

MODERN LANGUAGE NOTES

VOL. XXVI.

BALTIMORE, JUNE, 1911.

No. 6.

THE DEBATE OF HEART AND EYE

In a recent number of *Anglia*¹ there appears under the editorship of Miss Eleanor Hammond a hitherto inaccessible version of the Debate between the Heart and the Eye. The poem possesses no particular literary merit, but it is not without its interest to students of mediæval literature as being perhaps the only English treatment of this familiar theme. Miss Hammond in her introduction mentions the French *Débat du Cœur et de l'Œil* as the source of the English poem and refers to several other more or less closely related embodiments of the same idea. The history of the origin and development of this dispute, as it may be inferred from the evidence at hand, offers several points of special interest and is in many ways typical of the debate in general.

The basis of the controversy between Eye and Heart is clearly the general idea, frequently referred to by classical authors² and ultimately derived, perhaps, from a passage in Plato,³ that love is created in the soul of man through the medium of the eye. Among the mediæval courtly poets this conception became, as is well known, a part of the system of courtly love. With them, however, the conceit generally assumed a special form, exact classical parallels for which are very infrequent.⁴ Love is said to enter or strike through the eye and to capture or wound the heart. This motive, which appears early in the Provençal lyric, was elaborated by Chrestien de

¹*Anglia*, xxxiv, 235 ff.

²See H. L. Lang, "The Eyes as Generators of Love," *Modern Language Notes*, 1908, pp. 126-7.

³*Phaedrus*, 251 B. Cf. Rohde, *Der Griechische Roman*, 2te. Aufl. (1900), pp. 158 ff.; also Anna Lüderitz, *Die Liebestheorie der Provençalen bei den minnesingern*, pp. 102-3.

⁴Compare, however, the strikingly similar idea in the following passage from Achilles Tatius, quoted by Joseph de Perrott in *The Nation* (New York), May 4, 1911, p. 444: Κάλλος γὰρ δξύτερον τιτρώσκει βέλους, καὶ διὰ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν καταρρέει. Ὁφθαλμὸς γὰρ ὁδοῦ ἔρωτικῆ ἑρωτικῆ τραύματι. (Achillis Tatii de Leucippes et Clitophonis amoribus liber primus.)

Troyes, and to his influence is due, at least in part, its popularity.⁵ From the love poetry of northern and southern France the conceit appears to have passed to Italy, Germany, Spain, and England, where it became almost a commonplace in courtly verse.

As stated by the troubadours and trouvères the function of heart and eye in the creation of love naturally provoked the question of their relative responsibility for the pains of the lover, and Chrestien, in a characteristic passage⁶ distinct from that referred to above, makes his heroine discuss the problem with herself. She at first accuses her eyes of treason for having admitted the image of the loved one to her heart; but, since one does not love with one's eyes, she confesses that they are not to blame. Who then is? Herself, that is her heart, without whose wish the eyes see nothing. The problem thus suggested furnished excellent material for a formal debate. It was necessary only to complete the personification of the heart and the eye and to make them carry on the dispute themselves, a step which, in view of the popularity of similar debates, was natural and easy.

In the *Disputatio inter Cor et Oculum*,⁷ however, which appears to be the earliest formal debate between Eye and Heart, the issue is not their relative responsibility for love but for sin; and it is a fair question whether the theological problem did not precede and suggest the amatory.

After a brief expository introduction, the Heart begins the dispute by accusing the Eye of being the source of evil, the "tinder and the spur" of sin. The Eye denies the charge, affirming that it is the Heart's faithful servant and but follows

⁵*Cligès*, ed. Foerster, vv. 695 ff.; *Yvain*, ed. Foerster, vv. 1368 ff. See L. F. Mott, *The System of Courtly Love*, p. 31.

⁶*Cligès*, vv. 475 ff.

⁷Published by Thomas Wright, *The Latin Poems commonly attributed to Walter Mapes*, pp. 93 ff. I have used the more correct text given by Hauréau, *Notices et Extraits*, vol. I, p. 366. See also R. Peiper, *Herrigs Archiv*, VII, 424 ff.

its commands. The evil which enters at the Eye does not corrupt the Heart unless the Heart consents. Then Reason comes and renders judgment. Both are guilty but not in the same degree; for the Heart is the cause of sin, the Eye but the occasion.

Some connection between this academic *jeu d'esprit* and the courtly problem discussed in the *Cligès* will hardly be denied. Were the *trouvères* or the theologians the debtors? The *Disputatio* is ascribed on the authority of the chronicler Salimbene and several manuscripts to Philippe de Grève, Chancellor of the University of Paris and prolific author of Latin *nugae* of the kind.⁸ Philippe died in the year 1237, and if the debate is his, it is not likely to have been written earlier than the passage in Chrestien. Furthermore, as I have suggested, the question of responsibility grows naturally out of the general theory of the function of heart and eye in the development of love. It would seem likely, therefore, that Philippe derived a suggestion from Chrestien or some other secular poet. A significant circumstance with regard to the *Disputatio* is its clear connection with the *Visio Fulberti*,⁹ the best known Latin version of the Debate between the Body and the Soul. The elements of the problem in both poems are identical. The Soul accuses the Body of having brought about its destruction by sin; the Body replies that it was the mere passive instrument. The two poems contain parallels in phraseology which are so close as to make the relation between them indubitable.

Visio: "Ambo, dico, possumus adeo culpari:
Et debemus utique, sed non culpa pari:
Tibi culpa gravior debet imputari."

Disputatio: "Utrumque reum reputat,
Sed non pari periculo,
Nam cordi causam imputat,
Occasionem oculo."

Visio: "Quae statim carnem sequitur ut bos ductus
ad victimam."

Disputatio: "Nonne quod vides sequeris,
Ut bos ductus ad victimam?"

⁸ See Paul Meyer, *Documents Manuscrits*, etc., pp. 7 ff. For a full bibliography of Philippe see Chevalier, *Bibliographie*, p. 3634.

⁹ Ed. Wright, *op. cit.*, pp. 95 ff.

Now the issue between the Body and the Soul was as old as Democritus, and no religious theme was more familiar to the Middle Ages. Is it not natural that Philippe or another should have seen the issue here to be essentially the same as that which underlay the discussion in the *Cligès*, and should have framed a debate on the well known model of the *Visio*, giving to the amatory material a theological turn in order to make it conform more closely to the theme of his original?

The process by which the heart and eye material came to take the form of a literary debate is characteristic. By the end of the twelfth century the debate had become established as a definite and popular type, and this type afforded a convenient mould for a wide variety of ideas already current in other forms. Thus the mediæval allegory of the contest of the Daughters of God was in one thirteenth century version developed into a regular debate between Justice and Mercy;¹⁰ the fable of the Ant and the Fly was expanded into a contentious dialogue;¹¹ the amatory question of the relative merits of clerks and soldiers as lovers was made the theme of a contention between two maidens, representative of the two points of view.¹² In like manner the issue between Heart and Eye, already familiar as a subject of discussion, was embodied, under the influence of the type, in the form of an allegorical dispute.

The numerous manuscripts of the *Disputatio inter Cor et Oculum* prove the work to have been widely known. A French version exists,¹³ also ascribed to Philippe de Grève and is probably his. This poem is a pretty close rendering of the Latin, with something less of scholastic subtlety and a touch of the romantic coloring which so often appears in the debates in their passage from the Latin to the vernacular. Thus the Heart reinforces its charge of treason with a very pregnant instance:—

¹⁰ See my note on the 'Scheirer Rhythmus,' *Modern Language Notes*, 1909, pp. 74 ff.

¹¹ Bonvesin da Riva's "Disputatio Muscae cum Formica," *Monatsberichte der Berliner Akademie*, 1851, pp. 9 ff.

¹² See the various versions of the Phyllis and Flora debate, described by W. A. Neilson, *Origins and Sources of the Court of Love*, pp. 34 ff.

¹³ The text is given by Paul Meyer, *Henri d'Andeli et le Chancelier Philippe, Romania*, vol. I, pp. 202 ff.

"Tu es pire que Guenelon,¹⁴
 Tu es mon privé traïtor,
 Car quant je suis en garnison
 Mes enemis mès en ma tor."

The only other example of the theological debate between Heart and Eye with which I am familiar is to be found in a curious passage in Bonevesin da Riva's Debate between the Body and the Soul.¹⁵ When the Soul has addressed the Body for the last time, the Body reports its words to the members, warning them one after another to refrain from sin. The members accuse the Heart, as the source and occasion of all sin; the Heart throws the blame upon the Eye, and the latter replies with the familiar argument that it is but the instrument of the Heart. This dispute is not, like the French poem just described, a paraphrase of the *Disputatio*, but it evidently belongs to the same tradition.¹⁶ The Debate between the Body and the Members is combined with that of the Body and the Soul in a Provençal poem described by Batiouchkof,¹⁷ who assumes for it a common origin with Bonevesin's poem. In the Provençal debate, however, the Heart and Eye motive does not appear. Its incorporation by the Italian into such a dialogue was natural enough. For the Heart and Eye theme, as worked out by Philippe, was closely associated with the Debate of the Body and the Soul; and it had besides a certain affinity with the well-known fable of the Belly and the Members, upon which the latter part of the Provençal poem is obviously modeled.

In returning now to the use of the Heart and Eye motive in its proper and presumably original sphere of courtly love, it is necessary to distinguish between the use of the idea as a lyric con-

ceit¹⁸ and actual debates, in which the Heart and Eye carry on the dispute. The two embodiments of the question are, of course, closely related,¹⁹ and both may be in a general way referred to the passage in Chrestien discussed above. The debates, however, while deriving their material ultimately from the same sources as the lyrics, not improbably owe their special form to the influence of the *Disputatio*. An important passage in Huon de Meri's *Torneiement de l'Antéchrist*²⁰ (written

¹⁴ For numerous examples see *Modern Language Notes*, 1907, p. 199, p. 232; 1908, pp. 126-7; L. F. Mott, *The System of Courtly Love*, pp. 85, 102, 104, etc.; Anna Lüderitz, *loc. cit.*, and W. A. Neilson, *op. cit.*, pp. 26, 59, 79, etc. In one form or another the idea appears again and again in the Elizabethan lyric, a fact which seems not to have been mentioned in the discussion growing out of Shakespeare's song "Tell me where is fancy bred," *M. L. N.*, *loc. cit.* Most frequently, perhaps, it is simply an expression of the original idea that Love assails the heart through the eyes. Cf. Wyatt in *Tottle's Miscellany*, ed. Arbor, p. 65:

"Throw mine eyes the stroke from hers did slide,
 Directly down into mine hart it ranne."

In many passages, however, especially in the poems included in Davison's *Poetical Rhapsody*, the eyes are accused of treachery for admitting the image of the beloved to the heart. Cf. "A. W." in the *Poetical Rhapsody*, ed. Bullen, vol. II, p. 47:

"Unhappie Eies, the causers of my paine,
 That to my foe betrayed my strongest hold,
 Wherein, he like a tyrant now doth raigne,
 And boasts of winning that which treason solde."

¹⁹ It is sometimes impossible to distinguish between the lyric use and the debate use of the theme. Thus in one of the canzoni of Guido Guinicelli the problem naturally takes dialogue form:

"Dice lo core agli occhi: Per voi moro.
 Gli occhi dicono al cor: tu n'hai disfatti."
 —Nannucci's *Manuale*, ed. 1847, p. 42.

And Sonnet LXXXIV of Petrarch, supposed by Carducci and others to have been suggested by this passage, is in the form of a dialogue throughout.

"Il poeta: Occhi piangete; accompagnate il core
 Che di vostro fallir morte sostene.
 Gli occhi: Così sempre facciamo, ne conviene
 Lanentar piu l'altrui, che 'l nostro errore.
 Il poeta: Già prima ebbe per voi l'entrata Amore;
 Laonde ancor com' in suo albergo vene," etc.

From this poem to the Elizabethan passages quoted above it is an easy step.

²⁰ Ed. Wimmer, *Ausgaben und Abhandlungen*, vol. LXXVI (1888), vv. 2708 ff.

¹⁴ This phrase occurs in the *Oligès*, v. 1706, not, however, with reference to the treason of the eye.

¹⁵ *Monatsberichte der Berliner Akademie*, 1851, pp. 132-142.

¹⁶ The following verbal parallels may be quoted:

Bonevesin: "Dal corde sorze la fontana de li bon fagi e de li rei."

Disputatio: "De corde mala prodeunt."

Bonevesin: "L'ogio e quel ke comenza."

Disputatio: "Te peccati principium."

Bonevesin: "Tu m'he represò a torto."

Disputatio: "Iniuste de me quæreris."

¹⁷ *Romania*, xx, 535 ff.

in 1235 or a little later) clearly illustrates the double influence. In the course of the battle between the allegorical hosts of good and evil, Venus aims a shaft at Chastity. It misses its mark, but enters the author's eye and wounds his heart. He is succored by Esperance and others, and brings his case before "the court which renders justice to all lovers," in order to determine whether his Heart, the Goddess, or his Eyes are to blame for his mischance. The judge exonerates Venus who was aiming at another, and accuses the Eyes. The latter excuse themselves on the ground that they do nothing without the Heart's command. At this point Reason appears and decides the case against the Heart.

In this passage we have the Heart and Eye problem for the first time introduced as a part of the allegory of the Court of Love. The dispute is represented as actual, not merely speculative, and the Eyes reply in their own persons. That Huon had in mind the similar discussion by his master Chrestien cannot be doubted; for he refers to him a little earlier for a full account of the wounding of the Heart through the Eye.²¹ What is equally clear, though it seems not to have been pointed out, is that in every respect except the application of the dispute to love, Huon's immediate model was the Latin debate of Philippe de Grève. This treason, says the judge, should be laid upon the eyes,

"Qu'il requrent a porte overte
Sans contredit ton aversier
El chastel, dont il sont portier."

In the *Disputatio* the Heart says to the Eye :

"Tu domus meae janitor
Hosti non claudis ostium;
Admittis adversarium.
Nonne fenestra diceris
Qua mors intrat ad animam?"

And finally the decision of Reason is rendered in language clearly suggested by the Latin poem :

"A cest mot vi venir reson :
L'ainée file sapience
La definitive sentence

²¹ Max Grébel in his dissertation on the sources of the *Torneiement*, *Le Torneiement Antéchrist*, etc., Leipzig, 1883, p. 87, cites *Yvain* 1369, but the reference is obviously to the *Cligès*.

Rent et ront la despoitison
Et dist : 'Li cuers fu l'achoisson
Du mal qu'il a. Plus en doit estre
Blaméz que nus, qui la fenestre
Lessa overte comme fous
Par ou li descendi li cous
Du fer, dont il garra a tart."

"Ratio litem amputat
Definitivo calculo
Utrumque reum reputat,
Sed non pari periculo,
Nam cordi causam imputat,
Occasionem oculo."²²

It is interesting to observe that the conception of the eyes as porters of the castle of the soul, which becomes a common feature in the Court of Love allegories, was already present in the *Disputatio*.

The French *Debat du Cuer et de l' Oeil*,²³ while belonging to the allegorical type represented by Huon de Meri, differs from the passage in the *Torneiement* in that the dispute with its causes and results constitutes the main theme of the poem, while the Heart and not a third party makes the accusation against the Eyes. The author, who is out hunting one May morning, comes unexpectedly upon a fair company of ladies and is stricken with love longing. He lies down to sleep and hears, on two different occasions a dispute between his Heart and his Eye. To the charge of having been the cause of this unwonted pain, the Eye replies that it loves only by the counsel of the Heart. The two at length agree to submit the matter to Ardent Desire, the marshal of Love. A trial by combat follows before the Court of Love, but Pity intervenes, and compels them to bring their cause before Venus. The goddess hears a third and quite superfluous repetition of the arguments, and adjourns the case until she can get the opinions of all lovers, bidding the contestants meanwhile perform all the services of Love.

The elements common to this poem and Huon's *Torneiement* are certainly striking, but it is im-

²² There is nothing corresponding to this passage in the French paraphrase of the *Disputatio*; hence Huon must have used the original.

²³ Thomas Wright, *op. cit.*, pp. 310 ff. Miss Hammond, *loc. cit.*, calls attention to a displacement of several stanzas in the ms. used by Wright. Another French text, in which the stanzas are correctly arranged, is printed in the *Jardin de Plaisance*.

possible in the absence of detailed evidence to establish a direct relation between them. In the subordination of the actual dispute to the allegorical narrative both Huon and the author of the *Débat* are following a practice which is almost universal with the writers of vernacular debates. These poets care but little for the scholastic problem at issue, and with them the discussion loses most or all of its dialectical subtlety. Thus Huon fails to preserve the distinction between cause and occasion so carefully made by Philippe; and in the *Débat du Cœur et de l'Œil* the answers of the Eye are generally beside the point, while the accusations of the Heart partake of the nature of "complaints." The introduction and conclusion, on the other hand, are made much of. The reference of the dispute to a judge or tribunal²⁴ affords an opportunity for elaborate allegory which is not often neglected. Trial by battle, which frequently follows, allows the poet to devote his best energies to the description of a tournament. The quarrel has been transferred from the school room to the open air; the disputation has become a "debate" in the sense of physical conflict.

The English Debate of Heart and Eye printed by Miss Hammond offers few points of special interest. It is, as its editor has pointed out, a fairly close rendering of the French *Débat*. The original octosyllabic stanza (ababbcbc) has been expanded into a ten syllable form with the same rhyme scheme (Cf. Chaucer's *Monk's Tale*), and thanks to the joint efforts of the author, the translator, and the scribe, the poem is something worse than pedestrian. It was evidently thought worthy of reproduction, however, as it exists in an early print of Wynken de Worde.²⁵ Both the English Debate and its French original belong to the fifteenth century.

I am not aware of the existence of any later versions of this dispute in English. There are,

²⁴The Court of Love allegory appears in combination with the debate in at least one Latin poem, the *Altercatio Phillidis et Florae*, ed. Hauréau, *Notices et Extraits*, vol. VI, pp. 278 ff.; but this piece, in spite of the accident of its language, belongs to the literature of romance. In a later vernacular version entitled *Melior et Idoine*, ed. Meyer, *Romania*, xv, 333, the dispute ends in a judicial combat.

²⁵The first stanza is quoted by Warton, *History of English Poetry*, 1840 ed., vol. II, p. 388. See also Wright, *op. cit.*, Intro. xxiii.

however, a number of Elizabethan lyric dialogues which may be said to have at least a psychological connection with the debates discussed. In Davison's *Poetical Rhapsody* there are two dialogues between the Lover and his Heart,²⁶ a "Proso-poeia," in which the Lover's Heart addresses the Breast of his second Lady,²⁷ and a Dialogue between the Lover's Flaming Heart and his Ladie's Frozen Breast.²⁸ These pieces, if not derivatives from the Heart and Eye debate, are certainly, like the Dialogue between the Soul and the Body contained in the same collection,²⁹ late echoes of the mediæval debate in general. The tradition of the literary dispute may be said to have persisted into the Elizabethan period in full vigor. It appears in such familiar works as Robert Green's *Quip for an Upstart Courtier*, with its verse original,³⁰ was frequently employed in dramatic entertainments, crops out again and again in the regular drama, and forms one of the staples of the broadside literature of the day.

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ETYMOLOGICAL NOTES

1. NE. *bluster* 'blow boisterously; be loud, noisy, or swaggering,' *subst.* 'the noise of a storm or of violent wind, blast, gust; tumultuous noise; noisy but empty talk or menace' may be referred to Germ. *blüst-* 'swell, blow.' Next akin are EastFries. *blüster* 'Wind, frische Brise,' *blüstern* 'mit Geräusch wehen, stürmen, brausen' (Koolman, *Wb. der ostfries. Spr.* I, 193), Du. dial. *bluisterig* 'windig' (Draaijer, *Deventersch Dial.* 5), *bluisterg* 'gusty' (Molema, *Wb. der groningen Mundart* 39), NWestFries. *bluist(e)rich* 'üppig, blühend; lustig, aufgeweckt; glänzend; windig, geräuschvoll, wild, ungestüm' (Friesch Wdb. I, 201).

²⁶Ed. Bullen, vol. II, pp. 8 and 21. The latter is by Thomas Watson.

²⁷Vol. I, p. 126.

²⁸Vol. I, p. 132.

²⁹Vol. II, p. 96. The author is "A. W."

³⁰*The Debate between Pride and Lowliness*, by Francis Thynne, edited by J. Payne Collier, Shakespeare Society, 1841.