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ARNOLD GEULINCX ON THINKING SELF AND THE HUMAN CONDITION

Arnold Geulincx (1624–1669) is known as the one who laid foundations for a modern theory of Occasionalism. He belongs also to a group of philosophers for whom the reference point was the system of René Descartes. We will not concentrate here however, neither on theory of Occasionalism (even though we might mention it) nor on inspirations by Descartes (even though they will of course impose themselves). We will consider what is Geulincx's answer to the question: who am I?¹

Geulincx comes to the answer to this question through search of an indubitable and true knowledge which he calls prime knowledge (*scientia prima*), metaphysics or simply wisdom. Having gone through the sceptical stage, Geulincx gains first and fundamental and unquestionable knowledge 'I think therefore I exist' (*cogito ergo sum*).² The analysis of this first truth will show him who he is not only as a subject of metaphysical considerations. Let us think what is the process of thinking for Geulincx. Above all he understands it broadly. He connects it to senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste and also to the activity of mind: affirmation, negation but also feelings: love, hatred, fear. Geulincx connects various ways of thinking to human consciousness of them. He writes: 'And I am at the same time aware that

¹ In the present article we base on the following texts of the works of A. Geulincx the original version: *Arnoldi Geulincx Scholae Academicae ultimae ab auditore anonymo descriptae*, manuscript, Leiden University Library, Western Manuscripts, ms. BPL 1255; *Arnoldi Geulincx Antverpiensis opera philosophica*, recognovit J. P. N. Land, Hagae Comitum apud Martinum Nijhoff, 1891–1893 (reprint: A. Geulincx, *Sämtliche Schriften*, ed. J. P. N. Land, Stuttgart – Bad Cannstatt 1965–68); *Arnoldi Geulincx Metaphysica vera et ad mentem peripateticam. Opus posthumum iuxta manuscriptum iam editum Amstelredami apud Joannem Wolters*, 1691; and on translations to English: *Ethics with Samuel Beckett's Notes*, translated by M. Wilson, edited by H. Van Ruler, A. Uhlmann, M. Wilson, Brill, Leiden – Boston 2006; *Metaphysics*, translated by M. Wilson, The Christoffel Press, Wisbech 1999.

² A. Geulincx, *Metaphysica vera, Pars prima, Prima scientia*.

each of these modes may vary within itself. (...) I understand that I see light and colours, that I hear sounds, that I love, or hate, because all this means is that my consciousness has a certain modality; and in one and the same act of having this modality, I am immediately aware of what kind of modality it is.³ There are then infinite and various kinds of the process of thinking, it often depends on time and circumstances and man is only conscious of the fact that it takes place. Then according to Geulincx, thoughts are not provoked by a thinking subject and because they cannot exist without a reason they are generated by something different from the man, something which is conscious, something that understands how it is executed. He refers here to a rule which he accepts axiomatically and which reads as follows: What you do not know how to do, is not your action (*Quod nescis quomodo fiat, id non facis*).⁴ I do not know how my thoughts come into being though I am not their creator. Moreover various things beyond me (Geulincx gives the examples of fire, Sun and stones) as deprived of consciousness cannot all the more be creators of these thoughts in me. Then there is something or (as Geulincx notices) someone who is the originator of these thoughts – the God. This is the way Geulincx proves the existence of God.

How does God cause the thoughts to rise? According to Geulincx there may be theoretically three possibilities: he causes them to rise with the help of the thinking self, he causes them himself or by means of something third being both beyond the God and beyond the thinking self. First possibility is excluded because I (self), as a thinking subject, am a simple thing and thoughts are diverse. The same argument excludes the second possibility. The creator of thoughts is also simple for he is united to whatever he wants and whatever he knows, he is solely a thinking thing. There is only the third possibility left: thinking takes place by means of something else than thinking self or God. This thing should satisfy one condition: it has to be capable of transitions in order to awake various thoughts. The possibility of transition Geulincx connects to motion and extension – to occupy a place

³ *Quos omnes modos esse cogitationum mearum inter se diversos, quosdam etiam magis, quosdam minus diversos esse, conscientia ipsa notissimum et evidentissimum mihi est. (...) Clarissime, inquam, intelligo me videre lumen et colores, et me audire sonos, etc. me amare, me odisse, etc.; quia hoc non est aliud quam hoc vel illo modo me habere, cuius modi hoc ipso, quo illum habeo, intime mihi conscius sum.*; A. Geulincx, *Metaphysica vera, Pars prima, Secunda scientia*.

⁴ See A. Geulincx, *Metaphysica vera, Pars prima, Quinta scientia; Metaphysica vera, Annotata ad "Metaphysicam veram", Ad Partem primam, Quintam scientiam; Ethica, Tractatus I, caput 2, sectio 2, §2, 4 and Ethica, Annotata ad "Ethicam", Ad Tractatum I, caput 2, sectionem 2, §2, 9 and 14.*

in space. And since he thinks that there are only two kinds of substance:⁵ thinking substance and extended substance then the answer is: God in order to cause various thoughts in the thinking self uses the extended substance – the body as an instrument. Here Geulincx demonstrates the necessity of the existence of bodies.

One body presenting itself in a specific way can cause only one effect. It is necessary for a body to be changing, that means to be moving in order to cause various thoughts. Various thoughts are caused in a thinking self by means of the body and thanks to motion. Various movements of the body are caused by thoughts. Geulincx emphasizes that body is an instrument and only an instrument to cause thoughts. He specifies also what kind of instrument it is. Since there are three types of these tools.⁶ First are the instruments which achieve the effect or the aim from necessity (e.g. a mountain in relation to a valley), second are the instruments which achieve the effect for the reason of capacity and therefore sometimes the effect does not occur (e.g. a pen in relation to writing), the last type are the instruments which achieve their aim for the reason of ineffability of someone who uses them, and man cognizes these instruments not through reason but through consciousness (e.g. eye in relation to seeing). Body in this context belongs to the last of the discussed types.

Among various bodies one is specific namely the one in the matter of which the thinking self is deeply conscious of direct influence and experience. The self is conscious of full influence on the body and is also subject to its actions. It qualifies the body as theirs: ‘This, then, I call my body, by which I am thus affected. (But note that in the strict sense, I am not affected by my body, but by the cause that employs my body as an instrument: I have already shown that a body cannot act on me directly, but only as an instrument of a cause acting at will on me in an ineffable way). I also act on my body in some way. (But note also that I do not truly act on my body, but only my will: parts of my body are frequently moved about, though not by me but by the real mover; and what that may be will be explained later.)⁷ Through body we experience what the thinking self cognizes as

⁵ Geulincx occasionally uses in his considerations the term ‘substance’.

⁶ See A. Geulincx, *Metaphysica vera, Annotata ad “Metaphysicam veram”, Ad Partem primam, Septimam scientiam.*

⁷ *Hoc igitur voco corpus meum, a quo ego sic patior quodammodo (non enim proprie ab eo patior, sed a causa quae tali instrumento utitur; iam enim ostensum est corpus in me non posse agere, sed tantum assumi ut instrumentum, a causa per ipsum in me ineffabiliter agente) et in quod ago quodammodo (nec enim vere in illud ago, sed ad arbitrium voluntatis meae, quaedam subinde partes in corpore meo moventur, non quidem a me, sed a motore; quique ille sit, infra patebit);* A. Geulincx, *Metaphysica vera, Pars prima, Nona scientia.*

ideas. The lack of body would not impoverish the man when it comes to knowledge: 'If I lacked a body I would no doubt still have ideas of motion arousing various sensations in my mind, but I would not actually have the appropriate thoughts or sensations.'⁸

What am I then? From the fact that I am not conscious of some of my parts, in other words I comprehend myself as a unity, it results that 'I am a simple thing, undivided and without parts.'⁹ What it thinks, even though it thinks in different ways, is one and the same.¹⁰ As a matter of fact I am a thinking self, namely a mind (*mens*). This self however is directly connected to a specific body, which it calls theirs. This connection constitutes a man.

Geulincx in his philosophical considerations consequently identifies the self with the mind. The thinking self is a subject in situations when the subject talks about itself. The thinking self in its earthly existence is however always directly connected to a specific body which it considers as its and this way a human being is created. According to Geulincx the man is an 'incorporated mind' (*mens incorporata*).¹¹ Emphasising the essentiality of the body he notices that without it man would not be what he is. Both mind and body constitute a man. He claims also that in order to indicate properly what is the matter in a man and what is the form one needs to assume that the mind corresponds to the matter and the body to the form. Since it is not because of the mind that we say that the man is what he is but because of the body. The one who is not incorporated cannot be a man.

The man is the thinking self directly connected to a specific body, which he considers his own. Geulincx not only states this unity of the mind and the body (he calls it human condition – *condicio humana*) but also he emphasizes the fact that this unity ensues from the will of the One who

⁸ *Si corpus non haberem, essent quidem in me ideae motus, qui tam varios in me sensus excitat, non haberem autem ipsas illas perceptiones seu sensus*; A. Geulincx, *Metaphysica vera, Annotata ad "Metaphysicam veram", Ad Partem primam, Nonam scientiam*.

⁹ *Simplex quaedam, indivisa, et partium omnium expers res*; A. Geulincx, *Metaphysica vera, Pars prima, Tertia scientia*.

¹⁰ Geulincx rejects the concept of tripartite soul. In *Annotata ad "Ethicam"* he puts it unequivocally: 'Away, then, with that doctrine of some of the Scholastics, which endowed us with three souls, a vegetable, a sentient, and a rational soul. We are certainly not the subject of a vegetable soul: we are nourished, we grow, we generate, without any knowledge or consciousness of any such things. But we are indeed a sentient and a rational soul so long as we are in the body; though these are not two things in us, but one simple thing, since we feel quite clearly that we are one and the same thing, feeling and reasoning at the same time (...)' ; A. Geulincx, *Ethica, Annotata ad "Ethicam", Ad Tractatum I, caput 2, sectionem 2, §5, 38*.

¹¹ See A. Geulincx, *Ethica, Annotata ad "Ethicam", Ad Tractatum I, caput 2, sectionem 2, §2, 45*.

is above the thinking self and the body – the God. Human condition is awarded to the man without his will and similarly it will one day be taken from him. Moreover, what seemingly happens by order of human will in reality happens because God wants it to happen: ‘I am persuaded, then, that my human condition depends not on some natural necessity, but on the operation of a will: not my will, obviously, but on another’s, namely, God’s will.’¹² We shall pay attention here to the fact that for Geulincx the man is born in the moment of connection of the body to the mind, which happens in the moment of conception. We read: ‘for “to be born” is not for me to emerge into the light, but to be joined to a body, and to enter the World, the World in which I already was when I was enclosed in my mother’s womb.’¹³ When he explicates this thought Geulincx combines his medical knowledge with a conviction of philosophical nature that the man is gifted with knowledge from the moment of conception. He writes: ‘In case you should be tempted to believe that an embryo, as it is called when it has been formed in its mother’s womb and has received its principal organs, such as the brain and the heart (which occurs round about the fortieth day from conception, or the carnal union of its parents) is an automaton, which is alive only in the sense that a brute or a plant is alive, and moves without consciousness or understanding, the sheer number of our prejudices, which we absorbed once from having been enclosed in our mother’s womb, proves that an embryo is even then endowed with understanding, and is a true human being, enjoying a rational mind and a body.’¹⁴

The union of the thinking self and the body (being a man) may be taken away by the God. It does not consist in annihilation but in deprivation of human condition through setting apart the thinking self and the body which it considered their own. After this separation God may give the thinking self another condition. Geulincx indicates two possibilities: connecting it to

¹² *Pendet igitur humana condicio mea non a natura aliqua seu necessitate, sed ab arbitrio, non meo, ut clarissime vidi, sed alterius, utique Dei; A. Geulincx, Metaphysica vera, Pars prima, Duodecima scientia.*

¹³ (...) “*nasci enim mihi non est in lucem edi, sed corpore iungi, et intrare in hunc mundum, in quo etiam eram, cum matris utero inclusus eram; A. Geulincx, Ethica, Tractatus I, caput 2, sectio 2, §10, 1.*

¹⁴ *Ne forte putes embryonem, ut vocant, dum iam formatus est in utero matris, et partes principes, veluti cerebrum et cor, sortitus est (quod fit circiter die quarto decimo a conceptione, seu carnali coniunctione parentum), esse automa quoddam, quod instar bruti, vel plantae, tantum vivat, sine conscientia et cogitatione moveatur. Ostendunt quamplurima nostra praeiudicia, quae ex eo hausimus, quam primum matris utero inclusi fuimus, embryonem et tunc praeditum esse cognitione, esseque verum hominem, anima rationali et corpore constantem; A. Geulincx, Ethica, Annotata ad “Ethicam”, Ad Tractatum I, caput 2, sectionem 2, §10, 2.*

another body or leaving without a body. He presents Pythagoras as partisan of the first possibility even though he points out that it is a very popular view among philosophers. He underlines however: 'But it is only opinion and speculation, not science, Reason being profoundly silent on it (...).'¹⁵ And since it is like this then as a result of the lack of certainty about the truthfulness of this view the philosopher should reject it. Another indicated possibility was revealed by God in the Bible and although our reason lacks certainty then Geulincx inclines towards accepting that it is so and that: 'we shall remain with God at least for a time, divested of our body, until we take it again (...).'¹⁶ Considerations about the existence of the thinking self after separation from the body are not essential for Geulincx as the matter of fact. The man should not be interested in what shall happen with him after death for it is exclusively God's domain. The man should obey God's command who withdraws him from human condition. The following words express that: 'Now that He calls me forth from among the living, calls me to Himself, I must come, and nothing more will remain for me but to come. How He will receive me, I do not trouble myself, as I no longer trouble about myself at all. Whether He will in due course infuse me into another body? Whether He will keep me with Himself, divested of a body?'¹⁷

Human condition consists in the unity of the mind and the body, manifested in action and passion. The body acts in connection to the mind, the mind feels in connection to the body. Geulincx writes: 'that through the medium of our body we are affected by various perceptions; and that through the medium of our will we can choose to move the various members of a certain body in diverse ways; and in these two principles consists the union of the mind with the body that makes us men.'¹⁸ Being submitted to actions through the body includes senses and feelings. Senses come

¹⁵ (...) *opinio tantum atque suspicio; nulla scientia, cum altum hic sit rationis silentium; A. Geulincx, Ethica, Annotata ad "Ethicam", Ad Tractatum I, caput 2, sectionem 2, §6, 13.*

¹⁶ (...) *saltem ad tempus aliquid exuti corpore remanebimus apud Deum, donec illud resurgendo rursus assumamus; A. Geulincx, Ethica, Annotata ad "Ethicam", Ad Tractatum I, caput 2, sectionem 2, §6, 14.*

¹⁷ *Vocat me nunc e vivis, vocat me ad se; veniam igitur, et nihil longius erit quam ut veniam. Quomodo me accipiet, non laboro, qui de me non laboro. An protinus in aliud corpus me refundet? An me exutum corpore retinebit apud se?; A. Geulincx, Ethica, Tractatus I, caput 2, sectio 2, §6, 3.*

¹⁸ *Nempe in eo, quod ratione corporis certe modo moti certas et diversissimas patiamus perceptiones; secundo etiam in eo, quod ratione voluntatis nostrae certum aliquod corpus pro arbitrio nostro varie moveatur et secundum diversas suas partes varie agitetur; in his enim duobus consistit unio illa mentis cum corpore, qua homines sumus; A. Geulincx, Metaphysica vera, Pars tertia, Prima scientia.*

into existence in a man in relation to different movements caused in different parts of human body by other bodies. Geulincx claims that: '(...) only through sensation that we have a lodging in the World (...).'¹⁹ Being deprived of one of the senses a man's existence in the world becomes difficult, he is deprived of knowledge about certain spheres of the world. Even if for instance a blind man has known since the day he was born such terms as the sky, the stars, a colour he does not have in his mind a thought corresponding to these names. The senses are indissolubly connected to motion. Geulincx clearly refers to his knowledge of medicine when writing about this: '(...) the vibration of certain nerves in a certain way conveys motion to the brain, and to a certain part of the brain, as a result of which we see and hear all those diverse kinds of light, colours, and sounds that are aroused in our mind.'²⁰

The cause of senses is beyond man, and so the feelings are originated in him even though they are not within his power. Geulincx relates to the cognation of Latin words while matching feelings to undergoing actions through the body. Verb *pati* has several meanings among which there are: 'to bear', 'to endure', 'to experience', 'to suffer', 'to succumb'. Man through his body bears something, experiences or even suffers from something. A noun *passio* derives from this verb, which can mean 'suffering', 'a sudden feeling', 'passion' or even 'lust'. Geulincx however, uses it in a very neutral meaning – feeling, interchangeably with another Latin word *affectus* a 'spiritual state' or more rarely 'physical state', 'feeling', 'emotion', which comes from the verb *afficere* – 'to inflict something on somebody', 'to dispose somebody to something', 'to affect'. Then a feeling similarly to the senses (*sensus*) is some kind of an experience, an internal sense of oneself which he experiences through the body. If man was deprived of body, he would not have any senses or feelings.

Geulincx when talking about feelings postulates to discriminate the nature from the behaviour. Feelings considered in relation to nature are something good because as he writes '(...) for a good part of the human condition consists in these passions, and it is almost entirely through them that we exist as men. If they were to be withdrawn from us along with the

¹⁹ (...) *per sensum nos hunc mundum incolere*; A. Geulincx, *Metaphysica vera, Pars tertia, Quarta scientia*.

²⁰ (...) *videmus enim his aut illis nervis certo modo vibratis, cum per eos motus ad cerebrum, certamque cerebri partem pertinere potest, omnes illas diversissimasque species luminis, colorum, sonorum, etc. in nobis suscitari*; A. Geulincx, *Metaphysica vera, Pars tertia, Quarta scientia*.

senses, we would no longer be able to regard ourselves as men.’²¹ In other words human condition was created by God thus everything connected to it is good. Feelings in relation to behaviour are neutral: neither good nor wrong. What may be wrong is that man lets them guide him and yet God ordered him to follow reason and His laws. Reason (*ratio*) in Geulincx considerations is the most internal part of the mind in which are contained laws, orders, rules and tasks given to the man by God. We read: ‘This is manly: not to allow oneself to become preoccupied with one’s own passions, that is, never to grant them the right to dictate or inhibit any action of ours, but to cede that right wholly to Reason. For Reason alone has the vision, Reason alone has the capacity to guide our actions; and not our blind passions.’²² In like manner, even though God gave the man senses, in search of the truth he told him to base on notions innate to mind. Similarly, according to Geulincx, wrongly do those who follow their senses in philosophy as those who follow passions in ethics. He is conscious of the fact that men repeatedly follow their passions, moreover he notices some inclination to what he calls idleness which causes the man not to pay proper attention to the commands of reason. The man hesitates whether he wants to follow the reason and so he turns more willingly to what he is drawn to by passion. Geulincx says that the bodily lust for instance as an experience is not wrong but an inclination to stay in it, or satisfaction, is the source of sin. The inclination to follow the passions originates in babyhood, to the subject of which we will come back later.

The attitude towards passion assumed by the man enables Geulincx to characterise different ways of life. We have then the life based on actions from passion (*action ex passione*), action contrary to passion (*action contra passionem*) or action above passion (*action praeter passionem*).

Actions of vulgar people arise from passion. The first impulse for them to perform their basic duties like learning and choosing a certain mode of life is fear (*metus*), the fear of their parents and teachers. It is under the stress of fear that they choose a way of life to which they get used to while remaining in it and this makes them love it. Thus the first grade of the

²¹ (...) *consistit enim in his passionibus bona pars condicionis humanae, et fere potissimum per illas homines sumus, et demptis hisce una cum sensibus, non est quod nos amplius homines esse existimemus*; A. Geulincx, *Ethica, Tractatus IV*, §1.

²² *Hoc masculum est, non sinere se praeverti a passionibus, id est, nunquam illis hoc iuris dare, ut actionem aliquam nostram aut iubere aut inhibere possint, sed totum illud ius rationi integrum relinquere. Haec enim videt, haec dux esse potest actionum nostrarum; passiones omnes coecae sunt*; A. Geulincx, *Ethica, Annotata ad “Ethicam”, Ad Tractatum I, caput 1, §1, 16.*

vulgar holds on to duty out of fear and when they get used to it, out of love. This kind of people seem to be restrained and sedate. The second grade of people are characterised by another kind of fear, it is a fear of their conscience, the conscience understood as a kind of urge or instinct in human soul to fulfil what the reason commands. The conscience is calm when the man is obedient, when however, the man goes counter it, the conscience troubles him. This is not a proper understanding of conscience and that is why these people interpret the commands of the reason wrongly. For instance the reason commands to despise oneself and these people additionally trouble themselves, or the reason forbids killing other people and they add the prohibition to move mortal remains from their burial place. The conscience understood this way similarly to other passions weakens with habit. This second type of people is guided by the fear of non-habit and they are wrongly called religious or saints. The third grade of the vulgar are those who overcome the fear of non-habit with audacity and recklessness. They expose themselves to danger and often change they mode of life. Their fear awakes everything which is stable. Colloquially they are called ambitious and smart. Such a behaviour may – having got used to danger – lead them to think that death is nothing and they often become soldiers or if they do not care about their reputation bandits. The fourth grade of the vulgar restrain one feeling with another contrary to it. If they fear that they are too obedient they become audacious and whenever they feel prone to delight they restrain it with the spectre of infamy. These people are labelled wise and farsighted.

Life of philosophers consists of action contrary to passion and this results from the fact that they want to draw a distinction between them and vulgar people. But, as claims Geulincx: ‘(...) thereby they showed that they were not really wise, but merely deluded in a more ostentatious manner than the vulgar (...).’²³ There are four grades of philosophical life: Cynics and Stoics, Platonists and two grades of *mortifiers* (*mortificati*). Cynics and Stoics think that it is necessary to uproot every passion. Their fault resides in the fact that human condition out of its nature is connected to passions and by rejecting passions they reject human condition. Platonists recommend not to reject passions but to restrain oneself from action wherever the man is conscious that he might be urged by passion. Geulincx gives as an example a story about Plato, who apparently said to a mischievous boy

²³ (...) *et sic quidem non sapuerunt, sed splendidius et aliter quam populus insaniverunt*; A. Geulincx, *Ethica, Tractatus IV*, §3.

that he would beat him if he was not angry.²⁴ In spite of the penalty being just, Plato restrained from inflicting it because he was seized with a feeling of anger.²⁵ But those go astray as well for firstly sometimes one might forsake the good actions while acting this way and secondly the man might give up an action only because of the command of the reason and not because of passion. Certain philosophers tell not to uproot passions but to act contrary to them. There are two ways to do it: act against all passions or against specific ones and particularly against these which are related to eating, bodily love and honours. In reality everybody acts because of passions even though they are not conscious of that. Man is not each time guided by reason in his actions, he lets passions move him. In this classification Geulincx knowingly omitted Aristotelians for he claims that as far as this subject is concerned they are not exactly philosophers but wiser people and they should be on the fourth grade of life of the vulgar.²⁶

Actions above passion fill the Christian life. Christians, namely honest people, somehow neglect passions, they do not recognise them worth considering. Being concerned about doing what reason tells them they do not worry whether a passion exists or not. Thus when they punish for offences it is only because the reason tells them to do so and not because they are angry, either they do not restrain themselves from punishment because of the anger but because the reason tells them to do so. Such people never act because of passion even though their actions are accompanied by passion. However they have to be very careful for it is easy for a passion accompanying a certain action, whether it is anger or satisfaction, to take the control over the action and to become a reason of staying in it. What has started because of the command of reason may transform into an action out of anger or satisfaction. Passions as well as senses may also disturb obeying the reason. Within the power of man is not to let the passions become the reason of his actions and this is what Christians do. To want to get rid of passions is to desire to get rid of human nature. One should not fight passions, for the more they are fought with the more powerful they become. Only not paying attention to them may make them weaker. So when one thinks about God, a certain image of Him comes to mind and it is not good to fan it whereas it is impossible to withdraw it, the only way is not to consider it and to refer to innate ideas.

²⁴ Compare *Diogenes Laertius, Vitae Philosophorum*, III, 39 and *Seneca, De ira*, III, 12, 5.

²⁵ Compare Cicero, *De officiis*, 1, 25, 89.

²⁶ See A. Geulincx, *Ethica, Annotata ad "Ethicam"*, *Ad Tractatum IV*, 2.

The connection of mind and body influences the state of mind. Geulincx points out that human mind learns how to function in human condition given by God. He takes up this question while commenting article 71 of the Part One of *Principles of Philosophy* by Descartes, he refers also to the article 72. Descartes presents human state of mind in two periods of his development: in his childhood (*prima aetas*) and in maturity (*maturi anni*). The initial state of mind he describes as follows: ‘In our early childhood the mind was so closely tied to the body that it had no leisure for any thoughts except those by means of which it had sensory awareness of what was happening to the body. It did not refer these thoughts to anything outside itself, but merely felt pain when something harmful was happening to the body and felt pleasure when something beneficial occurred.’²⁷ In the maturity human mind works differently: ‘In later years the mind is no longer a total slave to the body, and does not refer everything to it. Indeed, it inquires into the truth of things considered in themselves, and discovers very many of its previous judgments to be false.’²⁸ Geulincx describes this subject in a more detailed way. He distinguishes three states of human mind connected to three periods in human life. These are: the state of numbness (*status stuporis*), the state of impudence (*status proterviae*) and the state of discernment (*status discretionis*). The first one is related to a period which Geulincx calls *infantia* in Latin and it is, according to him, the fetal and babyhood period. In this state human mind concentrates on itself and does not relate its thoughts (we shall remember about the extensive range of this term in Geulincx) to anything laying beyond it.²⁹ As confirmation of his belief Geulincx gives the example of an accidental bringing of a baby’s hand near the fire. A baby does not take the hand away from fire, which is burning it but cries informing about the pain it feels. The second state of mind is connected to childhood (*pueritia*) which starts according to Geulincx when one starts to talk. Then the mind relates all its thoughts to the things beyond it and this is caused by the conviction that senses come to it from the outside – and are caused by things beyond the mind. Geulincx considers

²⁷ R. Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy, Part One, 71* (*Oeuvres de Descartes*, ed. Ch. Adam, P. Tannery, Paris 1897–1913 (AT), VIII A, 35). About the close relation between the mind and the body in childhood Descartes writes also in articles 47 and 73 Part One of the mentioned work. Translation into English according to: *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, translated by J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff, D. Murdoch, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1985, vol. I.

²⁸ R. Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy, Part One, 72* (AT VIII A, 36).

²⁹ See A. Geulincx, *Annotata latiora in Principia philosophiae Renati Descartes, Ad Partem Primam art. 71*.

this state as an especially dangerous, chiefly if it is prolonged and disturbs in achieving the third state. The third one is connected to adulthood (*aetas adulta*). It consists in realizing that thought may be caused by things beyond mind as well as by the mind itself. The competence to subordinate thoughts properly Geulincx calls wisdom.

The above-mentioned states of mind are connected obviously to the question of human knowledge. Geulincx above all draws attention on two elements: what cognizes, namely knowing (*cognoscens*) and what is known (*cognitum*). The existence of knowledge determines the existence of the first of the two elements – what cognizes has to exist. It does not determine however, the existence of what is cognized. Geulincx claims: ‘Even something that we always know, is not always just as we know it (otherwise it would be impossible to err). (...) I can know something that does not exist; but it is impossible for me to know, and yet for myself not to exist.’³⁰ Geulincx shows also some grades of knowledge leading from images to ideas. The lowest are sensual images. They do not relate to the thing in itself, they might truly show the man the utility of the thing or not. Next is knowledge which is deprived of clarity, it does not penetrate things, for instance: we learn that God made us humans, but we do not know how He did that. Then comes the knowledge connected to some evidence but stopping at the surface of things, for instance knowing that something is beautiful, good etc. The last grade of knowledge consists of grasping things except everything related to human way of thinking, denominations used by men, that is knowledge of the thing in itself – in its idea. Next grades of cognizance constitute a way of knowledge. The lowest grade connected to senses does not bring any knowledge, the second one is related above all to consciousness though it brings some knowledge. The third gives the man knowledge: ‘This third kind of knowledge is learning proper, which gives us clear knowledge of things, though not as they are in themselves, but under the external qualities that derive from our consideration of them. For example, we recognize the difference between acclivity and declivity, high and low (...).’³¹ Owing to this kind of knowledge the man is educated. The last of the grades

³⁰ *Etiam si enim cognitum semper sit aliquid, non tamen semper sic est ut esse cognoscitur (alioqui enim impossibile esset errare) (...) Possum cognoscere aliquid quod non existit, sed impossibile est ut cognoscam et ego ipse non existam; A. Geulincx, Metaphysica vera, Annotata ad “Metaphysicam veram”, Ad Partem primam, Secundam scientiam.*

³¹ (...) *in quo clare cognoscimus res, non quidem secundum se, sed secundum extrinsecas denominationes, quas habet a considerationibus nostris. V. g. clare cognoscimus, quomodo differant acclive et declive, altum et profundum (...); A. Geulincx, Metaphysica vera, Annotata ad “Metaphysicam veram”, Ad Partem tertiam, Sextam scientiam.*

of knowledge described by Geulincx is based on: ‘understanding something through an idea, that is, knowing the idea of something’³² and brings about knowledge in exact sense and makes people wise. According to Geulincx: ‘If we want to understand anything we must pay attention to ideas. Wherein we have no idea, therein we must not conclude anything about the nature of a thing.’³³ Having ideas is separated from our sensual sphere and with our corporality: ‘Even deprived of our senses, we could still form an idea of a World, and its parts, in fact even of this World (...).’³⁴ Since ‘to be wise is to apprehend and understand a thing as it is in itself’³⁵ and only the one who is the creator of things possesses it, wisdom understood precisely relates to God uniquely. Medical knowledge seems to make Geulincx cautious while glorifying excessively human mind and wisdom. He writes: ‘Whatever we suffer from injuries to the body is not natural to our mind, in common with reasoning, memory,³⁶ and even wisdom, which desert us when we are delirious. So it is foolish for teachers to recommend study to their pupils by saying that the learning and wisdom they acquire can never depart from them; when the lowest ruffian can deprive us of them with one blow of a cudgel (...).’³⁷

Thus the man is a composition of entirely different substances: of a thinking self and extended body: ‘[Mind] does not presuppose a body, but is completely independent of body: it is only a thinking thing, which the inner

³² (...) *cognitionem per ideam, seu cognitionem, qua aliquid cognoscitur in idea sua*; A. Geulincx, *Metaphysica vera, Annotata ad “Metaphysicam veram”, Ad Partem tertiam, Sextam scientiam*.

³³ *Quotiens volumus aliquid intelligere, debemus consulere ideas. Ubi nullam ideam videmus, ibi non debemus statuere naturam*; A. Geulincx, *Metaphysica vera, Annotata ad “Metaphysicam veram”, Ad Partem primam, Decimam scientiam*.

³⁴ *Sensibus etiam destituti, ideam tamen mundi, partiumque eius habere possemus, imo etiam ideam huius mundi (...)*; A. Geulincx, *Metaphysica vera, Annotata ad “Metaphysicam veram”, Ad Partem tertiam, Quartam scientiam*.

³⁵ (...) *qui capit et intelligit rem ut est in se*; A. Geulincx, *Metaphysica vera, Pars tertia, Sexta scientia*.

³⁶ On the subject of memory Geulincx says: ‘Memory appertains to the body, that is, to ourselves only inasmuch as we are incorporated beings; it can hardly be that we are in ourselves minds by virtue of anticipating incorporation’ (*Memoria ad corpus pertinet, seu ad nos ipsos ut incorporati sumus; minime vero, ut in nobis ipsis praeveniendo incorporationem mentes quaedam sumus*; A. Geulincx, *Metaphysica vera, Annotata ad “Metaphysicam veram”, Ad Partem alteram, Duodecimam scientiam*).

³⁷ *Quicquid corpore laeso laeditur, non pertinet ad nostram mentem; ut ratiocinatio, memoria, etiam ipsa sapientia, quae per delirium a nobis aufertur. Ridiculum itaque est, quando praeceptores discipulis suis commendant studia, dicuntque eruditionem et sapientiam a nobis non posse auferri; cum quivis pessimus nebulo facillimo negotio et uno ictu lapidis, ferri, etc. eam nobis eripere possit*; A. Geulincx, *Metaphysica vera, Annotata ad “Metaphysicam veram”, Ad Partem alteram, Duodecimam scientiam*.

experience of our consciousness teaches us can be modified in diverse ways by body and its motions, but which in substance or essence is completely independent of body.³⁸ This experience or consciousness show that the two different substances influence each other in a way. There is thus a problem of possibilities of the mutual influence to be solved by a philosopher. The Geulincx's answer results from his metaphysical image of the world and rule: 'What you do not know how to do, is not your action'. Every mutual influence is based on motion and its cause should be conscious. This cause of the motion is unique and it is God: 'Our will has no influence, causality, determination, or any other effect on motion (...). Accordingly, this leaves God as not only sole First Mover but as sole Mover, ordaining and disposing motion, and simultaneously monitoring our will, so that at the very instant at which it desires, for example, to swing forward our feet when we walk, our feet are duly swung forward.'³⁹ Moreover the fact that the man is composed of the mind and the body is based on a certain necessity. Two minds not composed – God and the man, even though the one is mind in the proper sense and the other is 'something mental',⁴⁰ something limited 'by other minds, just as every mode terminates in another mode: as, for example, motion terminates in rest'⁴¹ – cannot influence each other directly by means of motion, which is connected to change and the change necessitates composition. Hence God as mind, namely a simple spiritual substance, in order to cause in the mind of the man, namely in human spirit which is also a simple substance, various changes needs a direct factor which would be composed and therefore would be subject to changes, and the body is such a factor. The body is changeable but passive at the same time, it cannot act on its own but it can be subject to changes. Thus it becomes a instrument

³⁸ *Neque enim mens nostra praesupponit corpus, sed penitus independens est ab illo (cum mens nostra nihil aliud sit quam cogitatio, quae quidem, teste intima experientia et conscientia, potest a corpore eiusque motu varie modificari, sed ipsa nihilominus in substantia seu essentia sua penitus a corpore independens esse intelligitur); A. Geulincx, Metaphysica vera, Annotata ad "Metaphysicam veram", Ad Partem tertiam, Nonam scientiam.*

³⁹ *Voluntas nostra nullum habet influxum, causalitatem, determinationem, aut efficaciam quamcumque in motu (...). (...) Restat igitur Deus solus primus motor et solus motor, qui et ita motum ordinat atque disponit et ita simul voluntati nostrae licet libere moderatur, ut eodem temporis momento conspiret et voluntas nostra ad proiciendum v. g. pedes inter ambulandum, et simul ipsa illa pedum proiectio seu ambulatio; A. Geulincx, Metaphysica vera, Annotata ad "Metaphysicam veram", Ad Partem tertiam, Octavam scientiam.*

⁴⁰ *Aliquid mentis; A. Geulincx, Metaphysica vera, Annotata ad "Metaphysicam veram", Ad Partem tertiam, Secundam scientiam.*

⁴¹ *(...) ad aliam mentem, quemadmodum omnis modus ad alium modum terminatur, e.g. motus ad quietem; A. Geulincx, Metaphysica vera, Annotata ad "Metaphysicam veram", Ad Partem secundam, Sextam scientiam.*

in God's hands, an occasion (*occasio*) to actions or motions of the spirit. This process occurs the other way: the spirit is the occasion to the motions of the body. Geulincx writes: 'The union of the mind with the body is in the first intention the will of God, who decides when the mind acts on the body, and when it is affected by the body; in the second intention it is the very interchange of action and passion.'⁴² In order to explain the way in which this mutual correspondence, this mutual being an occasion takes place Geulincx presents two well-known comparisons. The first comparison is a baby laid in his cradle which wants to be dandled and at the same time the mother or the nanny dandles it. In reality it is not so because the baby wants to but because the mother or the nanny want it. Their will is in accordance with the will of the child in the action of dandling. However the two wills do not influence each other. It seems that Geulincx thought this comparison was accurate, for he comes back to it repeatedly.⁴³ In the second comparison Geulincx presents two clocks which indicate always the same hour. It is so not because the one influences the other but because they were produced in such a way and they work the same way.⁴⁴

To the question: 'who am I?' asked at the beginning Geulincx answers: 'I am a thinking self (mind)' as a subject of any philosophical consideration and 'I am a man' for to function in the world from necessity the thinking self has to assume a form of 'an incorporated mind' – a man.

⁴² *Unio mentis cum corpore in actu primo est arbitrium illud Dei discernentis ut mens agat in corpus et patiatur a corpore; in actu secundo est illa ipsa reciproca actio passioque*; A. Geulincx, *Metaphysica vera, Annotata ad "Metaphysicam veram"*, *Ad Partem primam, Decimam scientiam*.

⁴³ See A. Geulincx, *Ethica, Tractatus I, caput 2, sectio 2, §5, 2* and *Ethica, Annotata ad "Ethicam"*, *Ad Tractatum I, caput 2, sectionem 2, §2, 19* and §5, 6–7.

⁴⁴ See A. Geulincx, *Ethica, Annotata ad "Ethicam"*, *Ad Tractatum I, caput 2, sectionem 2, §2, 19* and 48; *Metaphysica vera, Pars tertia, Tredecima scientia*; *Annotata ad "Metaphysicam veram"*, *Ad Partem tertiam, Octavam scientiam* and *Annotata ad "Metaphysicam ad mentem peripateticam"*, *Ad Partem primam, §3*.