

ACTIO — PASSIO (Greek ποιειν — πασχειν [poiéin — páschein]; Latin *actio* — *passio*, action — undergoing) — in ordinary language *actio* means an activity, and *passio* means a state of being moved, an experience, the state of undergoing something. In philosophy, *actio* in the broad sense means natural activities of various kinds, while *passio* means an acquired habit or skill, or a disposition. Both *actio* and *passio* are part of the canon of Aristotelian categories that indirectly modify the subject or substance. In a narrower sense, *actio* and *passio* are specific modifications proper to psychophysical beings. For this reason, in anthropology *actio* is associated with intellectual and sensory activity (or appetite), and *passio* is associated with the acts of these activities, namely sensations, feelings and emotions. In logic, *actio—passio* designates one of the categories of accidental predication.

THE METAPHYSICAL ASPECT. The problematic of *actio* and *passio* appeared first in the philosophy of Aristotle. In the context of the *aporia* — whether true being is identical, unchanging and always perfect — Aristotle demonstrated that as a true being acts for a purpose and good it perfects itself and is perfected, since it is internally composite. In the context of the discovery that being is composed of act and potency, and of the four types of causes (material and formal, efficient and final), Aristotle showed the source of being's action and the reason for this action in the internal teleology of beings. With regard to the distinct compositional factors in being, Aristotle presented real being as a source of activity and as a subject that undergoes the action of other beings. His discovery of the composite nature of beings was the first step toward discovering and explaining the foundations of their action and passion, namely their dynamism.

Action is one of the qualitative modifications of every substance; the result of action is that being is transformed in various ways. In every being there is natural action that has a good as its aim. In metaphysical language this kind of action is called natural love or natural inclination. The term of natural action is determined by the form of the being, while every form has definite actions as its consequences. Since there are different forms of being, there are different actions. The actions that result from sense knowledge, which has as its object sensory forms, are called sensory activities, while the actions that result from intellectual activity, which has as its object immaterial forms, are called rational actions, namely the will. The natural actions are an expression of the internal teleology with which every real thing is endowed. Some knowledge of an object to which we aspire is necessary in natural action, and in intellectual action some knowledge of the object of appetite is necessary (*De ver.*, q. 25, a. 1).

The actions that a subject or substance elicits from itself modify the subject's mode of being. Action as a kind of modification includes and allows for various opposites and, as Aristotle notes: "Action and passion have contraries and also degrees. That is, heating is contrary to cooling, as also being cooled to being heated" (*Cat.*, 11 b 1). All actions are ultimately ordered to one end, which is the perfection of the being, namely its good.

Action reveals the nature of the being that acts. When a being acts it is actualized as an efficient cause and manifests its nature. The nature of a being is revealed by way of its action. Therefore the question of whether and how someone (or something) acts is a question about the nature of the acting being.

Passion is a qualitative modification of the subject or substance. When we ask how someone (or something) feels or suffers an action, we discover this new quality of being. Passion, like

action, includes and allows for opposites. One may be subject to joy and sorrow, pain and pleasure, etc.. Passion is the reception of action into oneself, and so a passion corresponds to an action. An action causes an internal change in the being that is subject to the action, and so different kinds of actions are the causes of different kinds of passions. Action and passion are mutually correlated.

Aristotle explains that passion "in one sense is a quality in virtue of which alteration is possible. For example, whiteness and blackness, sweetness and bitterness, heaviness and lightness, etc.. In another sense passion is the actualization of these qualities; namely, the alterations already realized. More particularly, passion is hurtful alterations and motions, and especially hurts which cause suffering. Extreme cases of misfortune and suffering are called passions" (*Met.*, 1022 b 15-21).

Following Aristotle, philosophers distinguish passions in the strict sense, namely emotions and feelings, and passive qualities such as sweetness, bitterness, warmth and cold, whiteness and blackness etc.. According to Aristotle, one characteristic of passive qualities is that the things "that possess them are called such and such in consequence [...] Just as honey itself contains sweetness and, therefore, is said to be sweet, so the body itself contains whiteness and, therefore, is said to be white" (*Cat.*, 9 a 28). These qualities, however, are not called passive because something that possesses them passively receives them. For example, honey does not experience sweetness, and a warm thing does not experience its warmth, but they are called passive qualities because "each of the qualities mentioned can cause a sensation. For example, the sense of taste is affected by sweetness and sourness, and the sense of touch is affected by coldness or warmth." etc. (*ibid.*, 9 b 5-10). The qualities that arise as a result of a passion are also passive qualities. For example, someone who is ashamed blushes, and someone frightened turns pale. Passive qualities are described as those whose "source can be found in some constant and lasting passions" (*ibid.*, 9 b 20). Passions in the strict sense, namely emotions and feelings, are also states "that arise from causes that are easily removed and which pass quickly" (*ibid.* 9 b 25-30) and no one is defined according to them (*ibid.* 9 b 30-35). We do not regard someone who blushes from shame as naturally ruddy, or someone who is frightened naturally pale. We say rather that someone is affected by something. We call these states passions, not qualities.

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL ASPECT. The problematic of action and passion is of particular importance in understanding living beings in general, and man in particular. It is most important to understand man's volitional-emotional life. The source of action in man is his reason and will conceived as a rational activity. Man feelings and emotions are expressions of passion, namely that he receives actions within himself.

Action conceived as rational appetite, namely the will, is autonomous in relation to passion, although it is not separate from passion. The end, motive and source of human actions is the good that is recognized by the reason and shown to the will. Therefore, it is within man's power as a rational being to command himself to perform the proper actions. Because of the human being's psychophysical unity it is very difficult to divide actions at the sensory level from those at the intellectual level. However, if we consider the content and structure of such acts, we can establish the difference between them. Sensory action is associated with organic transformation in the human being. Such organic transformations are not part of the structure of intellectual (volitional) activity, unless perhaps in an accidental sense. Furthermore, intellectual or volitional action aims at the good as good in general, while sensory action is

directed at particular concrete good (*De ver.*, q. 25 a. 1).

Passion is a capability for receiving an action into oneself. In the case of personal being, the structure of passion has a psychic and a corporeal element. Every passion is the reception of some new form of action and the loss of an old one. Passions of this kind are also called feelings or affections, and this is what the Latin term "*passio*" means in a narrower sense. Here we may also distinguish between passions (affections or feelings) and passive qualities. Passions are also states "that arise from causes that quickly disappear" (*Cat.*, 9 b 33), e.g., when someone experiences pain he is irritated. Irritation is thus a passion as kind of affection or feeling. We are dealing with passive qualities "when a man has a temper from birth and its source is in certain stable passions" (*ibid.*, 9 b 33). For example, a hot temper is a kind of passive quality that arises from basically stable causes.

The body plays a role in the actualization of passion, and passion is actualized in the body. The body enters into the structure of passion (*S. th.*, I-II, q. 22, a. 1). Passion in the most proper sense occurs in a subject which is a psychophysical organism ("*passio proprie invenitur ubi est transmutatio corporalis*", *ibid.*, I-II, q. 22, a. 3). Therefore we see significant psychophysical determination in man's affective life. This is because the loss of the previous form and the reception of a new form during passion in a certain sense throws the person off balance. Every passion or experience involves the loss of an old one (of old forms). Passion that is joined with organic changes is called feeling.

Action and passion, as qualitative properties of every being, lead to different kinds of transformations and modifications and they reveal the inner causation of each being. Whether a being is active or is passively receptive of action, it is transformed and perfected. We also discover that every being is a source of action and a subject of passion. Action reveals a being as an efficient cause of particular effects, while passion shows a being as capable of internal changes, namely, as a subject capable of receiving actions in itself.

THE HISTORY OF THE PROBLEMATIC. The question of action and passion has been interpreted variously in history. Parmenides and Plato situated all actions and passions outside of true being. A perfect being cannot act or undergo actions. Action and passion are associated only with that which is imperfect. Aristotle connected the problematic of action and passion with the composite structure of being and with the fact of being's internal causation. By showing action and passion as qualitative modifications of being, he could discover being as an autonomous source of action and as a subject capable of receiving action.

With the rejection of internal teleology and internal causation, and the reduction of the four causes to one or two of them, namely the external causes, the problem of action and passion was seen in a different light. Descartes rejected any causation within being and reduced all causation to that which occurs between beings. Just as "*res cogitans*" and "*res extensa*" are different and do not act upon each other, so psychic and physiological phenomena are radically different and cannot affect each other. The body may indirectly influence a change in the direction of what happens in the soul, and the soul may likewise indirectly influence events in the body. The senses are needed for life, but not necessary for developing knowledge. Feelings or passions are given to man for practical purposes to signal what is proper for him and what is harmful.

According to Descartes, "actions and passions do not cease to be one and the same thing, which has two names with respect to the two different persons to whom it may be referred" (*Les Passion de l'âme*, I, 1). Descartes reduced all types of action to efficient causality which, depending upon one's point of view, could be conceived either as a stimulus (action) or as a reaction to a stimulus (passion). Thus action and passion are not internal states of being, but reactions to external stimuli. There are only actions. There are no passions or states of undergoing. This applies both to the *res cogitans* (the soul) and the *res extensa* (the body). The passions of which we speak in the case of man are nothing other than "the movement of living breaths that is imparted to the small gland found in the middle of the brain" (*ibid.*, II 51).

N. Malebranche took a different position from that of Descartes, and regarded both substances (*res cogitans* and *res extensa*) as passive. The body does not act upon the soul, and the soul does not act upon the body. Both substances undergo action from the outside because they have been created. Action is a form of creation proper only to God. Things are not interconnected because they do not act on each other. God is the cause of all actions and only passion remains for all other beings. Things are occasions for God's actions (occasionalism).

In the materialistic metaphysics of T. Hobbes, there was a return to the problematic of action and action alone. According to Hobbes only material substances or bodies exist. Action is reduced to stimulus and reaction. At the moment two bodies come into contact, action passes from one to the other. Passion is merely another form of action. For B. Spinoza, on the other hand, who recognized the existence of only one substance, namely God, all things that exist, namely spiritual beings and material beings, are merely a mode of God's substance. The soul and the body do not influence each other, but act in parallel (parallelism) and they are manifestations of one and the same substance.

G.W. Leibniz in his monadology held that only discontinuous and immaterial substances can exist. He denied that any substance could act upon another and so denied action and passion. Every monad acts. There are only actions, which he identifies with forces. Corporeality is not a substance but the form under which one monad appears to another. The body as a phenomenon can be neither the receptor of actions nor can it act by itself. In this way he reduced act and passion to the purely phenomenal aspect of reality (which does not mean an unreal aspect) and detached it from substance.

J. Locke and D. Hume rejected the reality of causal relations and reduced the problematic of action and passion to purely subjective phenomena, feelings, experiences, and impressions which are based in the intellect but not in things (Locke). Only in acts of the will do we experience the action of a force, but this experience is an illusion. What we experience is an effort, not a force or an action (Hume). In the place of action and passion a new term appears — "experience" or "feeling" (*Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, II 17).

This subjectivism was drawn to an extreme position in Kant's critical philosophy. Action and passion are merely subjective categories for ordering the data of experience. According to Kant the reason is what produces the unity of a phenomenon and the quality of the forms of objects. J.G. Fichte held that the self produces objects themselves and their content, and the self creates reality. For this reason the object and subject are of the same nature. Action and passion are also of the same nature.

With the positivism of A. Comte and J. Mill, action and passion are again interpreted in the categories of stimulus and reaction, which are of the same nature. In E. Husserl's phenomenology, the problematic of action and passion was reduced to a "state of affairs" given to us in cognition beside objective data. These "states of affairs" are not only the objects of our cognitive acts, but also the objects of feelings and desires. Action and passion are "states" of the acts of the will and of the acts of cognition.

The reduction of action and passion whether to physical stimuli of a uniform nature, or to purely subjective acts, or again to projections, rather than bringing us closer to a true knowledge and understanding of the nature of the world of persons and things, takes us further away from knowledge and understanding. This is because the truth about the inner causation of being has been rejected. It is on account of this inner causation that beings are autonomous sources of action and subjects capable of receiving action in themselves.

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