.

<sup>79</sup> Malebranche 1997, 330-331. See also James 2005 for an account of Hume's appropriation of Malebranche.

<sup>80</sup> Malebranche 1997, 114.

<sup>81</sup> At least, we are all disposed to respond to the effects of a particular passion in the same manner. The *actual* phenomenological quality of sadness, say, may differ between minds; this is a question we could never resolve given that we do not have access to each other's phenomenological experiences. While we can be sure that sensations between minds are *functionally* equivalent, we can at best be confident that they are phenomenologically equivalent. See Malebranche 1997, 63-66; also 238-39.

afforded by the forward-thinking imagination in order to assess the best course of action by first imagining the situation from our own point of view (to assess the impact of our affect) and then from the other participants' points of view (to assess the impact of their affect). This latter imagining will provide us with passions corresponding to the imagined actions that we can appropriately label empathetic or sympathetic. We can thus judge our actions based on whether or not we are causing other persons bodily pleasures or pains: since negative passions are to be avoided, we recognise that we should not cause them in others. (The "should" here is naturalistic, just as a dryness of the throat informs us that we should drink.) Through a Malebranchean account of passions and imagination (and by focusing on the contingent "truths" of Malebranchean science rather than his metaphysics), we can lay the groundwork for a world- and especially body-centric ethical system which relies not on moral duty through knowledge of God, but on the complex relations and interactions between minds and bodies. Such a theory would rely on the will only insofar as it seeks pleasure and avoids pain: any judgements made would be guided by one's natural inclination towards compassion rather than by reflection on the truths afforded by pure perceptions of eternal ideas. In short, exercising the moral imagination would mean acting in a morally sound way without having to reflect on one's duty to God.

Readers familiar with Hume's works will likely notice strong similarities between the above account of what I have been calling a natural ethics through Malebranchean passions and the foundations of the ethics of *le bon David*. In Book 3 of his first major work, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Hume explains that 'vice and virtue are not discoverable merely by reason'; rather they are differentiated according to some 'sentiment they occasion'.<sup>82</sup> Morality is subsequently 'more properly felt than judg'd of'.<sup>83</sup> It is precisely the sentiment triggered by the perception of an event that sees us determine its moral valence: 'An action, or sentiment, or character is virtuous or vicious; why? because its view causes a pleasure or uneasiness of a particular kind'.<sup>84</sup> Thus, we deem something to be virtuous or vicious by appealing to the particular sentiment we experience in perceiving that something. What I hope to have demonstrated in this paper is that the Malebranchean embodied mind too has the capacity to, and often does, experience the 'particular kind' of sentiment that Hume employs as the

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<sup>82</sup> Hume 2000, 302.

<sup>83</sup> Hume 2000, 302.

<sup>84</sup> Hume 2000, 303.

Forthcoming in H. Martyn Lloyd, ed., *The Discourse of Sensibility: The Knowing Body in the Enlightenment* (Springer).

bedrock of his moral theory.<sup>85</sup> Granted, Malebranche does not see much of moral value in such sentiments given that his theologically informed moral theory relies on eternal truths. But Hume, in denying that the mind has access to some such intellectual realm, instead relies upon the scientific “truths” that come from examining these sentiments. Hume, then, adopts Malebranchean science, in part at least, to replace Malebranchean metaphysics as the means of grounding a moral theory.

We can push the connection further by noting that Malebranche’s theory of embodied passions is highly compatible with Hume’s sceptical materialism,<sup>86</sup> and that Hume saw in Malebranche many of the metaphysical resources from which to build his own theory. Hume was certainly no stranger to Malebranche’s philosophy. Complementing the facts that numerous sections of the *Treatise* contain near word-for-word appropriations of the *Search*,<sup>87</sup> and that Hume places that work at the head of a list of philosophical texts recommended to his friend Michael Ramsay,<sup>88</sup> several recent scholars have exposed common themes between the two philosophers’ works.<sup>89</sup> While much attention has been paid to Hume’s adaptation of Malebranche’s criticisms of orthodox Cartesian claims that the mind is better known than the body, or to the shift from Malebranche’s occasionalism to Hume’s sceptical views on causation, few have attempted to expose any great debt Hume owes to Malebranche’s metaphysically informed moral theory. And this is not without reason: Hume’s project is largely anti-metaphysical. It is quite likely, however, that Hume noticed in Malebranche something akin to the scientifically guided natural ethics described above: indeed, as Charles McCracken points out, ‘Hume had a gift for seeing in the ideas of others possibilities that were not always apparent to their originators’.<sup>90</sup> In short: the foundations of Hume’s moral theory are readily available within Malebranche’s psycho-physiological system.

McCracken notes the significance of the Malebranchean passions and their emotional sensations in acting in a morally sound way: it was our pre-lapsarian default, as it were. He also explains that this theory of moral action through the passions is very similar to the one arrived

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<sup>85</sup> For more detailed accounts of Hume’s moral philosophy see Book 3 of Hume 2000. Many ideas therein have been reworked and published in Hume 1998. Important discussions include: Capaldi 1989; Cohon 2008; Loeb 1977; and Mackie 1980.

<sup>86</sup> Stephen Buckle argues that Hume’s account of the passions is ‘implicitly materialist’: see Buckle 2012, 204.

<sup>87</sup> See McCracken 1983, 257-61; and Kail 2008b.

<sup>88</sup> Hume’s letter to Ramsay can be found in Hume 2007, 203-204.

<sup>89</sup> More prominent studies on the various Malebranche-Hume connections include: McCracken 1983; James 2005; Kail 2008a and 2008b; Buckle 2001, *passim*; and Gaukroger 2010, 439-40.

<sup>90</sup> McCracken 1983, 255; cf. Buckle 2001, 192.

at by Hume: 'Before their fall, it seems, our first parents were good Humeans, distinguishing right from wrong by immediate *sentiment*; only in the day in which something went awry in the Garden did they have to begin to *reason* about morality'.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, Peter Kail observes that 'the Christian Platonist, as McCracken termed Malebranche, collapses into an empiricist naturalist when the intellect is decapitated'.<sup>92</sup> (Again, this is also true of Malebranche's science.) While it is certainly the case that Hume takes aim at Malebranche not just in the *Treatise* but also in the first *Enquiry*, most of the Scot's criticisms of the Frenchman specifically target problems arising due to the latter's theological commitments. By utilising numerous Malebranchean elements to his own ends, Hume is able to bring the battle to Malebranche's field. Take God out of Malebranche's philosophical system and it will certainly start to fall apart: since man is not a light unto himself, as Malebranche repeatedly preaches throughout his works, his search after truth will fail miserably if he attempts it without the illumination of eternal ideas through his union with his Author. But what remains is not reduced to mere rigid mechanism. The Malebranchean embodied mind maintains full access to its sensations – both perceptual and emotional – and can enjoy social interactions (though arguably in a much less sophisticated sense than previously) with its peers.

Voltaire, then, was too harsh in his dismissive treatment of Malebranche. It is simply not the case that we see all things in God: the Malebranchean mind has available a rich repertoire of passions and affective sensations by virtue not of its union with its Author, but of its union with its body. Far from a perfect philosophical system, Malebranche's theory is strong enough to have merited careful consideration from one of the eighteenth century's most important thinkers. That alone is enough to justify Malebranche's growing reputation as a highly influential figure in the discourse of sensibility in the Enlightenment era.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> McCracken 1983, 286.

<sup>92</sup> Kail 2008b, 76.

<sup>93</sup> Versions of this paper were presented at the *Sensibilité* conference in Brisbane, December 2010, and at the inaugural conference of the Centre for the History of Philosophy in York, UK, May 2011. I wish to thank all audience members who provided feedback. Thanks also to Stephen Buckle, Devin Curry, Karen Detlefsen, Daniel Garber, Stephen Gaukroger, Nabeel Hamid, Martyn Lloyd, Verónica Muriel, and Alison Simmons for helpful discussions, and most importantly to John Sutton, whose prompts and comments have proved indispensable.

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