

PASCAL'S SCALE OF VALUES

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for the degree of Ph.D. in the University of London

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ABSTRACT

Pascal's wonderment at nature's immensity, and his insistence on its underlying continuity, attest its value for him. The description of nature as a coherent system knowable through geometry indicates that it is intelligible; but Pascal's failure to develop this conception, together with his opposition to cosmological speculation, shows that he sets little store by any mathematical view of nature. The idea of nature which predominates in his writings is of a continuously active process. Although geometry does not therefore provide the key to the understanding of nature, it remains for Pascal a valuable instrument in the demonstration and discovery of truth.

Assertions as to the superior value of ethics compared with natural science point to a watershed in Pascal's thinking. The 'utility' lacking in science is found in "honnêteté"; but the fluctuating estimate of nature as ethical norm makes it impossible to determine what value it has in this respect. Pascal himself conceives of "morale" as rightly dominated by man's 'end', for it is its relation to this 'end' which determines the moral worth of any act.

Dualism is the keynote of Pascal's estimate of both natural law and justice; and he considers that pursuit of the general good, which should constitute the basis of society, has been superseded since the Fall by "amour-propre". Peace continues as the supreme political value only so long as it tends to security of property. The Church's superiority over secular institutions derives from the socializing agency of grace, which enables men

to live together in the condition of "ordre" which "amour-propre" precludes in secular society.

The 'three orders' form the framework of Pascal's scale of values - the different orders represent at once categories of value and orders of being. And the relativism which characterizes Pascal's estimates of value results from treating value as a perspective of the orders.

Note.

The edition of the Oeuvres complètes by Jacques Chevalier in the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade has been used throughout the thesis; and the alternative references given after quotations are to the fragment number in Brunschvicg's classification in the case of the Pensées, and the Grands Ecrivains edition of the Oeuvres complètes in the case of all other writings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to thank my supervisor Professor J. S. Spink for all the valuable help and stimulus which he has given me in the preparation of this thesis.

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S E C T I O N O N E

Nature and scientific methodology.

Chapter one: Nature as it is in itself.

(i) Expressions of wonderment at nature's "merveilles".

The celebrated opening paragraph of the "Disproportion de l'homme" fragment in the Pensées contains, despite the obvious apologetic intent with which it is written, an expression almost of awe, and certainly of profound admiration, in the face of the immensity and grandeur of nature.

"Que l'homme contemple donc la nature entière dans sa haute et pleine majesté; qu'il éloigne sa vue des objets bas qui l'environnent. Qu'il regarde cette éclatante lumière, mise comme une lampe éternelle pour éclairer l'univers; .. Mais si notre vue s'arrête là, que l'imagination passe outre; elle se lassera plutôt de concevoir, que la nature de fournir. Tout ce monde visible n'est qu'un trait imperceptible dans (1) l'ample sein de la nature. Nulle idée n'en approche. Nous avons beau enfler nos conceptions au delà des espaces imaginables, nous n'enfantons que des atomes, au prix de la réalité des choses." (2) (p.1105; B72)

A little further on in the same fragment, having described the whole worlds, the "merveilles aussi étonnantes dans leur petitesse que les autres par leur étendue," which escape man's perception at the other end of the scale, Pascal alleges that anyone to whom these facts are brought home,

"tremblera dans la vue de ces merveilles; et je crois que, sa curiosité se changeant en admiration, il sera plus disposé à les contempler en silence qu'à les rechercher avec présomption.--l'auteur de ces merveilles les comprend. Tout autre ne le peut faire." (p.1106-7; B72)

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the language of this passage vibrates with a kind of natural piety. Such words and phrases as:

(1) Earlier version: "le vaste [l'immense [l'amplitude]] "

(2) Earlier version continues with: "Cette vastitude immense"....

"sa haute et pleine majesté", "l'ample sein de la nature", "merveilles étonnantes"; together with the insistence on the vastness of the natural scheme, which swallows up man's powers even of imagination, so that he is reduced to merely contemplating its wonder, sharply distinguish this passage from others in the Pensées (the "roseau pensant" and allied fragments), where man's power of active thought is measured against the unthinking mass of the material universe. In the latter the aspect of the physical world inspires no reverence in the beholder, and Pascal is concerned above all to emphasize the greater nobility of man. It would almost be true to say that these roles are reversed in the extracts at present under discussion, where it is implied that nature's worth consists precisely in the immensity, and in the inexhaustible richness, which are beyond the power of the human intellect even to conceive.

The only other context in Pascal's works in which this attitude of wonderment at nature's marvels finds expression is in the treatise De l'esprit géométrique, in connection with the development of the notion of the two-fold infinity everywhere discernible in nature. Near the end of the first part of that treatise, having pointed out that the relation holding between zero and any positive number - that they differ not simply in degree but in kind ("genre"), since no degree of multiplication can ever convert the former into a positive number - is identical with that between an indivisible and space, rest and motion, an instant and duration, Pascal claims that in this way --"on trouvera une correspondance parfaite entre ces choses; car toutes ces grandeurs sont divisibles à l'infini, sans tomber dans leurs indivisibles, de sorte qu'elles tiennent

toutes le milieu entre l'infini et le néant." (p.590) He then adds the following significant remark:

"Voilà l'admirable rapport que la nature a mis entre ces choses, et les deux merveilleuses infinités qu'elle a proposées aux hommes, non pas à concevoir, mais à admirer,--" (ibid G.E.ix, p.268)

Here again the adjective "merveilleuse", used to describe this aspect of nature, has as its corollary that man's appropriate response, when confronted with these infinities, should be one of admiration, and not an attempt to grasp them by means of conceptual thought. The verb "admirer" is clearly intended in this context, as earlier, to carry the full force of the Latin verb from which it is derived.

In conclusion to the first part of the treatise Pascal maintains, with respect to the infinite capacity for increase and diminution which characterizes motion, number, space and time, that:

"--- ceux qui verront clairement ces vérités pourront admirer la grandeur et la puissance de la nature dans cette double infinité qui nous environne de toutes parts, et apprendre par cette considération merveilleuse--" (p.591 G.E. ix, p.269-70)

Again in this passage a strong impression of an attitude of natural piety is produced when Pascal speaks of looking in wonder at nature's "grandeur" and "puissance", and by the use of such an expression as "cette considération merveilleuse" in this context.

Although the preceding extracts, in which nature's wonders call forth an attitude of reverence, are all taken from two rather specialized contexts, they nonetheless suffice as examples to show the positive value Pascal accords to nature.

- (ii) Indications that nature does form a system even if incomprehensible for man.

The emphasis on the immensity and grandeur of nature in the "Disproportion de l'homme" fragment is designed, as the title suggests, to serve Pascal's apologetic purpose - to induce a mood of humility and self-depreciation in his reader by showing how far the dimensions and wonders of nature exceed the bounds of human comprehension. Yet despite this fact, and however great may be the "disproportion", upon which Pascal insists, between nature and man's powers of perception and conception, the very examples which he chooses to bring this out make it plain that even here he conceives of nature as constituting an ordered scheme of things.

Thus he alleges with respect to man "dans la nature" that:

"-- la fin des choses et leur principe sont pour lui invinciblement cachés dans un secret impénétrable,--"
(p. 1107 B.72)

and that his lot in this regard is:

"--un désespoir éternel de connaître ni le principe ni la fin des choses." (1) (ibid. B.72)

There are principles and ends therefore, in terms of which the things that go to make up the world of nature find explanation, even though these "principles" and "ends" are such as to elude the human intellect.

And Pascal takes a step further when he goes on to describe the "presumption" of those enquirers who:

"--ont voulu comprendre les principes des choses, et de là arriver jusqu'à connaître tout,--" (ibid. B.72)

(1) cf. an earlier variant: "Voilà une partie des choses qui rendent l'homme si imbécile à connaître la nature. -- les choses en particulier-- ont leur principe et leur fin: il ne conçoit ni l'un ni l'autre."
(p.1112. B.72)

For such a statement obviously implies that there is a "tout", an ordered whole, an all-embracing scheme of particular natural things. And the conception of the world as an ordered whole is brought out in a more arresting fashion in two further passages:

"-- les parties du monde ont toutes un tel rapport et un tel enchaînement l'une avec l'autre, que je crois impossible de connaître l'une sans l'autre et sans le tout." (p.1110; B.72)

"-- toutes choses étant causées et causantes, aidées et aidantes, médiates et immédiates, et toutes s'entretenant par un lieu naturel et insensible qui lie les plus éloignées et les plus différentes, je tiens impossible de connaître les parties sans connaître le tout, non plus que de connaître le tout sans connaître particulièrement les parties." (ibid: B.72)

Thus the same nature, whose wonders and grandeur arouse in the beholder an attitude of reverent awe, has a further title to respect because it forms a system permeated throughout by continuity. Pascal does not merely envisage nature as comprising an ordered whole, but actually goes so far as to affirm the existence of a deep-lying connectedness and interdependence of all phenomena, and to specify a mode of causal connection binding all things together. The apologetic character of the fragment necessarily precludes him from taking the final step, which follows logically from the conception of the universe as a whole made up of interconnected parts. However, the assumption which plays such an important role in the two treatises on the equilibrium of fluids,⁽¹⁾ that there is a network of uniformities throughout phenomena which enables laws and general modes of occurrence to be discovered and formulated, is at least clearly implied here.

(1) cf. below, p.38ff.

Chapter two: Nature as knowable by man

(i)(a) Nature as a coherent system knowable through geometry

In the treatise De l'esprit géométrique, after he has shown that the concepts motion, number and space comprise the particular subject-matter of geometry, Pascal continues:

"Ces trois choses, qui comprennent tout l'univers, selon ces paroles: 'Deus fecit omnia in pondere, in numero, et mensura,' ont une liaison réciproque et nécessaire. Car on ne peut imaginer de mouvement sans quelque chose qui se meuve; et cette chose étant une, cette unité est l'origine de tous les nombres;⁽¹⁾ enfin le mouvement ne pouvant être sans 2^e espace, on voit ces trois choses enfermées dans la première. Le temps même y est aussi compris: car le mouvement et le temps sont relatifs l'un à l'autre; la promptitude et la lenteur, qui sont les différences des mouvements, ayant un rapport nécessaire avec le temps.

Ainsi il y a des propriétés communes à toutes choses, dont la connaissance ouvre l'esprit aux plus grandes merveilles de la nature.

La principale comprend les deux infinités qui se rencontrent dans toutes: l'une de grandeur, l'autre de petitesse." (p.583-4 G.E. ix. p.255-6.

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- (1) This assertion, that one is the origin of all numbers, might be taken as implying that Pascal invests it with some peculiar mystical or metaphysical significance, as the earlier metaphysicians like Bruno had done cf. the latter's De Minimo for example: "aufer undique monadem, nusquam erit numerus, nihil erit numerabile, nullus numerator. Hinc optimus maximus, substantiarum substantia et entitas, qua entia sunt, monadis nomine celebratur." Quoted Charbonnel, La pensée italienne--(Paris 1919) p.543. "Deus est monas omnium numerorum fons, simplicitas omnis magnitudinis et compositionis substantia, et excellentia super omne momentum innumerabile, immensum". *ibid.*p.554. Such a view is discounted by later remarks made by Pascal in the same section of this treatise: "--puisque l'unité peut, étant multipliée plusieurs fois, surpasser quelque nombre que ce soit, elle est de même genre que les nombres précisément par son essence et par sa nature immuable,--" and they are (ces choses)"--toutes proportionnées entre elles et ne diffèrent que du plus ou du moins,--" (p.588-9 G.E.ix.p265-6.

The term nature is used here, as in previous passages, in a collective sense to denote the sum of natural phenomena, and this extract purports to show how the underlying geometrical structure, hidden beneath these phenomena, can be discerned. It presents in other words the summary sketch of a unified mathematical cosmology, whose fundamental principle is abstract motion, so that although elsewhere in the same treatise Pascal prescribes admiration and contemplation as man's appropriate response in the face of nature and her marvels, in this passage at least he appears to believe it intelligible to conceptual thought. He would seem to endorse Galileo's conviction⁽²⁾ that the universe represents a book which really is understandable, if only to those who are acquainted with nature's handwriting and hence able to interpret her text. For those unversed in mathematics however, this book must remain for ever closed, for Pascal has already pointed out that the branches into which 'geometry' is divided - mechanics, arithmetic, geometry - follow directly from the particular concept - motion, number, space - with which each is peculiarly concerned. Thus it can only be by mastering these specific subjects that the mind will gain access to the "merveilles de la nature", held out almost as a sort of reward at the end of the extract.

Pascal represents this conception of the framework of the physical universe, as a coherent system of mutually implicated data (motion, number, space and time), as coming within the purview of the human intellect by virtue of the fact that thought, having fastened on one of these concepts, finds itself driven to illate from it to the others in turn, and finally to

(2) cf. the passage quoted from Il Saggiatore qu.6, by A.C.Crombie in: Augustine to Galileo (London 1952) vol.II, p.142.

see them as the elements of an integrated whole.⁽¹⁾ Thus it is just such an underlying connectedness of the basic elements, as is elsewhere adduced as a principal cause of the inability of the human intellect to attain to any real knowledge of the scheme of nature, which here provides it with the key to the understanding of the universe in its inmost structure.

It follows from the sort of approach adopted in this passage that the truth of nature must consist in mathematical facts, and that in Pascal's case what is real and intelligible in nature is that which admits of being considered under the aspects of motion, number and space. Hence there will be a tendency for these latter to become categories of absolute validity, and to represent at once the elemental constituents of all that exists, and the foundations of all possible knowledge of the physical world.

However, Pascal disappoints any hopes which may have been formed of seeing this synopsis of the whole of nature filled out, for the remainder of the first part of the treatise is taken up with demonstrating that the basic concepts are potentially infinite in respect of addition and division, while the second part is concerned solely with questions of methodology. Since this fact bears unquestionably on the significance which Pascal accords to the mathematical conception of nature, two questions raised by it call for some consideration: (a) What is the precise meaning intended by this definition of the structure of the physical universe; (b) Is it referred to in any other works.

(1) In the extract under discussion Pascal uses the verb "imaginer" without any of the technical overtones with which Descartes colours the substantival form of that word in the 12th of his Règles pour la direction de l'esprit. For Pascal it has no more than the normal connotation of "to envisage".

The clue to the first question lies in the two short paragraphs with which the extract concludes. ⁽¹⁾ The adverb "ainsi", coming as it does at the beginning of the first of these, plainly indicates that the words which follow it - "des propriétés communes à toutes choses" - refer back to something in the preceding paragraph; and in fact, it would seem, to the motion, number and space there asserted to comprise the whole of the universe. It is logical therefore to interpret the opening words of the second paragraph - "la principale --" - as relating not to the "propriétés communes", but rather to the "merveilles de la nature", especially since these latter words are the more immediately antecedent. Indeed, if the words in the second paragraph are to be regarded as directly qualifying the "propriétés communes", the whole sentence commencing "ainsi" becomes both grammatically and contextually unintelligible. For in this case it is impossible for the "propriétés communes" to refer back to anything in the previous paragraph, as "ainsi" requires them to, since they have yet to be delineated.

However, if the full significance be grasped of Pascal's statement, to the effect that motion, number and space represent the fundamental constituents of everything that exists in the universe, then it is evident that his thought displays a gross confusion if he does in fact intend the words, "des propriétés communes à toutes choses", to pertain to those concepts.

(1) "Ainsi il y a des propriétés communes à toutes choses, dont la connaissance ouvre l'esprit aux plus grandes merveilles de la nature. La principale comprend les deux infinités qui se rencontrent sans toutes:--" cf. above, p.14.

Clearly it is impossible for one and the same thing to be at once a constituent and a property of some other composite thing. Although it is possible that, since all things can be reduced in this way to the same basic elements, they will as a result have certain properties in common - i.e. the properties of those basic constituents. In this case the "propriétés communes" refer only indirectly as it were to the concepts motion, number and space, which still retain their status of components. The requirements of grammar and context are also satisfied, since the consequence implied by the introductory "Ainsi -" is accounted for by the fact that, as these concepts are the fundamental constituents of all things, it follows that all things will exhibit the properties of these constituents.

The passage directly preceding the extract shows that this is the meaning which Pascal intends it to convey. He there maintains that geometry concerns itself with the simplest and purest of objects; so simple and so pure in fact that they do not admit of any definition or demonstration. It therefore takes for granted that everyone knows what the words motion, number and space signify,

"--et, sans s'arrêter à les définir inutilement, elle en pénètre la nature, et en découvre les merveilleuses propriétés." (p.583 G.E. ix. p.255)

After this comes the assertion, supported from Scripture, that these three concepts comprise the whole of the physical world, and the exposition of the way in which thought is driven to follow out the thread of implication connecting them, succeeded by the two short paragraphs under discussion. Thus, having stated that the aim of geometry is to reveal the properties

of the "simples" which go to make up its subject matter, ⁽¹⁾ and also that these same "simples" are the basic components of everything in the universe, before going on to show how this aim is realized, Pascal points out in the sentence commencing "Ainsi-" that this means that all things will have these properties in common. And when he proceeds to demonstrate that motion, number and space are potentially infinite in respect of increase and diminution, he is not merely applying himself to the continued exposition of the matter and method of geometry, but in his own terms at least is describing certain properties inherent in all natural things.

The foregoing discussion makes it plain that it is the propensity exhibited by all things for increase and diminution ad infinitum which constitutes at once the most outstanding of all nature's wonders, and the most important property common to all things, so that the opening words of the second short paragraph - "la principale" - may be regarded as qualifying both the "propriétés communes" and the "merveilles de la nature". ⁽²⁾ Pascal expressly links the two when he refers, in the extract quoted on the previous page, to the "merveilleuses propriétés" of motion, number and space.

Although it might be argued that when Pascal goes to such lengths in the remainder of this section to demonstrate that motion, number and

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- (1) Obviously "to lay bare the nature" of these is merely an alternative form of expression, as "nature" in this sense designates no more than the ensemble of a thing's properties.
- (2) This means that the succession implied in Pascal's phraseology - that nature's foremost marvels will be revealed to the mind when it has grasped the properties common to all things - does not denote any fresh acquisition of empirical knowledge, but merely indicates that perceiving the wonder is the fruit of reflection upon knowledge of the property.

space are potentially infinite in respect of addition and division, he does so in the belief that he is furthering his reader's knowledge of the fundamental characteristics of the material universe, yet he nowhere undertakes to show how the conclusion was reached, that these simple concepts, the subject matter of geometry, represent the basic constituents of all that is.⁽¹⁾ As it stands, does his plain unvarnished assertion that this is so indicate that Pascal takes for granted in his reader a thoroughly mechanistic outlook in regard to questions relating to the nature of the physical world? Germane to this possibility is the fact that commentators are generally agreed as to the soundness of M. Adam's conjecture,⁽²⁾ that the two pieces which comprise this treatise were written as the preface to an Essai d'éléments de géométrie, now lost, but intended for use in the Petites Ecoles at Port-Royal, where the Cartesian philosophy was well established. However, in this case it becomes difficult to account for the quite significant divergences from Descartes's basic pattern of things, and in particular the omission of all reference to the great informing principle of the Cartesian universe - extension.

Also, how much importance should be accorded to the quotation from the "Wisdom of Solomon"? Does it simply represent a convenient formula, seized upon because it superficially reconciles the religious and mechanistic world-views, and recommends itself, in virtue of its source, as suitable illustrative material for a treatise destined for use in a Jansenist school?

(1) In the original statement, quoted above p.14, he does no more than bring out the thread of implication that connects these concepts.

(2) cf. Brunschvicg, Pensées et opuscules, (Paris 1914) ed.min., p.163.

and yet the only ground adduced by Pascal for attributing universality to his three basic concepts is that contained in this Scriptural quotation, although the correspondence between the terms used in each case is by no means literal.

Moreover, the body of the treatise contains no subsequent demonstration of this alleged universal inference of the basic elements motion, number and space, such as it would seem normal to expect from a thinker who has propounded this as a principle by which he sets great store. Indeed, with one rather doubtful exception,⁽¹⁾ there is no further mention even of their relation to the overall scheme of things.

It therefore begins to look as if this all-important summary of Pascal's cosmological views amounts to little more than an interpolation, inserted with the object of lending significance to his exposition of the geometrical method - a bait almost, held out to entice the student to persevere in the attempt to master this discipline, since it alone provides the key to the understanding of the nature of things.

In the only other context outside the present work where Pascal treats of the relation holding between motion, number and space, he is primarily concerned with a quite different problem - that of the vacuum - and adds nothing relevant to his original assertion that they represent the basic constituents of everything that exists. The Jesuit Noël, in reply to Pascal's letter, which carried a carefully-worded refutation of the

(1)cf. "Mais ceux qui verront clairement ces vérités pourront admirer la grandeur et la puissance de la nature dans cette double infinité qui nous environne de toutes parts, --" (p.591; G.E. ix,p.269.) where "ces vérités" refer to the proofs advanced to show that it is impossible to set any limit to the potential exhibited by motion, number and space for increase or diminution.

positions he had adopted in his attack on the conclusions adumbrated by the latter in the preliminary Expériences nouvelles touchant le vide, had in desperation resorted to a feeble reductio ad absurdum. This took the form of a list of mutually exclusive characteristics attributed at various times to void space, one of which was that it is "immuable et se transporte avec le tube". The parts of Pascal's resolution of this particular antithesis which bear upon the present enquiry run as follows:

"l'immobilité est aussi naturelle à l'espace que le mouvement l'est au corps. Pour rendre cette vérité évidente, il faut remarquer que l'espace, en général, comprend tous les corps de la nature, dont chacun en particulier en occupe une certaine partie; mais qu'encore qu'ils soient tous mobiles, l'espace qu'ils remplissent ne l'est pas; -- soit ou vide ou plein, toujours dans un pareil repos, ce vaste espace, dont l'amplitude embrasse tout, est aussi stable et immobile en chacune de ses parties, comme il l'est en son total." (1)
(p.383; G.E.ii, p.190)

Space therefore, though itself perfectly motionless, can be accounted universal in the sense claimed for it in the extract considered earlier since it encompasses the sum total of natural things. It shows too the necessary relationship with motion there ascribed to it, for, since motion is here asserted as natural to bodies, and since all bodies occupy space, whether they are in motion or at rest, it follows that motion will always take place in space. The numerical concept, insisted upon as the other basic constituent of the physical world, in the passage first treated, is accounted for by the fact that each particular thing in space is a single unit.

(1) This view of space as an entity in its own right, having a claim equal to that of substance itself to the quality of being per se (cf. also p.382), is of considerable ontological significance, since it cuts across the traditional philosophical division of all being into substance and accident. Furthermore, by affirming that motionless space, and the mobile bodies that occupy it, constitute two quite different things, though both are extended, Pascal openly disavows the orthodox Cartesian

Thus in this further instance the conception of the basic structure of the universe as a complex of mutually implicated elements is at least clearly implied in Pascal's arguments, although no mention is made of geometry's role in enabling the mind to appreciate everything under this aspect. Despite the fact that his repeated assertions, that motion is "natural" to bodies, make it apparent that he was quite familiar with, and accepted the consequences of, the concept of inertial motion as this had been set out by Galileo and Descartes, yet Pascal undertakes no further examination in this, or in any other of his writings, of the significance for his conception of nature of this principle. Nor does he give any hint that he is aware of the profoundly important allied laws of gravitation and of uniform acceleration from constant force.

A difficulty emerges in this passage with respect to one of the elemental constituents of the universe, which the very summary nature of the previous extract precluded from appearing. Does Pascal tacitly assume that visible and absolute or mathematical space are one and the same thing? It is clear enough that when he maintains that space is the immovable supporter of all material things he refers, whether consciously or not, to absolute space, a reality that must be inferred; yet he makes no overt distinction between this and the space occupied by particular physical units, which can therefore be directly and empirically known. In another fragment destined for an introduction to geometry, he lists among his

cont.from p.22 (1) - view that extension is peculiar to the corporeal. His definition, in an earlier letter (p.376)* of a vacuum shows that he regards impenetrability, not extension, as the distinguishing mark of material substance. *(p.376; G.E.ii, P.103-4).

'first principles'

"(1) l'objet de la pure géométrie est l'espace, dont elle considère la triple étendue en trois sens divers qu'on appelle dimensions,--

(2) l'espace est infini selon toutes les dimensions.(3),
et immobile en tout et en chacune de ses parties"
(p.602-3; G.E. ix, p.291-2)

That this is the same "space" which was in question in the other extracts is conclusively attested by the fact that it is here held to be infinite, and by the almost word for word parallel between the third principle and the last two lines of the previous quotation: "--aussi immobile en chacune de ses parties, comme il l'est en son total". (1)

(1) A similar confusion or lack of distinction between visible and absolute space is found in the writings of Gassendi, whose definition of space, in the section devoted to physics in his Syntagma, closely resembles that given by Pascal in the two preceding extracts. Space, according to Gassendi, is infinite in three dimensions, motionless in itself, and the place of all things, which move about freely in it: "Spacia sunt immensa -- et penitus immobilia; ubicunque licet concipere distantiam, ibi et dimensionem concipere licet." "Spatium neque agere, neque pati aliquid potest; sed habet solum repugnantiam, qua sinit caetera transire per se, aut se occupare." Syntagma, I, 183, quoted by P.F. Thomas: La philosophie de Gassendi (Paris 1889; p.50)

- (i)(b) The attitude adopted toward cosmological speculation and toward Descartes's approach - indicates that Pascal does not favour a "mathematical" view of nature.

This failure on Pascal's part to differentiate between sensuous and geometrical space does not necessarily imply that the mechanistic view of the world of nature, which he appears to have taken for granted in his reader on at least two occasions, is one to which he himself attached no great weight. It does however indicate that he was either not aware of, or not convinced of the significance for his view of nature of the direction which Copernicanism had taken in the hands of Galileo. In view of the fact that he attended the scientific conferences, which started under Mersenne's auspices and eventually some years after his death evolved into the Académie des Sciences, ⁽¹⁾ it is highly improbable that Pascal could have remained completely unfamiliar with Galileo's work of application of the principle of relativity to such primary constituents of the mechanistic cosmos as motion and space. And a thorough investigation of Pascal's writings makes it apparent that the latter alternative explains with the greatest degree of likelihood the above inconsistency. For what scattered references to the cosmological speculations of his contemporaries and immediate predecessors they contain, reveal an extremely tentative attitude,

(1) Mme. Périer recounts in her *Vie*, p.6, (G.E.I, p.56) that their father early introduced Blaise to the weekly gatherings of savants, where he "--tenait fort bien son rang, tant pour l'examen que pour la production des ouvrages "-- Pascal himself designates the group in question "la très illustre académie parisienne de science," in the address which he delivered before them in 1654, outlining the scientific projects upon which he was then engaged. In the course of this he not only attributes his mathematical training to these savants, but refers also to "--cette bienveillance, qui m'a soutenu des mes plus jeunes années dans votre docte Assemblée, --" (p.73, Transl., p.1402; G.E. III, p.305.)

which at times verges on scepticism, to any conclusions posited. A hesitancy moreover, which the contexts show can not be ascribed simply to motives of prudence.

Thus in the 18th Provinciale, following the enumeration of the three 'principles' of human knowledge, each of which has its own special subject matter, Pascal concludes that since "les choses de fait ne se p^ouvent que par les sens" (p.899), mere authority, regardless of the sanctions with which it may arm itself, can have no influence in this domain.

He then adds by way of illustration that:

"Ce fut aussi en vain que vous obtîntes contre Galilée ce décret de Rome, qui condamnait son opinion touchant le mouvement de la terre. Ce ne sera pas cela qui prouvera qu'elle demeure en repos; et si l'on avait des observations constantes qui prouvassent que c'est elle qui tourne, tous les hommes ensemble ne l'empêcheraient pas de tourner, et ne s'empêcheraient pas de tourner avec elle.⁽¹⁾ (p.900; G.E. VII, p.53-4)

The fact that this statement constitutes an attack upon the validity of the whole procedure according to which Galileo was condemned, and actually

(1) With respect to the much-debated question, whether the description in the "Disproportion" fragment of the sun moving on a "vaste tour" round an apparently stationary earth, together with the implied contrast between the "objets bas" of the sublunary sphere and the nobler elements of the higher spheres, is evidence that he is here still clinging, in part at least, to the old geocentric cosmology, it is regrettable that too little notice has been paid to M. Allix's early and eminently plausible suggestion, "Peut-on dire qu'en parlant ainsi aux gens du monde, Pascal a opté pour le système de Ptolémée? Mais tous les jours les expressions relatives au mouvement apparent sont couramment employées par les astronomes eux-mêmes aussi bien que par les profanes. Lorsque nous disons que le Soleil se lève, qu'il monte dans le ciel, puis qu'il se couche et s'abaisse au-dessous de l'horizon, est-ce que nous abjurons l'opinion de Copernic?" - Pascal et le système de Copernic. Bulletin de l'Académie Delphinale, 4e. série, 18, 1904, p.279.

calls in question the papal right to pronounce on matters of fact, represents a far more significant act of defiance in the face of ecclesiastical authority, than would any mere declaration of agreement with the condemned views. It is evident that the requirements of the inductive method, as Pascal envisages them, and not the dictates of prudence, determine his attitude towards Galileo's 'opinion'. He considers that as yet the necessary support from experimentation or observation carried out over a sufficiently long period of time, to justify accepting the conclusions of this theory, has not been furnished.

In a letter to Noël in October 1647, in answer to the latter's recourse to the supposition of a "matière subtile", in order to account for the results of his own experiments pointing to the apparent existence of a vacuum, Pascal sets out a method for evaluating such hypotheses advanced as explanations of observed phenomena. One of the reasons he gives for the need of such a test is that, just as a single cause may produce a number of different effects, so a single effect may be derivable from a variety of causes.

"C'est ainsi que, quand on discourt humainement du mouvement, de la stabilité de la terre, tous les phénomènes des mouvements et rétrogradations des planètes s'ensuivent parfaitement des hypothèses de Ptolémée, de Tycho, de Copernic et de beaucoup d'autres qu'on peut faire, de toutes lesquelles une seule peut être véritable. Mais qui osera faire un si grand discernement, et qui pourra, sans danger d'erreur, soutenir l'une au préjudice des autres--"

(p.374-5; G.E. II, p.100-101)

None of the various cosmological schemes so far proposed has therefore, in Pascal's eyes, any special claim to the scientist's adherence, since all remain mere hypotheses, explaining with an equal degree of verisimilitude the phenomena in question. The standpoint adopted here is similar to that of Descartes in his Principes where, though Ptolemy's name is omitted from the list of 'possibles', the latter maintains that, provided one regards them simply as hypotheses, the explanations put forward by Copernicus and Tycho both tally equally well with the actual phenomena. However, it is clear from the proviso included here, as well as from Descartes's other writings,⁽¹⁾ that in his case this position is a purely politic one, assumed in order to avoid compromising himself. Both the context of Pascal's statement, and the other evidence hitherto adduced, would make it quite gratuitous to suppose his motives to be any other than genuine lack of intellectual conviction, consequent on the presentation of insufficient positive data.⁽²⁾

(1) cf. L. Brunschvicg, L'expérience humaine et la causalité physique (Paris 1922) p.187.

(2) In the forward to his Aristarchus, which appeared in the third volume of Mersenne's Novae Observationes (Paris 1647) Pascal's mentor and champion Roberval writes: "Sensum tandem nostrum quaeris? et an valere iussis Ptolemaio, atque Tychone, soli Aristarcho penitus adhaereamus? Absit, Neque enim recte sentientem Mathematicum decet opiniones sequi; aut hinc adhaerere, illas vero reiicere; donec evidens prodierit vel huius demonstratio, vel illarum confutatio. Sed nec illud constat quidem, an ex tribus Authorum ipsorum celeberrimorum diversis Systematis, aliquod verum sit ac geminum Mundi Systema: forsan etiam omnia tria falsa sunt et verum ignoratur." op.cit., Tomus III, no pagination. Strictly speaking therefore, the mathematician should refrain from passing judgement on such hypotheses until either a clear demonstration on the one side, or a convincing refutation on the other is forthcoming. Roberval adds however, that in this case the simplest explanation, and the one which best accords with established natural laws, is that formulated by Aristarchus. Hence, although not constrained

Again in the same letter, this time in connection with Noël's tactics of taking for granted in his 'demonstrations' the existence and characteristics of the very element requiring to be proved, Pascal remarks that if this method of demonstration, by mere question-begging, were to become accepted scientific practice, there would be no difficulty in solving even the most elusive of problems.

"Et le flux de la mer et l'attraction de l'aimant deviendront aisés à comprendre, s'il est permis de faire de^s matières et des qualités exprès." (p.373; G.E. II, p.96)

The implication of this comment made in passing is that among the problems, which in Pascal's judgement still await definitive solution, is to be numbered the whole question of gravitation. Despite the fact therefore that by this time (1647) the results of the investigations of Kepler, Gilbert and Galileo, to say nothing of those of Descartes, had become part of the general body of scientific opinion, which his membership of the 'Paris Academy' must have brought to Pascal's notice, yet he once again shows that he is by no means convinced of their adequacy as explanations of the phenomena involved.⁽¹⁾

(2) cont.from page 28. - to assent to the latter by absolutely convincing proof, he inclines with much greater weight ("graviori longe opinione") toward it than toward the two other hypotheses. Thus in the extract quoted he advocates the tentative approach toward cosmological explanations adopted by Pascal, but shows himself ready to advance from there to a sort of probabilism on this question which has no parallel in Pascal's writings.

(1) Moreover, throughout his writings on physics, Pascal displays a signal lack of interest in either the discovery or the application of general principles regarding the structure of nature as a whole. In fact, Descartes' criticism of Galileo's approach in physics is much more applicable to Pascal's than to Galileo's: "--sans avoir considéré les premières causes de la nature, il a seulement cherché les raisons de quelques effets particuliers, et ainsi il a bâti sans fondement." (à Mersenne, 11.10.1638,

The significance of the cautious attitude displayed by Pascal in the preceding extracts⁽¹⁾, emerges when it is realized that the theories there in question all in their various ways represent the application of the categories of geometry to the relations observable between the phenomena of the physical world - the very procedure which Pascal appeared to be advocating in the extract from the De l'esprit géométrique⁽²⁾. This

cont. from p.29. Pléjade ed. p.1025) For although Galileo set himself to solve particular problems as they arose, at least he did so with a cosmological objective in view. But it would be difficult to provide a more accurate and succinct description of the sort of approach which Pascal brings to physics, than is contained in these few lines. Further indication of Pascal's attitude toward general theories, and what he regards as their shortcomings, can be gleaned from a disparaging reference in the Avis, designed to accompany his arithmetical machine, to those who "--se persuadent possibles beaucoup de choses qui ne le sont pas, pour ne posséder qu'une théorie imparfaite des choses en général,--" (p.354; G.E. I p.305) - a theory which proves quite inadequate to cope with the necessary technical adjustments.

(1) Miss J. Leavenworth has also pointed out in her Methodological Analysis of the Physics of Pascal (New York 1930) that the conclusions, which Pascal draws from the experiments performed in connection with the vacuum controversy, do not depend for their cogency on the acceptance of any cosmological theory. Only at one point does he seem to make a cosmological presupposition - in regard to the proof of the existence of a vacuum drawn from the phenomena of rarefaction and condensation. This argument, Miss Leavenworth notes (op.cit.p.78), holds good only for a world composed of atoms. So Pascal "--les observations que nous faisons journallement de la raréfaction et condensation de l'air, qui,--se peut condenser jusqu'à la millièrme partie de la place qu'il semblait occuper auparavant, et qui se raréfie si fort, que je trouvais comme nécessaire, ou qu'il y eût un grand vide entre ses parties,--" (p.363; G.E. II, p.59)

(2) cf. above p.14f.

rather curious inconsistency, coupled with the fact already remarked upon that, despite his several opportunities to do so, he nowhere bothers to explore the ramifications of the concept of inertial motion - a fact all the more striking since it is the fundamental unifying principle upon which his system of mutually implicated concepts hinges - points to the conclusion that on the whole Pascal does not consider the mathematization of nature as either a valid, or a worthwhile undertaking.

The attitude which he adopts towards Descartes's conception of a mathematically interlocking universe, with an infallible "vera mathesis" to match, further testifies to the truth of this conclusion. Marguerite Périer in her account of her uncle's life records briefly that, with respect to Descartes's philosophy, Pascal:

"-- ne pouvait souffrir sa manière d'expliquer la formation de toutes choses--". (1) (p.41)

The accuracy of this testimony is borne out in several fragments from the Pensées, where Pascal makes his criticism quite explicit.

"--ces titres si ordinaires, 'Des principes des choses', 'Des principes de la philosophie', (2) -- aussi fastueux en effet, quoique moins en apparence, que cet autre qui crève les yeux, 'De omni scibili'." (p.1108; B72)

"Ecrire contre ceux qui approfondissent trop les sciences. Descartes." (B 76)

"Descartes inutile et incertain." (B.78)

"Descartes - Il faut dire en gros: 'Cela se fait par figure et mouvement'; car cela est vrai. Mais de dire quels et composer la machine, cela est ridicule; car cela est inutile et incertain et pénible. Et quand cela serait vrai, nous n'estimons pas que toute la philosophie vaille une heure de peine" (p.1137; B.79)

(1) This obviously refers to more than the famous "chiquenaude" which follows.

(2) Descartes's "Les principes de la philosophie, at which this remark is chiefly directed, first appeared in French translation in 1647.

Descartes then was right: broadly speaking things are composed in terms of shape and motion (Pascal has omitted the third term usually included by Descartes in this context⁽¹⁾ - "grandeur"). But his plan to proceed further to a detailed analysis of the whole structure of the world of nature on the basis of these elemental concepts, and to attempt to explain its manifold processes by means of a cosmic 'machine', functioning according to laws which admit of precise mathematical formulation, all this is in Pascal's eyes a complete waste of time. Fleeting though these references are, the fact that Pascal here concedes that Descartes is justified in postulating his initial general principle, while at the same time he denies any value to the subsequent project of formulating a universal science, which should at once embrace the whole of the physical world and be applicable to the relations of particular phenomena to each other, endorses the conclusion drawn above. Although it is necessary in the case of the fragments from the Pensées to take into account the apologetic factor - and although in the final sentence quoted the apologetic motive noticeably obtrudes - when looked at in the light of the extracts treated earlier they are seen to express a consistent view-point. For Pascal, general philosophies of nature, in which all phenomena find their full and primary explanation, are on a par with explanations of the facts of the natural world, like those advanced by Noël, not based upon what he regards as the requisite empirical knowledge.

(1) cf. Principes IV, 198-203, Pléjade ed., p.660-6

The material considered so far in this section makes it even more apparent that Pascal's statement in the De l'esprit géométrique, to the effect that everything in the physical world falls within the grasp of geometry - that one has only to draw out the implicatory threads connecting the basic concepts motion, number and space, in order to be able to comprehend the wonders of nature's structure - is an isolated one made in passing, and contrary to the general direction of his thought. At the very most this science might act as a guide to the most general principles of the composition of natural things, but any attempt to relate these to concrete nature is simply effort wasted. Pascal's writings betray no tendency to reduce physics to geometry as was Descartes's declared aim⁽¹⁾, and in fact he draws a sharp distinction between the fields in which the two operate.

Thus near the end of the letter to Noël, having defined what he means by a vacuum, as a motionless space having length, breadth and depth, capable of receiving and containing within itself a body of like length and shape, he adds:

"--et c'est ce qu'on appelle solide en géométrie, où l'on ne considère que les choses abstraites et immatérielles." (2) (p.376; G.E.II p.103)

Geometry moves therefore in a non-existing world of abstractions; it has

(1) cf. int. al. a letter to Mersenne, 17.7.1638, concerning Desargues: "S'il lui plaît de considérer ce que j'ai écrit du sel, de la neige, de l'arc-en-ciel, etc., il connaîtra bien que toute ma Physique n'est autre chose que Géométrie!"

(2) In a letter to Des Noyers, 15.5.1648, Roberval likewise draws a hard and fast division between the domains of mathematics and physics: "Mathematicus enim spatium primo ac per se considerat prout extensum est, mensurabile ac divisibile;--". He is concerned solely with the extension in space of physical matter, and not with its corporeity or the form it assumes: "unde vulgare illud: 'mathematicus abstrahit a materia'. Physicus, e contrario, corpus physicum primo ac per se considerat prout materiale est ac mobile; mutabile aut immutabile;--" G.E., II, p.337-8.

no access to empirical reality. And Pascal nowhere even concedes that the conclusions arrived at in geometry hold good for the particular relations of existing things in the concrete world, which depend upon the aspect of them that has been thus isolated for consideration. The highly abstract character of his own mathematical researches, entirely devoid of references to the possible application of any conclusions reached to the behaviour of empirical phenomena, endorses this view.

This conception of the restricted scope of geometry is the complete opposite of that of Descartes, who, convinced of the universality of his "vera mathesis", is led to the position of excluding, at least in theory, from the interpretation of nature whatever is not amenable to mathematical treatment. At the end of the fifth Méditation, as a result of having established to his own satisfaction that the truth and certainty of any science are wholly dependent on the prior knowledge of a veracious God, Descartes claims that he now possesses the means:

"-- d'acquérir une science parfaite touchant une infinité de choses, non seulement de celles qui sont en lui, mais aussi de celles qui appartiennent à la nature corporelle, en tant qu'elle peut servir d'objet aux démonstrations des géomètres,--"(1)

This extrusion from physics of all non-mathematical elements is enunciated more explicitly in the heading to the last section of the second part of the Principes:

"Que je ne reçois point de principes en physique, qui ne soient aussi reçus en mathématique, afin de pouvoir prouver par démonstration tout ce que j'en déduirai;

(1) Fléade ed., p.317.

et que ces principes suffisent, d'autant que tous les phénomènes de la nature peuvent être expliqués par leur moyen." (1)

But the most revealing passage in this connection, and certainly the one which serves to bring out in the most striking fashion the difference of standpoint between Pascal and Descartes, is the following one taken from the "Entretien avec Burman", where Descartes is recorded as saying that:

"--toutes les démonstrations des mathématiciens portent sur des êtres et sur des objets vrais et -- l'objet tout entier des mathématiques, avec tout ce qu'elles y considèrent, est un être vrai et réel et a une vraie et réelle nature, non moins que l'objet de la physique elle-même."

The difference between the two disciplines resides solely in the fact that:

"-- la physique considère son objet non seulement comme un être vrai et réel, mais comme un être en acte, et, en tant que tel, existant; les mathématiques au contraire seulement en tant que possible, n'existant point en acte dans l'espace, pouvant toutefois exister."(2)

When considered in the light of previous ones, this last extract shows how far that which actually exists in the physical world is a matter of complete indifference to Descartes, so obsessed is he with his fetish of conformity to mathematical type.

In sharp contrast to this a priorism, and far from seeing in the objects comprising the subject-matter of geometry the foundations of all genuine knowledge about the universe, Pascal expressly denies reality to those objects - to him they represent mere abstractions from the real and existent. In the Pensées he shows himself inclined to attribute their

(1) Pléiade ed. p.652

(2) " " " p. 1374.

simplicity, and the immediacy with which they confront the mind, to the circumstances of the mind's own physical embodiment:

"Notre âme est jetée dans le corps, où elle trouve nombre, temps, dimensions. Elle raisonne là-dessus, et appelle cela nature, nécessité, et ne peut croire autre chose." (p.1212; B.233)

"La coutume est notre nature. Qui s'accoutume à la foi la croit. -- Qui doute donc que, notre âme étant accoutumée à voir nombre, espace, mouvement, croie cela et rien que cela." (ibid; B.49)

The mind therefore, in Pascal's view, is necessarily conditioned by the fact that it is united in some way with, and functions in, the body; and it is this fact which accounts for the constant presence to it of the concepts space, time, number, motion, and explains why it comes to regard them as the basic constituents of all that is. This impression is further reinforced by the requirements of physical existence:

"L'homme a besoin de lieu pour le contenir, de temps pour durer, de mouvement pour vivre,--" (p.1110; B.72)

Thus the wheel of Pascal's thought has revolved in its full circle from the conception outlined in the De l'esprit géométrique, that the above concepts are the fundamental principles of the structure of everything in the physical universe, for he is here clearly sounding a warning not to impose a priori on reality the limitations of the modes of human perception. He maintains in effect that since the modes to which the mind becomes conditioned act as blinkers on our awareness, our mode of

perception cannot be the measure of things,⁽¹⁾ and that we must be careful to distinguish between what belongs to the subjective nature of knowledge and what belongs to the universe. To assert therefore, as Galileo and Descartes do, and as Pascal himself does by implication in the De l'esprit géométrique, that nature is mathematical, is to overlook precisely that fact - it is to advance from the mind's concepts to the independent reality that conforms to them, and to shape the external world of nature in conformity with the mind's subjective modes. And this predominantly subjective element in Descartes's approach, as Pascal sees it, prompts him to describe the former's philosophy as:

"-- le roman de la nature, semblable à peu près à l'histoire de Don Quichot".⁽²⁾

(1) Similarly Bacon, when he ascribes the origin of the 'Idols of the Tribe' to human nature itself, writes: "-- it is a false assertion that the sense of man is the measure of things. On the contrary, all perceptions as well of the sense as of the mind are according to the measure of the individual and not according to the measure of the universe." Novum Organon I, 41. In a rather different context in the De l'esprit géométrique Pascal writes: "-- ce n'est pas par notre capacité à concevoir ces choses que nous devons juger de leur réalité,--" (p.586; G.E. IX, p.260)

(2) Related in a letter by Menjot to his colleague Puerari (p.1504 n.; G.E. X, p.45)

- (ii) Nature regarded as acting in accordance with uniform laws in the treatises.

The important role played by the assumption that nature acts according to regular laws in Pascal's two treatises on statics is brought out in a very clear light by the great use which he makes there of 'thought experiments'. For it appears that only one of the numerous experiments referred to was actually performed - Gassendi's testimony in the case of the experiment with the flaccid balloon is held by commentators to be sufficient evidence as to its having been carried out.⁽¹⁾

As early as 1666 Boyle in his Hydrostatical Paradoxes affirms that, though in agreement in the main with the conclusions arrived at by Pascal in his treatises, he has no mind to make use of his experimental proofs. Three principal reasons are given for rejecting these: "First, Because though the Experiments he mentions he delivered in such a manner, as is usual in mentioning matters of fact; yet I remember not that he expressly says that he actually try'd them, and therefore he might possibly have set them down as things that must happen, upon a just confidence that he was not mistaken in his Ratiocinations."⁽²⁾ Boyle's remaining two objections stem from what he considers are insuperable technical difficulties, which would be encountered in attempting to perform the experiments as Pascal has described them, and it is significant that in regard to one of

(1) cf. G.E.III, p.200, n.i., for the letter in which Gassendi gives an account of this experiment.

(2) op.cit. p.4 - 5.

these he notes that: "--they require Brass Cylinders, or Pluggs, made with an exactness, that, though easily supposed by a Mathematician, will scarce be found obtainable from a Tradesman."⁽¹⁾ He concludes that these difficulties are such as to make Pascal's alleged experiments "more ingenious than practicable."

If, as Boyle considers possible, the experiments which Pascal sets out in the two treatises are only 'thought experiments', this means that he is basing his conclusions here on principles of a very different nature from those which he repeatedly claims are the sole legitimate ones in physics.⁽²⁾ The truth of Boyle's contention, that the experiments could not have been carried out, has been vindicated by subsequent writers;⁽³⁾ and since, as he points out, Pascal nowhere expressly affirms that he did perform them, his suggestion is confirmed that the latter did merely set down the purported experimental results "--as things that must happen upon a just confidence that he was not mistaken in his Ratiocinations."

The most notable example of this occurs with respect to the principle of the hydraulic press - Pascal's most significant contribution to the science of statics - enunciated in the opening chapters of the first treatise. He envisages a number of experiments - the ones requiring the "Brass Cylinders, or Pluggs", alleged by Boyle to be unprocurable -

(1) *ibid.*, and cf. also p.63-4

(2) cf. below p.113f

(3) Ch.Thürot, Recherches sur le principe d'Archimède notes that "Pascal -- (ce qui est curieux de la part d'un homme qui professe que les expériences sont les seuls principes de la physique) invoque des expériences qu'il n'avait pas faites, et même qui ne peuvent pas être faites,--" Revue Archéologique, vol.20, p.19. cf. also A. Koyré: Pascal savant, in, Blaise Pascal: l'homme et l'oeuvre. (Paris 1956); p.276,

to demonstrate that fluids have weight in proportion to their depth. The results of these, he claims, make it plain that:

"--la force nécessaire pour empêcher l'eau de couler par une ouverture, est proportionnée à la hauteur de l'eau, et non pas à sa largeur;--" (p.413; G.E. III, p.161.

and that: "un petit filet d'eau tient un grand poids en équilibre:--" (p.414; G.E. III, p.162). In the course of determining what causes this multiplication of force, Pascal extends the latter conclusion to explain the following phenomenon:

"Si un vaisseau plein d'eau, clos de toutes parts, a deux ouvertures, l'une centuple de l'autre: en mettant à chacune un piston qui lui soit juste, un homme poussant le petit piston égalera la force de cent hommes, qui pousseront celui qui est cent fois plus large,--" (p.414; G.E.III, p.162).

It is evident from this, given the continuity and the fluidity of the water, that:

"--un vaisseau plein d'eau est un nouveau principe de mécanique, et une machine nouvelle pour multiplier les forces--" (ibid; G.E.III, p.163)

Further proof is then derived for the new principle by pointing out how it links up with other previously established principles of statics; the principle of virtual displacements, and Torricelli's principle of the centre of gravity. It is also explained in hydrostatical terms by showing how, in virtue of the "continuité" and "fluidité" of the liquid contained in the vessel, pressure exerted on any portion of its surface will be transmitted undiminished throughout. Having reached this point, Pascal

considers himself justified in assuming the truth of his basic principle:

"Prenons donc pour très véritable, qu'un vaisseau plein d'eau, ayant des ouvertures, et des forces à ces ouvertures qui leur soient proportionnées, elles sont en équilibre; et c'est le fondement et la raison de l'équilibre des liqueurs, dont nous allons donner plusieurs exemples." (p.416;G.E.III, p.168)

It is clear from Pascal's constant use of the conditional "si", and of the formula "il faut" and infinitive, in describing the experiments designed to prove and illustrate these principles, that he is here assuming as the basis of his argument, on which "the just confidence that he was not mistaken in his Ratiocinations" is grounded, the uniform behaviour of the natural forces whose effects he is engaged in tracing and corollating. The procedure which he follows is to affirm that, conditional on the performance of specified experiments, certain phenomena will be found to behave in a certain way. These predictions, which anticipate conclusions not directly observed, are no doubt based on and suggested by previously observed cases - the experiments concerning the vacuum⁽¹⁾ and everyday experience of the behaviour of fluids, for example, - but they nonetheless take for granted, as an underlying principle, that natural processes are governed by a uniformity of law. And the confidence with which Pascal propounds the basic principle of statics arrived at in this way, together with the fact that the two ensuing treatises comprise little more than an elaboration of it, amply attests the trust he places in this notion of nature's conformity to

(1) M.Kóyré argues that many of these even could not have been performed in the manner, or with the results, that Pascal alleges. art.cit;p.275-8.

invariable laws.

Presumably Pascal sees fit here to overlook the idea, which he develops elsewhere, of there being an element of indeterminacy in nature, whose subtlety is such as to render quite vain any attempt to reduce her processes to a formula.⁽¹⁾ Moreover, this procedure of drawing inferences from the data of experiments never actually performed, and claiming far-reaching scope and significance for their conclusions, runs directly counter to his professed attitude towards induction. For elsewhere he disputes the legitimacy of any inference beyond immediate experience, which is made in trust that the uniformities discovered in the segment of nature that comes within the purview of such experience hold good over all the rest.⁽²⁾ And where the processes of nature are conceived of in terms of an iron regularity of sequences outside the context of these treatises, it is claimed rather paradoxically, not that it is justifiable in this case to resort to rational inference, but that empirical observation will on that account prove fruitful. Thus in the address to the Paris 'Academy' in connection with the problem of devising a method to equitably apportion the stakes in a game of chance which has been interrupted, Pascal says:

"--c'est là certes ce qu'il faut d'autant plus chercher par le raisonnement, qu'il est moins possible d'être renseigné par l'expérience. En effet les résultats du sort ambigu sont justement attribués à la contingence

(1) cf. below p.55.

(2) cf. below p.117ff.

fortuite plutôt qu'à la nécessité naturelle. (1) C'est pourquoi la question a été incertaine jusqu'à ce jour; mais maintenant, demeurée rebelle à l'expérience, elle n'a pu échapper à l'empire de la raison." (p.74 Trans.p.1403;G.E.III, p.307)

The significance of this alignment of what can be attributed to the causality of "nécessité naturelle" with "expérience", can only be that the appropriate method of investigation to adopt where one can count on regular laws governing the behaviour of things is experimentation, but that its effectiveness and reliability diminish when an element of randomness enters.

The method of reasoning by analogy employed in the second treatise, which is very largely an extension of the principles formulated in the first to apply to the atmosphere as well as to liquids, provides further evidence that Pascal directs his enquiries in accordance with the belief in the existence of a network of uniformities underlying phenomena. For he sets out to show how the phenomena ordinarily attributed to nature's "horror vacui", obey the same laws as those studied previously in connection with the equilibrium of fluids, by simply bringing out the clear analogies between these two classes of phenomena in all important respects. The explanation of the phenomena that relate to the supposed "horror vacui" thus rests almost entirely on the way in which they are integrated into a system of established laws.

(1) This expression also occurs in the Abrégé de la vie de Jésus-Christ (p.649) "--il mourut non pas par une nécessité naturelle, mais par sa propre volonté,--". Also in the Pensées, p.1121 (cf. below p.55.), where the element of "nécessité" is asserted to be not in things, but in the human mind, which spontaneously connects all phenomena. cf. also p.460.

Already in the letter to Florin Périer, included in the Récit de la grande expérience, Pascal writes with respect to the phenomena normally attributed to the "horror vacui":

"--j'incline bien plus à imputer tous ces effets à la pesanteur et pression de l'air, parce que je ne les considère que comme des cas particuliers d'une proposition universelle de l'équilibre des liqueurs,--" (p.393 G.E.II;p.154)

and in the second treatise, having established as a result of the experiment with the flaccid balloon that air has certain characteristics in common with water and all other fluids,⁽¹⁾ and having enumerated the effects usually attributed to the "horror vacui",⁽²⁾ he sets down in brief outline the argument which is to be elaborated in the ensuing section:

"Si l'on a bien compris, dans le Traité de l'équilibre des liqueurs, de quelle manière elles font impression par leur poids contre tous les corps qui y sont, on n'aura point de peine à comprendre comment le poids de la masse de l'air, agissant sur tous les corps, y produit tous les effets qu'on avait attribués à l'horreur du vide; car ils sont tout à fait semblables, comme nous l'allons montrer sur chacun."(p.434;G.E.III,p.206

Not only does this manifesto set the board, but it makes very plain the way in which the method of argument to be followed, of bringing out the analogies between the two different classes of phenomena, takes for granted the central fact of nature's uniformity.

The first example to be treated is the difficulty experienced in opening a bellows with all its apertures stopped:

"Pour faire entendre comment la pesanteur de la masse de l'air cause la difficulté qu'on sent à ouvrir un soufflet, lorsque l'air n'y peut entrer, je ferai voir une pareille résistance causée par le poids de l'eau." (ibid.G.E.IIIp.206-7)

(1) ch.I, p.429-431. G.E.III, p.194-199

(2) ch.II, sect.I p.432-4, G.E.III, p.201-6.

Clearly in the case of a bellows immersed in water, with the tube emerging into the air, it would be ridiculous to attribute the resistance to the "horror vacui". And since what is said of water is to be understood of any fluid, a "general law" can be propounded, that the resistance encountered in opening a bellows with its apertures stopped in any fluid is caused by, and is proportionate to, the weight of fluid which must be raised. If this general law is applied to the particular case of air, it will be found to be true that the weight of the mass of air causes the resistance felt in opening the bellows:

"D'où l'on voit que la difficulté d'ouvrir un soufflet bouché n'est qu'un cas particulier de la règle générale de la difficulté d'ouvrir un soufflet dans quelque liqueur que ce soit, où elle n'a point d'accès. Ce que nous avons dit de cet effet, nous allons le dire de chacun des autres, mais plus succinctement."(p.435;G.E.p.208)

Having applied this method of reasoning by analogy to the remaining eight examples of effects previously attributed to the "horror vacui", formulating in each instance the general law of which this is the particular case, Pascal concludes the chapter as follows:

"Voilà de quelle sorte le poids de l'air produit tous les effets qu'on avait jusqu'ici attribués à l'horreur du vide.⁽¹⁾ J'en viens d'expliquer les principaux; s'il en reste quelqu'un, il est si aisé de l'entendre ensuite de ceux-ci,--et on peut même dire qu'on les avait déjà tous vus, comme en leur source, dans le Traité précédent, puisque tous ces effets ne sont que des cas particuliers de la règle générale de l'équilibre des liqueurs". (p.443; G.E.III, p.225)

(1) In a further fragment Pascal extends this conclusion, again making the fundamental assumption that nature is regular, acting in accordance with uniform laws throughout different classes of phenomena. "La conformité de tous les effets attribués à l'horreur du vide, étant telle que ce qui se dit de l'un s'entend de tous les autres, nous doit faire conclure avec certitude que, puisque le mercure suspendu varie ses hauteurs suivant les variétés des temps, il arrivera aussi de semblables variétés dans tous les autres,--" (p.463;G.E.II, p.515) And one of the examples cited to show that the effects produced by varying degrees of atmospheric pressure are uniform throughout various cases, is especially interesting in this respect: "Que si le siphon

Thus the method which Pascal adopts in this part of the treatise consists essentially in pointing out how closely analogous is the case in his previous treatment of the equilibrium of liquids to that of the particular effect in question attributed to the "horror vacui". In this way the "horror vacui" is made to appear superfluous as an explanation, since the relevant phenomena are shown to constitute a particular case of a general law already established. Such a method presupposes throughout a belief that nature's processes are governed by a far-reaching uniformity of law.⁽¹⁾ For Pascal is not merely assuming that the conditions of the occurrence of phenomena are predictable; he is extending, on the grounds of analogy, the mode of cause and effect which holds good in one set of phenomena to another quite separate set.

contd. from p.45. à eau est dans une basse-cour, et que le tuyau du mercure soit dans une chambre; lorsqu'on observera que le mercure hausse dans la chambre où l'on est, on peut assurer, sans le voir, que le siphon joue dans la cour où l'on n'est pas. -- parce que tous ces effets sont conformes, et dépendant immédiatement de la pesanteur de l'air qui les règle tous, et les diversifie suivant ses propres diversités." (p.466; G.E.II, p.519)

(1) Nature thus conceived is not necessarily incompatible with the nature of the Schools, with which Pascal aligns himself elsewhere. For there is nothing peculiar to 17th century mechanistic philosophy in the conception of nature acting in accordance with necessary laws. M. Gilson's account of the mediaeval idea of nature makes this evident. The mediaeval thinkers managed to reconcile both "fecundité" and "nécessité", which they attributed to nature, as the aggregate of active entities whose essence determines their behaviour according to necessary laws, so that for them "Chaque fois qu'il est possible de constater l'existence d'une constance, de quelque chose qui arrive 'ut in pluribus', on peut être sûr que cette constance a une cause et cette cause ne peut être que la présence d'une essence, ou nature, dont l'opération produit régulièrement le phénomène." L'esprit de la philosophie médiévale. (Paris, 1944) p.346.

(iii)(a) Nature as continuous process

The context of Pascal's assertion in the Préface pour le traité du vide, that experiments are the only legitimate principles in physics, shows that he believes the necessity for such an empirical approach, in order to acquire any knowledge about the physical world, is dictated by the face which nature itself presents to the investigator.

"les secrets de la nature sont cachés; quoiqu'elle agisse toujours, on ne découvre pas toujours ses effets: le temps les révèle d'âge en âge, et quoique toujours égale en elle-même, elle n'est pas toujours également connue. Les expériences qui nous en donnent l'intelligence multiplient continuellement;--" (p.532;G.E.II, p.136)

Although there are properly two ideas relating to nature implicit in this passage - that of nature as a hidden continuous process, which often eludes us since its effects are too subtle for our senses to detect, and that of nature's constancy - it will be convenient, since the one frequently seems to imply the other, to treat them together.

Some passages however, which describe nature's constancy alone, may be isolated. In the "Disproportion" fragment in the Pensées, Pascal contrasts nature and human nature in the following terms:

"L'immobilité fixe et constante de la nature, comparaison au changement continuel qui se passe en nous,--" (p.1110;B.72)

An earlier variant, as well as the comparison drawn, shows that the expression "immobilité fixe", which gives the impression that nature constitutes a continuous, homogeneous mass, of which and within which there can be no motion, is merely intended here to emphasize nature's constancy.

"Voilà une partie des causes qui rendent l'homme si imbécile à connaître la nature.-- Elle dure et se maintient perpétuellement en son être: il passe et est mortel." (p.1112; B.72)

Nature's constancy is again illustrated in the description of an experiment designed to prove the effects of air-pressure. The air is prevented from exerting pressure on the mercury lying in the elbow of a curved tube, because the experimenter has placed his finger over the opening at the point where the curve joins the straight portion of the tube: ⁽¹⁾

"Mais comme rien ne se perd dans la nature, si le vif-argent qui est dans la recourbure ne sent pas le poids de l'air, parce que le doigt qui bouche son ouverture l'en garde, il arrive, en récompense, que le doigt souffre beaucoup de douleur car il porte tout le poids de l'air qui le presse par-dessus, et rien ne le soutient par-dessous." (p.450; G.E.III, p.240)

The notion of the constancy of nature is assumed here as a general principle almost, adequate apparently to account for the occurrence of phenomena, since it is alleged that the sensation of pain results as "récompense".

However, the idea is by no means peculiar to Pascal in the first half of the seventeenth century in France. Pierre Guiffart makes an interesting comparison, in his Discours du vuide, ⁽²⁾ between Nature and Art:

"Il y a une très notable différence entre l'Art et la Nature-- la Nature n'a pas besoin de l'Art, elle est toujours semblable à elle mesme, et depuis le moment de sa naissance jusques à sa fin;-- Aussi ses causes agissent sans cesse d'une mesme maniere et produisent

(1) cf. diagram, p.450 Traité de la pesanteur de la masse de l'air. G.E.III p.237.

(2) Published in August 1647, and written to support the conclusions outlined by Pascal in his Expériences nouvelles --, against the criticisms which had been levelled at them by Jacob Pierius, a professor of philosophy at the College de Rouen.

tousjours de semblables effects. C'est pourquoy si quelques uns d'entre eux nous paroissent nouveaux, ils ne le sont neantmoins qu'à l'esgard de la connoissance que nous en avons, et non pas à l'esgard de la nature." (1)

Roberval also enunciates a very similar conception of nature in a Fragment inédit:

"-- la nature n'est jamais contraire à elle mesme quoy qu'elle produise des effets contraires, ou qui nous semblent tels. -- On ne la peut détruire, non pas meme l'altérer en la moindre chose; quoy que les corps dans lesquels elle se rencontre puissent changer de mouvemens, de figures, et d'autres accidens. -- la nature demeure tousjours telle qu'elle est constante en son estre veritable:--" (2)

The textual similarities discernible in these extracts testify to a definite interplay of influence here, but the fact that it is impossible to give a definite date to the writings of either Pascal or Roberval, from which the relevant passages are taken, means that it would be quite arbitrary to assign priority in formulating this conception of the continuity and stability of nature. Besides it appears to have been Bacon who first recognized the significance of the idea for the investigation of the processes and phenomena of physical nature. Already in the Novum Organon the essential elements are present. (3)

(1) Discours du vuide sur les expériences de monsieur Paschal et le traicte de Monsieur Pierius, (Rouen 1647) p.48-9.

(2) cf. Roberval's: Des principes du devoir et des connoissances humaines: (15) "Mesme cause naturelle ou semblable ou semblablement disposé, produit semblable effect en un sujet mesme ou semblable ou semblablement disposé; et la nature n'est point contraire à elle-mesme". Included by Cousin in Fragments de philosophie cartésienne (Paris, 1845) p.247. The Fragment inédit is included in the G.E. edition of Pascal, vol.II. p.49-50.

(3) "For there is nothing more true in nature than the twin propositions that 'nothing is produced from nothing', and 'nothing is reduced to nothing', but that the absolute quantum or sum total of matter remains unchanged, without increase or diminution." op.cit.II,40 and cf.also II 4-7. Newton, in the

However, the constancy and continuous process of nature does not mean for Pascal, as it clearly does for both Roberval and Bacon, that the individual phenomena sharing in the process are simply the transformations into new forms of what has already appeared in another form, without any loss of, or addition to, the quantity of the basic material. On this view nature's constancy consists primarily in the fact that the quantum remains undiminished despite processes and change. Clearly such a conception is not adequate to account for the principle of the unceasing activity of nature postulated in the passage from the Préface. Nature there represents in Pascal's eyes essentially a continuous activity, expressing itself in individual embodiments ("effets"), and not simply a given amount of matter which remains uniform throughout all time.

It is this sort of view that predominates in the scattered fragments of the Pensées bearing upon the subject:

"La nature s'imite: une graine jetée en bonne terre, produit; un principe jeté dans un bon esprit, produit; les nombres imitent l'espace, qui sont de nature si différente. Tout est fait et conduit par un même maître: la racine, les branches, les fruits; les principes, les conséquences."
(p.1096; B 119)

"La nature recommence toujours les mêmes choses, les ans, les jours, les heures; les espaces de même, et les nombres sont bout à bout à la suite l'un de l'autre. Ainsi se fait une espace d'infini et d'éternel--" (p.1123; B121).

cont. from p.49. third of his Rules of Reasoning in Philosophy, incorporates a variation on the theme of nature as constant: "--nor are we to recede from the analogy of Nature, which is wont to be -- always consonant to itself." Newton's Philosophy of Nature (New York, 1953); ed.H.S.Thayer, p.4.)

Thus Pascal describes the fundamental continuity he sees running through the world of nature, not in terms of any underlying material substance, but in terms of the processes of growth and change which take place according to the same sequence in such dissimilar aspects as plant-life and the mental life of man. This unity of pattern is extended to include numbers and space, which conform to identical laws of increase, despite the fact that the one is a mere mode imposed by the mind on objective reality while the other is an entity encompassing the whole of that reality. The use of the reflexive verb "s'imiter" in the first extract is especially significant, since it indicates that Pascal has broken away, at least in part, from the Aristotelean scholastic tradition of regarding nature as the material imitation of a transcendent immaterial model. Nature's model is now immanent not transcendent, for it is the ordered reproduction of its own inherent processes that "s'imiter" suggests.

Although Pascal does endorse the sharp distinction, on which Descartes insists, between mind and body⁽¹⁾, the position he adopts in the first passage sets him outside the orthodox Cartesian view that mind and the thought processes generic to it form a class apart from every other sort of natural entity. Not that he has any conception of mind pervading the whole body of the physical world - minds simply constitute one class of phenomena which appear in nature, and exhibit the same characteristics of development as any other class.

(1) cf. *Pensées*, p.1110 "--nous sommes composés de deux natures opposées et de divers genre, d'âme et de corps." (B.72)

Closely akin to this principle of continuity, or more correctly perhaps, resultant upon it, is the notion that everything in the natural world is in reciprocal action:

"Le moindre mouvement importe à toute la nature; la mer entière change pour une pierre." (p.1296; B.505)

In this way the modification of one part of the world extends to all parts, so that every point of the physical universe reacts in however slight degree to everything that happens anywhere in the whole universe. And Pascal's sense of the proximity of different 'worlds' comes into play even in his essays on pure mathematics. In conclusion to the treatise on the sum of the numerical powers, after enunciating the general law that a continuous magnitude of a given order is not increased by the addition to it of any number of magnitudes of a lower order, so that points add nothing to lines, lines nothing to surfaces, surfaces nothing to solids; or in arithmetical terms, roots do not count in relation to squares, squares in relation to cubes, etc., he makes the following observation:

"J'ai tenu à ajouter ces quelques remarques, familières à ceux qui pratiquent les indivisibles, afin de faire ressortir la liaison, toujours admirable, que la nature, éprise d'unité, établit entre les choses les plus éloignées en apparence. Elle apparaît dans cet exemple, où nous voyons le calcul des dimensions des grandeurs continues se rattacher à la sommation des puissances numériques." (p.171. Trans.1432; G.E.III; p.366)

Now even if the notion of heterogeneous orders, as it is here set out, is as banal as M. Koyré would have us believe, ⁽¹⁾ this in no way affects the

(1) art.cit., p.265-6.

significance for the present discussion of the fact that Pascal has noted, and considers it remarkable, that in geometry and arithmetic components are governed in certain of their relations by the self-same principle, and that he attributes this uniformity to nature's being "éprise d'unité". Indeed, the expression "toujours admirable", used in the translation to describe the correspondence between numbers and continuous magnitudes, hardly does justice to the matching expression in Pascal's original latin. This gives a much more precise indication of the light in which he regards this activity of nature: "nunquam satis mirata connexio".

The idea of the continuity of nature, of there being some "liaison" connecting the diverse fields in which its activity is manifest, appears to have enjoyed some popularity in the early part of the 17th Century. Fournier reproduces (1) a Discours de la vie, de la mort et des os du geant Theutobocus, written by a certain Jacques Tissot, and first published at Lyon in 1613, where the appearance of giants in the natural world is interpreted as an opportunity to:

"--mettre en pratique l'axiôme: 'Operatur natura quantum, et quandiu potest', sans néanmoins faire aucun sault 'ab extremis ad extrema: natura enim in suis operationibus non facit saltum'."

The fact that Tissot's treatise is written in French, but that the relevant phrase is quoted in Latin, indicates that it was in all likelihood a current aphorism of the period. And Tissot's English contemporary Coke, the famous jurist, applies it to the law in the form:

(1) Variétés historiques et littéraires, (Paris 1859) vol.ix,p.247-8.

"Natura non facit saltus, ita nec lex." (1)

The maxim proved fruitful when taken up by Leibniz at the end of the century and developed in conjunction with his other great principle of sufficient reason. It occurs in its apparently original form in the New Essays on the Human Understanding:

"--it is one of my most important and best verified maxims that nature makes no leaps." (2)

Pascal himself gives no indication of the precise nature of the connection he conceives as running through the various aspects of the world of nature, but it is clear from the earlier passages cited that it is formed in some way by nature's own creative process, which he describes in the following terms:

"La nature agit par progrès, 'itus et reditus'. Elle passe et revient, puis va plus loin, puis deux fois moins, puis plus que jamais, etc., le flux de la mer se fait ainsi, le soleil semble marcher ainsi. (p.1168-9; B 355)

The human temperament behaves in this way, as do also the passage of a fever, the inventive spirit of man, human motives of altruism and their reverse, the rules of eloquence and the principle of "divertissement". However, what is important for the present purpose, is that the process of nature should be delineated as one of rhythmical change, and at the same time of creative advance - an overall movement of progress which includes and allows for a measure of periodic regression. Nature so conceived cannot

(1) Coke upon Littleton, 238-9, in W.F.H.King: Classical and Foreign Quotations (London 1904)

(2) Leibniz: Philosophical Writings, Everyman ed., p.152. Pascal's emphasis in the "Disproportion" fragment on the "rapport" and "enchaînement" between the parts and the whole in the natural scheme, and on the "lien naturel et insensible" connecting the most diverse items in the physical world, has already been treated, above, p.13.

be thought of as a finished product or a closed system; and if it is progressive, as Pascal asserts it to be, then it cannot be pictured as a machine, nor can any of its parts be adequately described in mechanistic terms. For it is clearly impossible to describe the same thing in one and the same breath as a machine and as developing, for the one characteristic which a mechanistic system specifically eliminates is that of any form of development - purposeless and unprogressive change is all that it can take cognizance of.

(iii)(b) Pascal's anti-mechanism.

Any doubts as to Pascal's final attitude toward a thorough-going mechanistic view of nature are dispelled by his recognition of an element of the unpredictable in nature's operations:

" 'Spongia solis.' - Quand nous voyons un effet arriver toujours de même, nous en concluons une nécessité naturelle, comme qu'il sera demain jour, etc. Mais souvent la nature nous dément, et ne s'assujettit pas à ses propres règles."
(p.1121; B p.)

It is particularly significant here that, whereas the element of necessity is ascribed to the agency of the human mind, the indeterminacy does not depend on any human inability but is inherent in the nature of things, in a way completely incompatible with the conception of the physical world as

a mere congeries of bits of matter, infinite in extent and permeated all through by movement, functioning in accordance with invariable laws. The secret of nature's uniform behaviour, which any mechanistic world view must take as its ultimate foundation, consists in the invariable sequences of cause and effect that Pascal expressly declares in this fragment to be frequently disregarded.

The idea of nature as process, growth and development, which seems to have survived in Pascal's thinking as a relic of the conceptions of the previous century, is strangely out of tune with the rationalist tendency dominant in the thought of his period. To the Cartesian the world of nature was a mechanistic system of interacting parts, capable of mathematical interpretation in terms of the motion of matter in space and time. And yet in one important respect Pascal does appear to have been deeply influenced by this Cartesian mechanism,⁽¹⁾ for several fragments in the *Pensees* show him to have been in substantial agreement with Descartes's doctrine of animal-automata.

"Je puis bien concevoir un homme sans mains, pieds, tête, ...
Mais je ne puis concevoir l'homme sans pensée: ce serait
une pierre ou une brute." (p.1156; B.339).

"L'histoire du brochet et de la grenouille de Liencourt:⁽²⁾
ils le font toujours, et jamais autrement, ni autre
chose d'esprit." (ibid; B.341)

(1) This statement abstracts from the possible influence traceable to Descartes in regard to the assumption in the treatises, that nature acts in accordance with laws.

(2) E. Jovy, in vol. IV of his *Etudes pascaliennes*, (Paris 1928), p.58-66, traces a probable source of the anecdote to which Pascal alludes here.

"Le bec du perroquet qu'il essuie, quoiqu'il soit net." (ibid; B.343)

"Si un animal faisait par esprit ce qu'il fait par instinct, et s'il parlait par esprit ce qu'il parle par instinct, pour la chasse, et pour avertir ses camarades que la proie est trouvée ou perdue, il parlerait aussi pour des choses où il a plus d'affection, comme pour dire: 'Rongez cette corde qui me blesse, où je ne puis atteindre'." (ibid; B.342.

In this last fragment in particular, Pascal seems to be echoing Descartes's contention that it is the ability to communicate genuine thought, whether by the use of articulate speech or some other means, that differentiates man from beast, rational intellect from animal instinct.⁽¹⁾ The testimonies of Baillet, that it was this aspect of Descartes's philosophy which Pascal most esteemed,⁽²⁾ and of Margu rite P rier, who relates that: "Il  tait de son sentiment sur l'automate--",⁽³⁾ apparently bear this out.

The foregoing evidence, together with the fact that such was the view generally accepted at Port-Royal,⁽⁴⁾ has led Mrs. L.C. Rosenfield, in her study of the subject,⁽⁵⁾ to lump Pascal in with the "solitaires", to

(1) e.g. the letter to Henry More, 5.2.1649: "--jamais jusqu'  ce jour on n'a pu observer qu'aucun animal en soit venu   ce point de perfection d'user d'un v ritable langage, c'est- -dire d'exprimer soit par la voix, soit par les gestes quelque chose qui puisse se rapporter   la seule pens e et non   l'impulsion naturelle. Le langage est en effet le seul signe certain d'une pens e latente dans le corps, -- c'est pourquoi il est permis de prendre le langage pour la vraie diff rence entre les hommes et les b tes." Pl iade ed., p.1320.

(2) La vie de Monsieur Descartes, I. p.52

(3) M moire sur la vie de M. Pascal, p.41.

(4) cf. Sainte-Beuve, Port-Royal (Pl iade ed.), volI, p.757-8

(5) From Beast-Machine to Man-Machine, (New York, 1941)

swell the ranks of the protagonists of the Cartesian beast-machine theory in the first half of the 17th century. The obviously crucial fragment in this respect is completely omitted from her treatment however:

"La machine d'arithmétique fait des effets qui approchent plus de la pensée que tout ce que font les animaux; mais elle ne fait rien qui puisse faire dire qu'elle a de la volonté, comme les animaux." (p.ii56; B.340)

And since in writing her book Mrs. Rosenfield also seems to have been unaware of the conclusion reached by M. Desgrippes, after a very careful examination of all the relevant fragments in the light of the Cartesian doctrine, that there is insufficient conclusive evidence to justify making a decision either way,⁽¹⁾ her ascription is largely invalidated. It is also very difficult to see how a further passage, adduced in support of her thesis, can possibly have given rise to the assertion by which it is introduced: "Another fragment from Pascal's pen testifies to the same attitude:"⁽²⁾

"--qu'y a-t-il de plus absurde que de dire que des corps inanimés ont des passions, des craintes, des horreurs? que des corps insensibles, sans vie, et même incapables de vie, aient des passions, qui présupposent une âme au moins sensitive pour les recevoir?" (p.1136-7)

For Pascal expressly states that it is to inorganic substance that he is concerned to deny 'passions, fears and horrors'. And if Mrs. Rosenfield interprets the passage as implying that he accords a mere 'sensitive' soul to animals, as opposed to the conscious intelligence which characterizes the human species - though the fragment only warrants the conclusion that

(1) Etudes sur Pascal: De l'automatisme à la foi, (Paris 1935)p.103-121. Desgrippes himself inclines toward the negative view.

(2) op.cit., p.216, n.37.

he regards such a soul as the sine qua non of sentience - even this cannot be taken as indicating his espousal of the Cartesian view. For Descartes claims, in the final sentence of his Traité de l'homme, that it is unnecessary in order to account for the presence of passions in any animal, not excepting man, to envisage any:

"--ame végétative, ni sensitive, ni aucun autre principe de mouvement et de vie, que son sang et ses esprits, agités par la chaleur du feu qui brûle continuellement dans son coeur, et qui n'est point d'autre nature que tous les feux qui sont dans les corps inanimés." (1)

And Pascal's colleagues at Port-Royal justified their indifference to the pain inflicted on animals in the course of anatomical experiments, on the grounds that the latter are totally without feeling of any kind. (2)

M. Brunschvicg's attempt to explain away the fragment contrasting the arithmetical machine with animals is both implausible and self-contradictory. He maintains that it would be rash to conclude from this fragment that Pascal attributes the power of volition to animals, in opposition to the Cartesian view established at Port-Royal which he himself seems to accept elsewhere, and continues: "Peut-être ne convient-il de voir là qu'un exemple destiné à mettre en lumière la différence des opérations de l'entendement pur et des tendances de la volonté." (3) But surely any such "tendances de la volonté" must presuppose the existence of a "volonté" in whatever is alleged to exhibit them, and in the case in point in animals! In whatever light this extract may be considered the

(1) Pléiade ed., p.873

(2) cf. Sainte-Beuve, op.cit., loc. cit., and the passage quoted from Fontaine's Mémoires by E. Jovy, op.cit., p.58.

(3) Pensées et Opuscules, ed.min., p.486, n.2.

fact remains, as M. Desgrippes has pointed out,⁽¹⁾ that it would be impossible to imagine a more apt contemporary example of an automaton, to which to assimilate animal behaviour, than the arithmetical machine and that in the one context where Pascal does compare the two it is to bring out the differences between them.

Furthermore, this acknowledgement of a will in animals tallies with the singularly un-mechanistic language used by Pascal in describing animal instinct in the Préface, where he contrasts its essentially static character with the ever-increasing body of knowledge which the human mind is capable of embracing. In illustration, he quotes the stock example of the bee-hive, which has not varied in shape or size over a period of a thousand years, and adds:

"Il en est de même de tout ce que les animaux produisent par ce mouvement occulte." (p.533; G.E.II, p.138)

According to Descartes there is no need to have recourse to any such "occult movement", in order to explain the behaviour of animals, since the motive force in them is in no way different from that of inanimate bodies.

Even this isolated aspect of the mechanistic conception of nature fails therefore to secure Pascal's adherence, and one might speculate how far this can be attributed to his own idea of nature as above all active and developing.

(1) op.cit., p.117-9.

(iii)(c) Nature as active principle

Pascal's statements regarding nature considered in section (a) showed that it constitutes for him a self-contained process, in the sense that it stands in no necessary relation with any agency outside or prior to itself, upon which it is dependent for its existence.

This implies that the word "nature" denotes not simply the physical world, or the things which go to make up that world together with the processes that characterize them, but in addition the principle in virtue of which everything in the world behaves as it does. And several further extracts testify to the fact that Pascal does conceive of nature as not merely active, but as generative and regulative as well. Thus in the Préface, having shown how animals always act in accordance with the dictates of instinct, he continues:

"La nature les instruit à mesure que la nécessité les presse; --la nature n'ayant pour objet que de maintenir les animaux dans un ordre de perfection bornée, elle leur inspire cette science nécessaire, toujours égale, de peur qu'ils ne tombent dans le déperissement, et ne permet pas qu'ils y ajoutent, de peur qu'ils ne passent les limites qu'elle leur a prescrites." (p.533; G.E.II, p.138)

However, it is not only in the life of animals that nature fulfils this role of ordaining principle, but, as numerous fragments from the Pensées attest, in the life of men as well. In the "Disproportion" passage Pascal maintains that, once their position between the two infinities, with all that it entails, has been brought home to men, they will be content to make the most of what it presents,

"chacun dans l'état où la nature l'a placé." (p.1109;B72).

In another fragment an interlocutor is imagined as putting the following questions:

"Pourquoi ma connaissance est-elle bornée? ma taille? ma durée à cent ans plutôt qu'à mille? Quelle raison a eue la nature de me la donner telle,--?" (p.1113;B 208).

Again, in the course of illustrating the effects produced on anyone's attitude by the imagination, Pascal shows how even a venerable magistrate, who appears to judge things on their intrinsic merits without allowing himself to be influenced by other factors, is distracted by the grotesque appearance of the preacher at a sermon:

"Que le prédicateur vienne à paraître, que la nature lui ait donné une voix enrouée et un tour de visage bizarre,--" (p.1117;B 82).

It is nature too that ensures the concurrence of the appropriate emotions with the various states of health through which men pass:

"La nature donne alors des passions et des désirs conformes à l'état présent." (p.1131; B 109).

Even in the case of the two distinct types of cognition, after expressing the wish that all knowledge derived from the "coeur" as opposed to the "raison", Pascal adds in regretful tones:

"Mais la nature nous a refusé ce bien; elle ne nous a au contraire donné que très peu de connaissances de cette sorte,--" (p.1222; B 282).

Clearly nature's significance is considerably enhanced when it is thought of in this regulative capacity. Yet any notion that Pascal's conception of nature as thus active and directive implies a revival of

something akin to the 16th century theory of an 'anima mundi', is rendered untenable by his emphatic rejection of any form of animism. In the letter to Périer, included in the Récit de la grande expérience--, he alleges that one of his reasons for doubting the truth of the belief that nature abhors a vacuum is that:

"--j'ai peine à croire que la nature, qui n'est point animée, ni sensible, soit susceptible d'horreur, puisque les passions présupposent une âme capable de les ressentir,--" (p.393; G.E.II, p.154)

In the final section of the Récit--, having shown that the "horror vacui" is a pure fiction, invented simply in order to conceal man's ignorance, Pascal goes on to say that this is by no means the first time that men, when unable to discover the true causes of phenomena, have substituted imaginary ones, couched in specious terms which satisfy the ear rather than the mind:

"--c'est ainsi que l'on dit que la sympathie et l'antipathie des corps naturels sont les causes efficientes et univoques de plusieurs effets, comme si des corps inanimés étaient capables de sympathie et antipathie,--" (p.400; G.E.II, p.370-1)

And in the conclusion to the two treatises he contends that, since it has been demonstrated that atmospheric pressure alone is the true cause of the effects normally attributed to the "horror vacui", it is now established that nature produces nothing with a view to avoiding a vacuum. He claims that it would be easy to pass on from here to show that it has no horror of one either:

"--car cette façon de parler n'est pas propre, puisque la nature créée, qui est celle dont il s'agit, n'étant pas animée, n'est pas capable de passion,--" (p.457; G.E.III, p.254)

The proviso contained in this extract is highly significant, since it may be taken as showing that Pascal is in the habit of distinguishing between an active and passive sides of nature. This would imply the retention of the scholastic distinction between a 'natura naturans' and a 'natura naturata'.

Opposition to any form of animism also appears in two fragments from the Pensées. The untenable position of those who defend the "horror vacui" thesis is demonstrated by a reductio ad absurdum:

"--pour l'examiner en elle-même, qu'y a-t-il de plus absurde que de dire que des corps inanimés ont des passions, des craintes, des horreurs?⁽¹⁾-- de plus, que l'objet de cette horreur fût le vide? -- Ce n'est pas tout: qu'ils aient en eux-mêmes un principe de mouvement pour éviter le vide.
(p.1136-7; B 75)

Elsewhere Pascal alleges that the readiness men display to account for phenomena by such spurious reasons stems from their own composite nature of body and mind, which precludes them from perfect knowledge of any 'simple' object, whether corporeal or spiritual:

"De là vient que presque tous les philosophes confondent les idées des choses, et parlent des choses corporelles spirituellement -- Car ils disent hardiment que les corps tendent en bas, qu'ils aspirent à leur centre, qu'ils fuient leur destruction, qu'ils craignent le vide, --qui sont toutes choses qui n'appartiennent qu'aux esprits."
(p.1111; B.72)

The foregoing assertions that the objects comprising the world of nature are completely devoid of psychical properties and innate energies, so that it is no longer possible to resort to the age-old device of

(1) cited above, p.58.

explaining the effects produced by such phenomena as air-pressure in terms of various passions, are final enough. But how do they tally, since they also imply that the movements of natural things are imposed upon them from without, with the conception of nature as not merely active but self-ordering and progressive, with the capacity for change and development? The difficulty here is very largely resolved if the proviso noted above: "--la nature créée, qui est celle dont il s'agit;"-- is interpreted as pointing to some distinction between nature as process and nature as the effects which result from the process.

Germane to this question is the notion which Pascal develops of a relation between nature and God. As one would expect he conceives of God as the creator of the material univers, and refers in the Pensées to:

"La conduite de Dieu, qui dispose toutes choses avec douceur;--"(p.1090; B.185)

There is also the line from the "Wisdom of Solomon", quoted in such a significant context in the "De l'esprit géométrique":

"Ces trois choses qui comprennent tout l'univers, selon ces paroles: 'Deus fecit omnia in pondere, in numero, et mensura',--" (p.583; G.E.IX, p.255)

And Pascal's illuminating gloss on a passage from Saint Augustine in the 12th Provinciale:

"--'l'ouvrage de Dieu', c'est-à-dire la nature;--" (p.798;G.E.V p.373)

But when he becomes explicit as to the relation of the deity to the physical world, nature is seen to play a kind of intermediate role linking the two. Thus in the Entretien avec M. de Saci Pascal is recorded as

having drawn a comparison between the way in which Epictetus and Montaigne have succeeded in achieving some degree of resemblance in their writings to: "--la sagesse véritable qu'ils ont essayé de connaître--", and the manner in which nature strives to reproduce God in all her works:

"--il est agréable d'observer dans la nature le désir qu'elle a de peindre Dieu dans tous ses ouvrages, où l'on en voit quelque caractère parce qu'ils en sont les images--" (p.571; G.E.IV.p.51-2)

Natural objects therefore bear a divine imprint in so far as they are images of God, and in addition nature herself attempts to shadow forth God in all her works. The notion of a dual causality is quite unmistakable here, for Pascal makes a clear distinction between nature and God, affirming (a) that nature desires to depict God in all her works, and (b) that the divine stamp is discernible in these works because they are in fact the images of God. And the choice of the conjunctive particle "où", instead of for example "ainsi", indicating that no necessary consequence relates the two statements, suggests that he wishes to emphasize the two causal forces here at work.

Although it should be borne in mind that the above do not represent Pascal's 'ipsissima verba', they are confirmed by the following extract from the Pensées:

"Quand on est instruit, on comprend que, la nature ayant gravé son image et celle de son auteur dans toutes choses,--"
(p.1107; B.72)

Thus all phenomena in the physical world exhibit the image of nature, and more remotely (one presumes) that of nature's own author. And this relation

holds good not only in the physical world, but even in the human sphere, for in the letter to his sister Mme. Périer and her husband, after the death of their father, Pascal writes:

"Ne quittons donc pas cet amour que la nature nous a donné pour la vie, puisque nous l'avons reçu de Dieu;--"(1)
(p.497; G.E.II, p.553)

The notion of God standing as it were at one remove from the world, and working through nature, appears also in a letter to Mlle. de Roannez:

"Les impies, voyant les effets naturels, les attribuent à la nature, sans penser qu'il y en ait un autre auteur."
(p.510; G.E.VI, p.89)

It is clear from this conception of dual authorship that it is through the agency of nature, construed as an active and generative power in its own right, that God penetrates the world with his organizing activity and accomplishes his ends. Nature, in the sense of the physical world, is therefore to be distinguished from nature the active principle, whose activity is the immediate cause of all the productions of that world. The similarity is very marked between nature as thus conceived and the Aristotelean concept of "physis", as it was taken over and developed by the Schoolmen.⁽²⁾ Pascal falls with them between Renaissance hylozoism, which regarded nature as something divine and self-creative,⁽³⁾ and the Cartesian idea of the world as a sort of giant clockwork, which needs an initial push but can then be left to its own devices, Marguérite Périer

(1) Reproduced with slight verbal alterations by Mme. Périer in her Vie, p.21.

(2) cf. A.C.Crombie, *op.cit.*, volI, p.69-72.

(3) cf. R.G.Collingwood: The Idea of Nature (London,1945) p.94.

has recorded Pascal's comment on this conception of Descartes, according to which the first mover, in the shape of an immaterial spiritual being, is dispensed with after his original act of setting the universe in motion, since its movements can then be explained as going on after its own mechanical laws:

"Je ne puis pardonner à Descartes; il voudrait bien, dans toute sa philosophie, se pouvoir passer de Dieu, mais il n'a pu s'empêcher de lui faire donner une chiquenaude pour mettre le monde en mouvement; après cela il n'a plus que faire de Dieu." (1) (B.77)

Whether or not this criticism does full justice to Descartes's doctrine is unimportant for the present discussion, since it suffices to indicate Pascal's attitude toward the mechanistic solution of the problem of divine interaction with the world of nature. (2)

Although Pascal, by means of this conception of nature as a sort of active go-between linking the physical world with God, eliminates any need to ascribe every detail in the behaviour of every natural object to a special ad hoc act of will on the part of God, it is nonetheless clear that he believes God continues to direct his world, which everywhere exhibits his image. Here again there is a marked divergence from the

(1) Mémoire sur la vie de M. Pascal, loc.cit.

(2) The contemporary, outside the Schools, with whose views Pascal's idea of nature as a formative principle would seem to have most in common is Cudworth. In the True Intellectual System Cudworth specifies the function of his 'plastic nature' as follows: "--there is a plastic nature under God which as an inferior and subordinate instrument doth drudgingly execute that part of his providence which consists in the regular and orderly motion of matter--" And just as Pascal, in the passage from the Préface quoted above p. 47 envisages nature as constant and continuously active, so Cudworth alleges in regard to his plastic nature that: "--it goes on in one constant unrepenting tenor from generation to generation--", and that in this it constitutes "--a living stamp or signature of the divine wisdom." Extracts quoted by C.E.Raven, Natural Religion and Christian Theology (London 1953) vol.I. p115-6.

Cartesian view, for, as M. Koyré has pointed out with respect to the ideas elaborated in the Principes, "Descartes' God, in contradistinction to most previous Gods, is not symbolized by the things He created; He does not express Himself in them. There is no analogy between God and the world, no 'imagines' and 'vestigia Dei in mundo';--"⁽¹⁾ Pascal on the contrary, in an early letter to Mme. Périer, refers to the:

"--ressemblance que la nature créée ait avec son Créateur,--"

and contends that:

"--les moindres choses et les plus petites et les plus viles parties du monde représentent au moins par leur unité la parfaite unité qui ne se trouve qu'en Dieu,--"
(p.485; G.E.II, p.250-1)

No mention is made here of nature as the tertium quid, which bridges the gap between God and the things that comprise the physical world. Yet the use of the significant expression "nature créée", to designate things analogous to "nature's works", which are elsewhere sharply differentiated from nature as a creative force, clearly points in this direction.

The references to the way in which God is shadowed forth in all nature's works show plainly enough that Pascal is not concerned to withdraw from nature the support of the concept of God. Indeed he can even on occasion go so far as to affirm that "--je vois bien qu'il y a dans la nature un être nécessaire, éternel et infini" (p.1211; B.469), where the locative preposition "dans" makes it clear that this is so, not in the sense that natural objects by their very existence demand some such being as an ultimate ground, but that this being is in some way discernible

(1) From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe, (Baltimore, 1957) p.100.

actually within the framework of nature. Despite this however, and despite the very obvious similarity between his conception of nature as an active principle linking God and the physical world and that taught in the Schools, it is not true that in his case the study of the physical world points to the idea of God as it did for the scholastic tradition. For it is undoubtedly this tradition, insisting as it did, in keeping with its Aristotelean origins, that theology grows out of physical science in which its roots remain always firmly embedded, so that all knowledge appears in the last resort homogeneous, which is uppermost in Pascal's mind in the Préface, when he attacks the classification of disciplines current in his own day. (1)

This fact in no way detracts however from the dignity and worth with which nature is invested in thus becoming co-partner almost with the deity in the work of creating and sustaining the physical world.

(1) He there emphasizes the absolute barrier separating the "sciences", where reason and empirical observation must be allowed free rein if knowledge is to progress, from those fields where what may be designated 'literary authority' is alone competent to add to our knowledge, and where as a result great stress is laid upon the memory. Pre-eminent among the latter is theology, because authority "--y est inséparable de la vérité, et que nous ne la connaissons que par elle:--" (p.530:G.E.II,p.131) Pascal's uncompromising rejection of the traditional proofs for the existence of God, drawn from the consideration of the physical universe or from metaphysical conclusions, also reflects this attitude.

(iii) (d) Nature's diversity

The idea of nature, which has emerged from the preceding sections, as an active process manifesting itself in the continuity and unity running all through the physical world which comprises its effects, does not mean that the world is therefore devoid of multiformity and characterized only by change and development. Indeed in a fragment from the Pensées, where he extends the conception of nature's diversity to the individual members of the human species, Pascal expressly asserts that uniformity is alien to nature as creative principle. With respect to the influence exerted on anyone's choice of profession by being continually subjected in childhood to hearing certain "métiers" recommended and the rest derided, he notes:

"Tant est grande la force de la coutume, que, de ceux que la nature n'a faits qu'hommes, on fait toutes les conditions des hommes, car des pays sont tout de maçons, d'autres tout de soldats, etc. Sans doute que la nature n'est pas si uniforme. C'est la coutume qui fait donc cela, car elle contraint la nature;--" (p.1122-3; B.97)

On the contrary, it is evident from several further fragments in the Pensées, that the inexhaustible diversity of nature's effects adds to its worth in Pascal's view.

"La diversité est si ample, que tous les tons de voix, tous les marchers, toussers, mouchers, éternuements-- On distingue des fruits les raisins, et entre ceux-là les muscats, et puis Condrieu, et puis Desargues, et puis cette ente. Est-ce tout? en a-t-elle jamais produit deux grappes pareilles? et une grappe a-t-elle deux grains pareils? etc." (p.1095;B.114)

"Diversité. - Un homme est un suppôt; mais si on l'anatomise, sera-ce la tête, le coeur, l'estomac, les veines, chaque veine, chaque portion de veine, le sang, chaque humeur de sang? Une ville, une campagne, de loin est une ville et une campagne; mais, à mesure qu'on s'approche, ce sont des maisons, des arbres, des tuiles, des feuilles, des herbes, des fourmis, des jambes de fourmis, à l'infini. Tout cela s'enveloppe sous le nom de campagne." (p.1095-6; B 115)

"Combien les lunettes nous ont-elles découvert d'astres qui n'étaient point pour nos philosophes d'auparavant!-- Il y a des herbes sur la terre; nous les voyons. - De la lune on ne les verrait pas. - Et sur ces herbes des poils; et dans ces poils de petits animaux: mais après cela, plus rien. - O présomptueux! - les mixtes sont composés d'éléments; et les éléments, non. - O présomptueux! voici un trait délicat." (p.1218; B 266)

The last fragment here clearly impinges on the subject matter of the "Disproportion de l'homme" passage, where the theme of the two infinities discernible on all sides is more fully developed. There too Pascal emphasizes not only the boundless extent of the firmament hidden in the "ample sein de la nature", but also the fact that, however far we proceed in the analysis of the parts of even the most minute organism, we shall still find that they are syntheses made up of complex component parts, and this as far as the powers of seeing will carry us, and on into the infinitely little.⁽¹⁾

Thus despite his belief that nature is "éprise d'unité", Pascal has a deep sense of the irreducible character of the individual species, and of the immense complexity of the phenomena which go to make up the physical

(1) "Qu'un ciron lui offre, dans la petitesse de son corps, des parties incomparablement plus petites, -- que, divisant encore ces dernières choses, il épuise ses forces en ces conceptions, --Je lui veux peindre non seulement l'univers visible, mais l'immensité qu'on peut concevoir de la nature, dans l'enceinte de raccourci d'atome." (p.1106; B 72.)

world. He contrasts, in a cryptic statement, the way in which nature achieves unity in and through such manifold diversity, with the opposite mode of design followed by human art, which models all its productions on a single archetype:

"Nature diversifie et imite, artifice imite et diversifie."
(p.1095; B.120)

The significance of this distinction is made apparent in a further short fragment:

"La nature a mis toutes ses vérités chacune en soi-même;
notre art les renferme les unes dans les autres, mais
cela n'est pas naturel:chacune tient sa place."(p.1102;B.21.)

Nature therefore in Pascal's view does not respond to this sort of manhandling, and thought, instead of trying to explain one property in terms of another, must just accept the world as it is empirically given with the various phenomena all enjoying separate existence. To seek to interpret otherwise is to falsify nature, and Pascal's censure would obviously fall with equal severity on an a priori scheme into which everything is fitted willy nilly, and on one which simply extrudes recalcitrant elements.

The continuity which runs all through its productions does not therefore prevent Pascal from seeing nature as always saying something new, as always enlarging before man's vision. And this infinite richness and diversity, as the language which he uses to describe it clearly indicates, enhances nature's value for him.

Chapter three: Scientific Methodology

(i) The superiority of the geometrical method

Although Pascal's claim on behalf of geometry, that once mastered it provides the key to the path of the secrets of nature,⁽¹⁾ is not substantiated in his own writings, this does not necessarily mean that its value is on that account reduced to negligible proportions, for its methodological superiority is not thereby impugned. On the contrary, Pascal seems to have always retained a high respect for this aspect of geometry.

In a letter to Le Pailleur, written at end of 1647, he shows how Noël's statement, that all substance is corporeal, is emptied of significance since the latter confuses his personal definition of corporeality with what normally goes by that name. He then points out that this confusion becomes immediately apparent if the definition is substituted in place of the thing defined in the statement in question, and adds:

"Je ne m'arrêterai pas davantage sur une conséquence dont la faiblesse est si évidente, puisque je parle à un excellent géomètre, et que vous avez autant d'adresse pour découvrir les fautes de raisonnement, que de force pour les éviter." (p.385; G.E.II, p.195-6.)

No doubt allowance must be made here for the note of flattery which Pascal permits to creep into his language, although he can have had little motive for trying to ingratiate himself with Le Pailleur, who was already a close

(1) cf. above, p.14 ff.

family friend. ⁽¹⁾ Besides, what is important is that it should be le Pailleur's qualifications as a geometer, which are alleged to constitute sufficient reason for not insisting further upon Noël's bad logic. In addition Pascal implies that the ability to detect and to avoid falling into errors in the conduct of reasoning is also contingent upon those qualifications.

Similarly in a letter to Fermat (1654), concerning the question of probabilities, and the celebrated mathematical problem of the "règle des partis", he writes:

"Je n'ai pas le temps de vous envoyer la démonstration d'une difficulté qui étonnait fort M.--⁽²⁾ car il a très bon esprit, mais il n'est pas géomètre (c'est, comme vous savez, un grand défaut) et même il ne comprend pas qu'une ligne mathématique soit divisible à l'infini et croit fort bien entendre qu'elle est composée de points en nombre fini, et jamais je n'ai pu l'en tirer. Si vous pouviez le faire, on le rendrait parfait." (p.80; G.E.III, p.388)

This judgement, that a lack of proficiency in geometry should constitute, even in the case of one who evidently displayed little interest in acquiring it, a serious lacuna in his intellectual equipment, is a significant testimony to the esteem in which Pascal holds the mental training involved in mastering this subject. For in his own terms, this inability to perceive that a mathematical line admits of division ad infinitum simply denotes that M.-'s mind is not logically accurate.

Again, in the dedicatory letter accompanying the arithmetical

(1) Mme. Périer in her Vie describes him as Etienne Pascal's "ami intime". (p.6 G.E.I, p,55.)

(2) Commentators are generally agreed that the person in question here is Méré. cf. Brunschvicg, ed.min., p.176, n.i.

machine, he refers to mathematics as:

"cette véritable science, qui, par une préférence toute particulière, a l'avantage de ne rien enseigner qu'elle ne démontre,--" (p.352; G.E. I, p.301)

The emphasis here is on the method of demonstration used in the "true science", for it is in this that Pascal implies its superiority lies.

Even in the letter to Fermat, dated August 1660, containing the derogatory comments on geometry as an occupation, he still recognizes its superiority as a form of intellectual discipline:

"--pour vous parler franchement de la géométrie, je la trouve le plus haut exercice de l'esprit; mais en même temps je la connais pour si inutile,-- elle est bonne pour faire l'essai, mais non pas l'emploi de notre force:--" (p.522; G.E.X, p.4-5.)

Finally in a fragment from the Pensées, taken up with discussing the question of a suitable order in which to develop his apologetic argument, Pascal notes:

"Ordre. - --Je sais un peu ce que c'est, et combien peu de gens l'entendent. Nulle science humaine ne le peut garder. Saint Thomas ne l'a pas gardé. La mathématique le garde, mais elle est inutile en sa profondeur." (p.1102).

Here, as in the previous extract, the fact that geometry is useless in itself does not detract from the worth of its method for Pascal.

(i) (a) Superiority in demonstration of truth.

In the De l'esprit géométrique, Pascal outlines an ideal method

of demonstration,⁽¹⁾ to comply with which it would be necessary to rigorously define all terms used, in addition to only advancing propositions proved by means of previously established truths. It is evident however that such a method would involve a process of indefinite regression in definition and proof, and is on that account impossible and completely impracticable. Besides, a point is always reached in this process where one comes up against 'primitive' words which cannot be defined, and primary propositions which it is impossible to get behind in order to prove - a state of affairs which Pascal regards as arising, not simply in the nature of the case, but because of the limitations of the human intellect. Whence he concludes:

"D'où il paraît que les hommes sont dans une impuissance naturelle et immuable de traiter quelque science que ce soit dans un ordre absolument accompli." (p.579; G.E. IX, p.246)

The method within the scope of the human mind which approximates most closely to this unattainable ideal is the geometrical, which Pascal designates:

"Cet ordre, le plus parfait entre les hommes, --" (ibid. G.E. IX, p.247)

It consists in keeping to a *via media* ("à se tenir dans ce milieu") of defining only those things not clear and understood by all men, and of proving only those things not known by men. And in order to expound the 'art' of demonstrating truths, and of making them so clear that their proofs cannot be refuted, Pascal claims that:

(1) "--qui formerait les démonstrations dans la plus haute excellence, s'il était possible d'y arriver, --" (p.577; G.E. IX, p.242)

"--je n'ai pour cela qu'à expliquer la méthode que la géométrie y observe: car elle l'enseigne parfaitement par ses exemples quoique'elle n'en produise aucun discours." (p.576; G.E.IX, p.241.)

In the second part of the treatise, having enumerated the rules which comprise "La conduite des preuves méthodiques parfaites", (p.596-7; G.E.IX, p.277-80) Pascal refers back to them⁽¹⁾ in the following terms:

"La méthode de ne point errer est recherchée de tout le monde. Les logiciens font profession d'y conduire, les géomètres seuls y arrivent, et, hors de leur science et de ce qui l'imite il n'y a point de véritables démonstrations. Tout l'art en est renfermé dans les seuls préceptes que nous avons dits: ils suffisent seuls, ils prouvent seuls; toutes les autres règles sont inutiles ou nuisibles. Voilà ce que je sais par une longue expérience de toutes sortes de livres et de personnes." (p.601; G.E.IX, p.287)

Thus in regard to the traditional scholastic logic he claims to wipe the slate clean - the rules which he outlines, derived as they are from the practice of geometry, alone represent the true instrument of demonstration. Traditional logic may have 'borrowed' some of these rules from geometry, "sans en comprendre la force" (p.600; G.E.IX, p.286), or made passing reference to them, but this, far from reflecting to the credit of scholasticism, only testifies with even greater force to the confusion that clouds its methods of reasoning.⁽²⁾ In this way Pascal flatly denies all

(1) In a preliminary conspectus the eight rules are reduced to 'three essential parts': "--à définir les termes dont on doit se servir par des définitions claires; à proposer des principes ou axiomes évidents pour prouver la chose dont il s'agit; et à substituer toujours mentalement dans la démonstration les définitions à la place des définis." (p.596; G.E.IX, p.277). Pascal goes on to claim with respect to the foregoing: "--jamais une démonstration dans laquelle ces circonstances sont gardées n'a pu recevoir le moindre doute; et jamais celles où elles manquent ne peuvent avoir de force." (ibid; G.E.IX p.278).

(2) "Car de l'avoir dit en passant, sans avoir pris garde que tout est renfermé là-dedans, et au lieu de suivre ces lumières, s'égarer à perte de vue après des recherches inutiles, --c'est véritablement montrer qu'on n'est guère clairvoyant, --" (p.601; G.E.IX, p.287)

substance to the claim that the geometrical canon implies nothing new, since it is already included within the corpus of the traditional logic. The fact that he has put his finger on "La source de tous les défauts des raisonnements, qui sont véritablement communs" (p.598; G.E.IX, p.283) - the failure to comply with these very rules - abundantly illustrates just how ill-founded this criticism is. For, if exception be made of those practised in geometry, "qui sont en si petit nombre qu'ils sont uniques en tout un peuple et dans un long temps" (p.598-9; G.E. *ibid*), the 'art' which he expounds represents something quite new, different from anything contemplated by the schoolmen - it is the high road to certainty in demonstration.

And in answer to a further charge, that the geometrical method of demonstration which he has set out is useless in practice, since it is restricted in application solely to geometrical problems. Pascal affirms that in actual fact there is:

"--rien de plus utile et de plus universel" (p.598; G.E.IX, p.282)

The usefulness of this method is amply demonstrated by the fact that:

"Le défaut d'un raisonnement faux est une maladie qui se guérit par ces deux remèdes." (p.601; G.E.IX, p.288)

For the 'two remedies' here refer to the two fundamental principles which he has previously asserted to contain in epitome the whole of the new 'art': to define all words used and prove all propositions, taking care always to mentally substitute the definition in place of whatever is defined in the demonstration.⁽¹⁾ By contrast, the method used by the old logicians to

(1) cf. above, p.77 n.l.

expose the sophisms of captious arguments has been simply to invent a 'barbarous' nomenclature, and to apply indiscriminately a plethora of rules for the conduct of reasoning, with the result that the handful which really do point the way to the desired goal are hopelessly obscured in the tangle. (1)

With respect to the universality of the rules which he has elaborated, Pascal maintains:

"Rien n'est plus commun que les bonnes choses: il n'est question que de les discerner, et il est certain qu'elles sont toutes naturelles et à notre portée, et même connues de tout le monde. Mais on ne sait pas les distinguer. Ceci est universel. Ce n'est pas dans les choses extraordinaires et bizarres que se trouve l'excellence de quelque genre que ce soit. On s'élève pour y arriver, et on s'en éloigne:--la nature qui seule est bonne, est toute familière et commune.

Je ne fais donc pas de doute que ces règles, étant les véritables, ne doivent être simples, naïves, naturelles, comme elles le sont. Ce n'est pas 'barbara' et 'baralipon' qui forment le raisonnement. Il ne faut pas guinder l'esprit;--" (p.602;G.E.IX,p.288-9.)

As M. Brunschvicg has noted, (2) Pascal here does little more than echo and enlarge upon Montaigne's indictment of the "philosophy" taught in the educational establishments of his day - there is the same scorn poured on the barren form of syllogistic reasoning practised by the Schoolmen, the same distrust of an imposing and high-sounding terminology, the same conviction that the 'natural' criterion to be aimed at is synonymous with the simple and familiar. (3) However, what is of especial significance for

(1) And Pascal avers that: "--on ne peut débrouiller tous les replis de ce noeud si embarrassé qu'en tirant l'un des bouts que les géomètres assignent--" (p.601;G.E.IX, p.288)

(2) Pensées et Opuscules, ed.min. p.195, n.i.

(3) cf. Essais (Garnier) I, p.173 (De l'institution des enfants), III p.371 (De l'expérience)

the present enquiry, is that Pascal makes these criticisms and claims against the background of the geometrical method. It is to the methodological tenets derived from the procedure followed in geometrical demonstrations that he expressly ascribes the prized qualities, natural, simple, familiar, which guarantee universal application to the new 'art', and set it as an intellectual instrument within the reach and grasp of all men.

The reason why geometry is considered to be thus uniquely qualified to provide the rules for the logic of demonstration in every field of enquiry, is made apparent in the following extracts. In the prologue to the treatise, the rules relating to the geometrical 'art' of proving each proposition individually and setting out all the propositions in the best order, are alleged to contain:

"--tout ce qui sera nécessaire pour la conduite du raisonnement à prouver et discerner les vérités,--"
(p.576;G.E.IX,p.241, n.2)

And a further claim advanced on geometry's behalf makes it plain that the "truths" here in question do not relate exclusively to geometrical matters:

"--elle (la géométrie) seule sait les véritables règles de raisonnement, et --s'arrête et se fonde sur la véritable méthode de conduire le raisonnement en toutes choses, que presque tout le monde ignore,--"(p.576;G.E.IX,p.242,n.1.)

Once again, having thus affirmed that geometry alone conforms to the true procedural rules applicable to reasoning in whatever context, Pascal goes on to say that it has been empirically established that, among minds of similar calibre, other things being equal,

"--celui qui a la géométrie l'emporte et acquiert une vigueur toute nouvelle." (ibid; G.E.ibid)

These confident assertions, that an account of the *modus operandi* of geometry will bring to light all the principles necessary for the guidance of reason in whatever field, imply that Pascal believes the method followed by geometrical reasoning to be that which reason must use for demonstrative certainty in every field of the knowable. A further extract directly testifies to this belief:

"--la géométrie -- est presque la seule des sciences humaines qui produise d'infailibles démonstrations, parce qu'elle seule observe la véritable méthode, au lieu que toutes les autres sont par une nécessité naturelle dans quelque sorte de confusion que les seuls géomètres savent extrêmement connaître." (p.576-7; G.E. *ibid*).

Despite the obscurity of the final clause here, the basic judgement is clear enough: geometry alone among the sciences has evolved a method adjusted to the inherent nature of the intellect, and one which furnishes a framework within which human reasoning can attain to certain demonstration. Thus in the sentence immediately following, where mention is made of the ideal method, which must remain for ever out of reach of the human mind, Pascal maintains that this is so because,

"--ce qui passe la géométrie nous surpasse;--"
(p.577; G.E. IX, p.242)

The geometrical method therefore exploits to the full the positive faculties of the human intellect as well as recognizing its limitations, and so represents the ultimate, at least in practical terms, in this sphere.

However, despite all this, and despite his contentions as to its usefulness and universality, Pascal himself is not entirely without some misgivings as to whether the geometrical method represents anything more

than an unrealizable ideal outside geometry itself. Thus in the second section of the treatise, before enumerating the rules for the "conduite des preuves méthodiques parfaites,"⁽¹⁾ which involves showing how the particular truths requiring to be demonstrated flow as a necessary consequence from generally accorded principles, he expresses doubt as to whether such rules will hold good outside geometry:

"--comme il y a peu de principes de cette sorte, et que hors de la géométrie, qui ne considère que des figures très simples, il n'y a presque point de vérités⁽²⁾ dont nous demeurions toujours d'accord,--je ne sais s'il y a moyen de donner des règles fermes pour accorder les discours à l'inconstance de nos caprices." (p.595-6; G.E.IX, p.277)

The simplicity characterizing the objects which form the subject-matter of geometry is therefore peculiar to geometry alone. This means that the general agreement as to the meaning and truth of the principles, which have to be accorded as a prerequisite for certain demonstration, will be unattainable in any other sphere. Consequently a set of fixed rules, which lay down the procedure followed in geometry for demonstrating truth, cannot hope to achieve the same success when applied to any other subject-matter.

(1) cf. above, p.77 n.1.

(2) The term "vérité" is synonymous in this context with "principe", as when Pascal a little earlier groups them together "--des principes communs et des vérités avouées." (p.593; G.E.IX, p.274).

(i) (b) Superiority in discovery of truth.

In the brief prologue to the treatise De l'esprit géométrique, Pascal affirms that geometry excels not merely in the art of demonstrating truths already found, but also in the original discovery of truths:

"La géométrie -- a expliqué l'art de découvrir les vérités inconnues; et c'est ce qu'elle appelle analyse,--" (p.576; G.E.IX, p.240-1)

However, he considers it unnecessary to expound this aspect of the geometrical method in view of the exhaustive treatment it has received at the hands of other writers. Consequently it is necessary to turn to his own mathematical writings to obtain some idea of the light in which he regards this geometrical art of discovering truths.

Now whatever else Pascal may understand by this 'art' the one thing which he emphatically does not envisage it as implying, at least in so far as his own discoveries in this field are concerned, is a set of a priori principles in conformity with which all solutions of geometrical problems must be framed. On the contrary he himself seems to be content to allow the particular problem to be the occasion for the formulating of a law that springs almost spontaneously to his mind when applied - a stochastic approach, which finds typical expression in the 'apology' at the end of a short essay, outlining the means of determining if a given number is divisible by some other given number. He alleges that:

"--si j'ai touché ce sujet c'est parce que je cétais volontiers à l'attrait de la nouveauté--" (p.165. Trans.p.1427; (1) G.E.III, p.338)

(1) Of a piece with this attitude is the way in which he refuses to be drawn into discussion upon mathematical problems in which he has no special interest. His lame excuse in a letter to Fermat illustrates this; for, after expressing admiration of the latter's method for solving the puzzle of the

This does not mean to say however that Pascal evinces no interest in the discovery of laws or principles which admit of general application in the special subject matter to which they relate - indeed, if a single unifying theme had to be assigned to his mathematical researches this would have a strong claim to priority. Even the youthful treatise on conics, no longer extant but of which a summary from Pascal's own hand still survives, affords ample evidence of such an interest. For he there claims that, having once established his famous theorem - that the intersections of the three pairs of the opposite sides of a hexagon inscribed in a conic are collinear - he will proceed to set out:

"--des Eléments coniques complets, --quoi faisant, nous énonçons les propriétés que nous en touchons d'une manière plus universelle qu'à l'ordinaire,--" (p.61; G.E. I, p.255)

Mersenne maintains that he did in fact deduce from it more than four hundred corollaries. (2) And when about to enumerate some of the various usages to which his theory of the arithmetical triangle can be put, Pascal writes:

"--j'en laisse bien plus que je n'en donne; c'est une chose étrange combien il est fertile en propriétés." (p.108; G.E.III, p.465)

Two illuminating statements in regard to the art of discovery that leads to the formulation of such fertile principles, occur in the course of

(1) cont. from p.83. "partis", he goes on: "Mais, Monsieur, si j'ai concouru avec vous en cela, cherchez ailleurs qui vous suive dans vos inventions numériques, -- Pour moi, je vous confesse que cela me passe de bien loin;--" (p.90; G.E.III, p.43.1.)

(2) In the preface to his Cogitata Physico - Mathematica, (Paris, 1644)

the treatises relating to the arithmetical triangle. In the conclusion to a cognate treatise on numerical orders Pascal affirms:

"La méthode que j'ai donnée pour la résolution des ordres numériques est tout à fait générale. Cependant je ne l'ai trouvée qu'après bien des recherches.--je cherchais ainsi les racines non pas suivant une règle générale mais suivant une règle appropriée à chaque ordre particulier.-- Puis donc qu'on ne connaît pas encore de règle générale pour la résolution des puissances, je n'osais guère espérer en trouver une pour la résolution des ordres: mais le résultat de mes efforts a dépassé mon attente, et j'ai trouvé la méthode que j'ai exposée plus haut, méthode tout à fait générale,--"(1)
(p.138-9. Trans.p.1408;G.E.III, p.524-5)

The important point here is the account of the genesis of the general method, which, as the context clearly shows, is the equivalent of a principle or law. It does not antedate the initial formulation of the problem, but only comes to light in the course of calculations undertaken with a view to solving this. So that Pascal does not confront the question ready-armed with an all-purpose formula which can be adapted to any field of enquiry, but is led to propound his general rule only when, after treating numerous individual instances, the thread linking them together becomes apparent. The hallmark of the geometrical art of discovery would thus seem to be a flexibility of the reason, which enables a set of categories to be devised appropriate to the subject matter being studied, but realizes all the while that, although these categories are useful in this particular

(1) Pascal continues: "--et qui fut fort goûtée de mes savants amis, amateurs de solutions universelles. Ce sont eux qui m'ont conseillé de tenter une résolution générale des puissances numériques à l'instar de la résolution générale des ordres." This reference to the "Paris Academy", as the source of inspiration behind the search for "solutions universelles", is highly significant, since it emphasizes the stochastic character of Pascal's own approach.

context, they will be of no relevance in another.

The second statement occurs at the end of a short general treatise, where Pascal has extended some other of the consequences of the arithmetical triangle to the subject of numerical orders. The last enunciated proposition is to be left for application to whoever may be interested in exercising his talents in this branch of research, which should claim the attention of all geometers:

"--car si on ne sait pas tourner les propositions à tous sens, et qu'on ne se serve que du premier biais qu'on a envisagé, on n'ira jamais bien loin: ce sont ces diverses routes qui ouvrent les conséquences nouvelles, et qui, par des énonciations assorties au sujet, lient des propositions qui semblaient n'avoir aucun rapport dans les termes où elles étaient conçues d'abord."(p.134;G.E.III,p.511)

Pascal's conception of the function of "analyse" in a geometrical context is presented in a nutshell in this extract. It presupposes an ability to view all sides of a problem almost simultaneously, thus grasping unforeseen consequences, and enabling fresh relationships between propositions to be elucidated. He comments further on this geometrical "analyse" in the fragment from the Pensées, distinguishing between the two different types of "sens droit".

"Les uns tirent bien les conséquences de peu de principes, et c'est une droiture de sens. Les autres tirent bien les conséquences où il y a beaucoup de principes. Par exemple, les uns comprennent bien les effets de l'eau, en quoi il y a peu de principes;--

Et ceux-là ne seraient peut-être pas pour cela grands géomètres, parce que la géométrie comprend un grand nombre de principes,--

Il y a donc deux sortes d'esprits: l'une de pénétrer vivement et profondément les conséquences des principes, et c'est là l'esprit de justesse; l'autre de comprendre un grand nombre de principes sans les confondre, et c'est là l'esprit de géométrie. L'un est force et droiture d'esprit, l'autre est l'amplitude d'esprit." (p.1093-4)

The "esprit de justesse", the type of analytic mind ideally suited to grapple with the problems of physics, and which adopts what may be termed for purposes of classification a method of linear inference, is set in sharp contrast to the "esprit de géométrie", which follows what may best be described as an order of manifold implication. For if the last two extracts are considered together, it is evident that Pascal believes the work of discovery in geometry requires the capacity to grasp clearly in a single mental act a complex nexus of correlative factors, and to perceive the manifold lines of implicatory sequences contained therein.

And yet, although the quality of *mind* prescribed as the sine qua non for geometrical "analyse" is "amplitude", whereas "pénétration" is regarded as belonging rather to the method of enquiry used in physical science, in at least one mathematical context it is this latter characteristic which Pascal claims to prize most highly. Indeed his challenge to the "géomètres les plus illustres de l'univers" (p.180), to furnish a solution to the problem of the cycloid, is specially designed to exercise and appropriately recognize it. In the course of formulating the problem, and having made quite clear what particular cycloid he has in mind, Pascal remarks that one thing remains to be done, in order to make his invitation more acceptable to the geometers to whom it is addressed:

"--c'est d'écarter de notre programme toutes les choses, --qui ne réclament aucune pénétration d'esprit, cette dernière qualité étant la seule dont nous fassions cas, que nous recherchions et que nous désirions couronner."
(p.182. Trans. p.1435; G.E.VIII, p.18)

Obviously therefore the mind must be perspicacious (the phrase "pénétration d'esprit" is a translation of Pascal's "perspicacitas ingenii"), as well as flexible, if it is to accomplish fruitful researches in geometry.

There is a marked contrast between this conception of "analyse", the instrument of discovery in geometry, and that of the art of geometrical demonstration. The latter constitutes a method, a set of universally valid rules which only need to be applied in order to achieve their object, and which level minds and capacities, leaving little or nothing to the differences of intellectual power; whereas the former could more aptly be called an approach, demanding special mental aptitude, and which is improvised to fit the peculiarities of particular subject-matter within the general field of geometry.

(ii) The primacy of "lumière naturelle".

Pascal's profound admiration for the geometrical ideal in demonstration stems in large part from the simplicity which marks the class of objects comprising the subject matter of geometry.⁽¹⁾ It is

(1) cf. above, p.82.

true of course that he considers the "order" followed by geometry, in defining all the things it treats of which are not clear, and proving all those which are not known, to approximate most nearly to the ideal method, and the degree of precision it attains where definition is necessary to be such that there is no need of a dictionary to understand any of the terms used.⁽¹⁾ But quite apart from this, it is plain that he wishes to stress the advantage of the peculiarly transparent nature of the terms and propositions with which geometry is primarily concerned.

Thus in the De l'esprit géométrique, having pointed out that geometry is unable to provide definitions of any of ^{the} things which make up its basic objects - motion, number, space - Pascal remarks that this should cause no surprise, since this "excellent science" deals only with the simplest things.

"cette même qualité qui les rend dignes d'être ses objets, les rend incapables d'être définies; de sorte que le manque de définition est plutôt une perfection qu'un défaut, parce qu'il ne vient pas de leur obscurité, mais au contraire de leur extrême évidence,--" (p.583;G.E.IX, 255).

Likewise in the case of the separate principles: that each of the above concepts is potentially infinite in respect of addition or division:

"Toutes ces vérités ne se peuvent démontrer, et cependant ce sont les fondements et les principes de la géométrie. Mais comme la cause qui les rend incapables de démonstration n'est pas leur obscurité mais au contraire leur extrême évidence, ce manque de preuve n'est pas un défaut, mais plutôt une perfection." (p.584;G.E.IX, p.257)

The significance of these assertions, that the inability to extend the

(1) cf. p.582; G.E.IX, p.254.

machinery of definition and demonstration to such terms and propositions is caused by the very simplicity of the recalcitrant items and their "extrême évidence", lies in the fact that this "extrême évidence" in turn results from "lumière naturelle". For it is elsewhere alleged of the "order" followed by geometry, that:

"--il ne suppose que des choses claires et constantes par la lumière naturelle, et c'est pourquoi il est parfaitement véritable, la nature le soutenant au défaut du discours".
(p.579;G.E.IX, p.246-7)

The simplicity and clarity of those primitive terms like space, time, motion, number, which do not admit of any definition, is thus accounted for in terms of "lumière naturelle". Such terms designate "so naturally" the things they signify that any attempt at clarification would in their case contribute more obscurity than instruction.⁽¹⁾ The human mind when challenged to produce adequate definitions of these simple words finds itself unable to do so, but Pascal argues that the testimony of normal everyday conversation bears out his contention that "lumière naturelle" makes good this deficiency by ensuring that any such term is recognized, and seen as denoting the same idea, by everyone wherever it is in question.⁽²⁾

(1) In illustration of this point Pascal holds up to ridicule the definition said to have been proposed by Plato, of man as a two-legged animal without feathers, and objects: "Comme si l'idée que j'en ai naturellement et que je ne puis exprimer n'était pas plus nette et plus sûre que celle qu'il me donne par son explication inutile et même ridicule;--" (p.579;G.E.IX,p.248).

(2) "--si la nature n'avait supplié à ce défaut par une idée pareille qu'elle a donnée à tous les hommes, toutes nos expressions seraient confuses; au lieu qu'on en use avec la même assurance et la même certitude que s'ils étaient expliqués d'une manière parfaitement exempte d'équivoques; parce que la nature nous en a elle-même donné, sans paroles, une intelligence plus nette que celle que l'art nous acquiert par nos explications." (p.580;G.E.IX,p.249)

The description of geometry's "order", as the assuming of only what is clear by "lumière naturelle", indicates that it is by this means also that primary propositions are known to be true without being proved. And in a context where he has just affirmed that geometry undertakes the demonstration of all propositions not self-evident, Pascal adds:

"quand elle (la géométrie) est arrivée aux premières vérités connues elle s'arrête là et demande qu'on les accorde, n'ayant rien de plus clair pour les prouver: de sorte que tout ce que la géométrie propose est parfaitement démontré, ou par la lumière naturelle, ou par les preuves." (p.582; G.E.IX, p.254).

The only instance cited in the present Treatise of such a proposition "demonstrated" by "lumière naturelle", is that motion, number, space and time are all potentially infinite in respect of addition and division. Positive proof in this case is both impossible and unnecessary, for the intellectual certainty with which the truth of this kind of proposition is recognized is immediate. Indeed Pascal claims of this sort of knowledge that:

"Il n'y a point de connaissance naturelle dans l'homme qui précède celles-là, et qui les surpasse en clarté." (p.585; G.E.IX, p.258)

M. Droz has undertaken an exhaustive examination of the implications of the fragments from the Pensées where Pascal seems to advocate what he describes as the "pyrrhonist" attitude.⁽¹⁾ If seriously intended, this would undermine the certainty of immediate awareness of the meaning of the indefinable terms, as well as of the truth of the undemonstrable propositions, which comprise the very groundwork of geometry.⁽²⁾ However

(1) p.1188-9; B.386, 387, 388, 392 and p.1204-7; B.434.

(2) The argument of these fragments is adumbrated in the Entretien avec M. de Saci, where Pascal attributes to Montaigne the following sceptical approach: "Il demande -- puisque nous ne savons ce que c'est que -- temps, espace,

M. Droz makes plain the extent to which this seeming endorsement of the "pyrrhonist" position on Pascal's part is a deliberately chosen move within the general strategy of the apology, and concludes that it does not impugn in his terms the validity of this sort of knowledge.⁽¹⁾ The statement from the De l'esprit géométrique, that such knowledge is unsurpassed in clarity and priority by any other natural knowledge, therefore stands.

The preceding extracts amply attest the high esteem in which Pascal holds this immediate knowledge. Yet despite this, and despite the fact that "lumière naturelle" plays such a crucial role in his conception of the geometrical method, in assigning the limits to which definition and demonstration are to be pushed, he nowhere in the course of the treatise explains precisely what the terms "la nature" or "la lumière naturelle" signify in this particular context. Furthermore, such information as can be inferred from the passages where these expressions occur is discrepant in regard to an obviously central issue - the degree of conviction which self-evident terms and propositions carry with them, in comparison with those defined and demonstrated with full logical rigour. The fact that, because of an inherent weakness of the human intellect, certain primitive

(2) cont. from page 91. mouvement, vérité, -- ni expliquer l'idée que nous nous en formons, comment assurons - nous qu'elle est la même dans tous les hommes, vu que nous n'en avons d'autre marque que l'uniformité des conséquences, qui n'est pas toujours un signe de celle des principes?-- il examine aussi profondément -- la géométrie dont il montre l'incertitude dans les axiomes et dans les termes qu'elle ne définit point, comme d'étendue, de mouvement, etc.,--" (p.566-7; G.E.IV, p.43-4)

(1) E.Droz: Etude sur le scepticisme de Pascal (Paris 1886) p.183-213. However, M. Droz seems to me to pass into the realm of pure conjecture on this question when he attributes to Pascal the belief that: "Toutes nos connaissances spontanées et intuitives, sont l'oeuvre de ce que nous avons conservé de notre sainteté originelle;--" op.cit., p.108-9, cf. p.198-9, and 255. More recently M. Laporte has advanced a similar interpretation: Le
cont. p.93.

words have to be left undefined and certain primary propositions accorded without demonstration, points undeniably to the conclusion that they will have as a result inferior convincing power. And Pascal affirms that the geometrical "order", when set beside the ideal method of demonstration, is:

"--à la vérité inférieur en ce qu'il est moins convaincant, mais non pas en ce qu'il est moins certain. Il ne définit pas tout et ne prouve pas tout, et c'est en cela qu'il lui cède; mais il ne suppose que des choses claires et constantes par la lumière naturelle, -- la nature le soutenant au défaut du discours." (p.579; G.E.IX, p.246-7).

The capacity of the geometrical method is therefore held to be in some measure defective in producing conviction simply because it is compelled to stop short of complete definition and demonstration - a judgement which reflects back on to the "lumière naturelle". The same point is made in regard to the lack of definition in the case of the concepts forming the subject matter of geometry, which is said to derive from:

"--leur extrême évidence, qui est telle qu'encore qu'elle n'ait pas la conviction des démonstrations, elle en a toute la certitude." (p.583; G.E.IX, p.255)

However, later in the first section, the following "sole and favourable reason" is alleged to account for the inability of geometry to define its prime terms, and to demonstrate its basic principles:

"--que les uns et les autres sont dans une extrême clarté naturelle qui convainc la raison plus puissamment que le discours." (p.585; G.E.IX, p. 257)

(1) cont. from p.92. coeur et la raison selon Pascal (Paris 1950) p.121-2. Neither writer seems to me to produce convincing evidence in support of this view.

This statement is the direct converse of the preceding ones. In them it was precisely in respect of convincing power that such "clarté naturelle" was asserted to fall short of "discours", which in Pascal's terminology denotes the process of definition and reasoned proof. Clearly these conflicting assertions make it impossible to determine with any degree of certainty whether he actually does believe that "lumière naturelle" falls short of "discours" in convincing power. But at all events the primacy of the knowledge that derives from this source, and the certainty which Pascal repeatedly ascribes to it, remain unaffected by such inconsistencies.

More directly consequent upon his failure to specify his exact meaning in using the words "la nature" and "la lumière naturelle", is the confusion which arises between the function of mind involved and the kind of object upon which the mind is directed. For although it is obvious where "lumière naturelle" is in question that the object apprehended, whether term or proposition, is self-evidencing, bathed in natural light, there is no unequivocal statement in the treatise to the effect that any distinctive act of apprehension or power of mind corresponds to this special type of object. That the nature of the object contributes to, and indeed is the factor that determines, the immediacy and certainty with which it is registered cannot be doubted; but it is extremely difficult to ascertain whether Pascal's references to "lumière naturelle" point only to this and no more. If such were in fact the case, the mind's part in the operation would be purely passive and receptive. It would be impossible to speak even of its native capacity for immediate awareness being called into

action, as it were, by the simplicity of the object in question. And this is undoubtedly the import of the last extract quoted, which occurs later in the treatise than any considered previously. The sole distinction drawn there is between the "clarté naturelle" and the "discours", which differ in the degree of conviction they succeed in producing upon the self-same passive "raison" - the latter does not have any special or separate functions or aspects matching the former.

Although "lumière naturelle" in this treatise signifies almost a medium of cognition - that which helps to bring the mind into relation or contact with the object⁽¹⁾ - Pascal does use the term in four other contexts to denote a power of intellectual perception. In the Entretien avec M. de Saci, the phrase "abandonnés à leurs lumières naturelles" occurs (p.565; G.E.IV, p.41), and in the Pensées the expression is used as follows: "Parlons maintenant selon les lumières naturelles" (p.1213; B.233). "Ils ont vu par lumière naturelle" (p.1279; B.556), "nos lumières naturelles" (p.1189; B.392)⁽²⁾ However, this is not sufficient to justify M. Laporte, when he succumbs to the temptation of identifying "la nature", "lumière naturelle", as employed in the treatise, with the "coeur", as described in the Pensées.⁽³⁾ He is no doubt setting the correct interpretation

(1) It is at least feasible that it is in fact the peculiar nature of the object itself which is responsible for thus aiding cognition and ensuring immediate awareness.

(2) In the fragment on "pyrrhonism", from which this last extract is taken, the expression "clarté naturelle" appears to be employed as in the treatise. Similarly with "la nature", in the phrase: "La nature soutient la raison impuissante,--" in a related fragment (p.1206; B.434)

(3) Le coeur et la raison selon Pascal, p.83

on the term "lumière naturelle" as it appears in the above extracts, but the internal evidence of the treatise points to a quite different conclusion for the usage there. The relevant parts of the "coeur" fragment from the Pensées run:

"Nous connaissons la vérité, non seulement par la raison, mais encore par le coeur; c'est de cette dernière sorte que nous connaissons les premiers principes, -- la connaissance des premiers principes, comme qu'il y a espace, temps, mouvement, nombres, est aussi ferme qu'aucune de celles que nos raisonnements nous donnent. Et c'est sur ces connaissances du coeur et de l'instinct qu'il faut que la raison s'appuie, et qu'elle y fonde tout son discours. Le coeur sent qu'il y a trois dimensions dans l'espace, et que les nombres sont infinis; et la raison démontre ensuite,--les principes se sentent, les propositions se concluent, et le tout avec certitude, quoique par différentes voies." (p.1221-2)

Now whereas in the De l'esprit géométrique space, time, motion and number are treated as primitive terms, which do not admit of any definition, Pascal is concerned with them in this passage as propositions, so that the "coeur" grasps intuitively not what these concepts signify, but that they have objective existence. One of the first principles here alleged to be apprehended by the "coeur" - that numbers are infinite - is classified in the treatise as a primary proposition not amenable to demonstration, but nonetheless known to be true through "lumière naturelle"⁽¹⁾ And the primacy and certainty of this immediate knowledge is insisted upon no less in the fragment from the Pensées than in the

(1) It is noteworthy in regard to the remaining example of a first principle -that space is three dimensional- that in a further fragment Pascal refers to the object of pure geometry as space "--dont elle considère la triple étendue en trois sens divers qu'on appelle dimensions, lesquelles on distingue par les noms de longueur, largeur et profondeur--" However, he makes no claim that the fact that space actually is three dimensional is known intuitively, but merely that these underlined terms "sont connus d'eux-mêmes". Nor do any of the theorems, which he there designates as "connus naturellement", contain any reference to that fact. (p.602-3; G.E.IX, p.291-2).

extract from the treatise.

However, despite this and despite the obvious similarity between the epistemological views expounded in the two contexts, if they are set alongside each other it becomes evident that Pascal had two distinct, even if related, aims in view when writing them. In the passage from the Pensées he is concerned to distinguish between two quite separate faculties or activities of mind - the "coeur" and "raison". The former assures us of certain primary data which it apprehends by an immediate, intuitive act, while the latter guarantees as it were our advance from these data by means of "discours" or stringently prosecuted reasoning. In the De l'esprit géométrique on the other hand, it is not two distinct functions of mind that are in question, but two different kinds of objects - terms and propositions requiring definition and demonstration, and terms and propositions which do not admit of any definition and demonstration - and the means whereby in the case of terms they are rendered intelligible, and in the case of propositions they are proved to be true. Thus Pascal asserts in regard to the terms employed in geometry that they are all:

"--parfaitement intelligibles, ou par la lumière naturelle, ou par les définitions qu'elle (la géométrie) en donne,--"
(p.582; G.E.IX, p.254)

and that:

"--tout ce que la géométrie propose est parfaitement démontré, ou par la lumière naturelle, ou par les preuves." (ibid) G.E. ibid).

It is clear from the symmetrical structure of these phrases that "lumière

naturelle" denotes a characteristic of the terms and propositions in question, and not a form of intellectual vision. Besides it would be nonsensical to speak of a word being intelligible, or a proposition being proved, by a faculty of mind; where definition and demonstration can or must be dispensed with this is so because the meaning of the term and the truth of the proposition are luminous to the mind as the result of their peculiar nature.

Moreover, it would be utterly paradoxical for Pascal to maintain in one and the same section of a treatise that our inability to produce definitions of primitive terms and demonstrations of primary propositions stems from a weakness inherent in the human intellect, and that definition and demonstration are unnecessary and impossible in such cases because some native power of the mind registers them intuitively. When he refers therefore to "nature" making good the deficiency with respect to definition, by ensuring that wherever a primitive word is pronounced the same idea is summoned up to the mind of everyone who hears it, and again when he affirms, after marking the limitations of geometry in definition and proof, that "--la nature fournit tout ce que cette science ne donne pas." (p.583; G.E.IX, p.254, n.i.), it would be quite gratuitous to assume that the term "nature" in this context is synonymous with the "coeur" of the Pensées, meaning the intuitive side of the mind. "Nature" here is much closer in connotation to the usage in the Pensées where it represents the ordaining principle responsible for assigning the different objects of knowledge to their appropriate sources.⁽¹⁾ And the means whereby "nature" guarantees the

(1) cf. above p.61.

mind access to terms and propositions not susceptible of definition or proof is, not by awakening in it any innate power of immediate awareness, but by so ordering these objects that they confront the mind in such a direct fashion that it cannot help but recognize them. (1)

Despite his discrepant statements as to the precise source of this immediate knowledge, Pascal's insistence on its fundamental character, regardless of whether it derives from the mind's intuition or rather from the self-evidence of the objects in question, gives at least one element of consistency to his treatment of it. Even if, in the De l'esprit géométrique, the primacy of "lumière naturelle" is essentially the result of the limitations of the human intellect, and so to that extent only a second best to complete definition and complete proof, the fact remains that Pascal himself claims that the whole of geometry is built on the knowledge which it furnishes.

(1) M. Laporte brings out very clearly the fundamental divergence between Pascal's and Descartes's conception of intuitive and discursive knowledge. He notes that whereas the former regards "coeur" and "raison", in his terminology the intuitive and discursive faculties, as radically heterogeneous, functioning in his own words "par différentes voies", the latter's aim is to show conclusively that the mind intuits its first principles and conducts its deductive reasoning by means of the self-same infallible insight, thus reducing deduction to a series of intuitions. (cf. Laporte, op.cit., p.106; also V. Delbos La philosophie française, Paris 1919, p65) Nor does the expression "lumière naturelle", as it is used by Descartes in his Règles pour la direction de l'esprit and other writings, to describe the natural power of discriminating the true from the false, native to the minds of all men, correspond with Pascal's usage in the De l'esprit géométrique, where it denotes a characteristic peculiar to certain objects of mind. (cf. particularly a letter to Mersenne 16.10.1639 concerning Herbert of Cherbury's account of the human intellect. Pléiade ed., p.1059-60) Moreover, in view of the sharp cleavage which Pascal envisages between "coeur" and "raison", it is evident that his conception of "true method", as one that should ideally be able to do without any appeal to intuitive knowledge, is alien to Descartes's basic epistemological tenets. For as Professor Joachim has noted with respect to

(iii) "Démonstration" and certain knowledge in physics.

At the conclusion of his letter to Le Pailleur, Pascal describes the confusion of opinion among those persons who maintain that nature constitutes a plenum, and goes on to point out that it is unnecessary to take the trouble of refuting them since they all contradict one another. Truth is not to be looked for amid such disagreement:

"--l'on ne peut la trouver hors de cette maxime, qui ne permet que de décider des choses évidentes, et qui défend d'assurer ou de nier celles qui ne le sont pas."
(p.390; G.E.II, p.210).

In view of the context in which it is put forth, two highly significant implications can be drawn from this "maxim" in regard to Pascal's conception of physics: (a) true knowledge is attainable in this science, which (b), when properly conducted, deals with "choses évidentes". And this "maxim" is in fact the epitome of a "universal rule", enunciated in the opening paragraphs of the earlier letter to Noël, and designed to avoid any needless misunderstanding over points of method. Pascal claims that this rule applies in all subjects which have as their aim the discovery of truth, and, since the occasion of the letter is a disagreement over a question of physics, it is obviously directed more especially to that field.

"--on ne doit jamais porter un jugement décisif de la négative ou de l'affirmative d'une proposition, que ce que l'on affirme ou nie n'ait une de ces deux conditions: savoir, ou qu'il paraisse si clairement et si distinctement de soi-même aux sens ou à la raison, suivant qu'il est sujet à l'un ou à l'autre, qu'il l'esprit n'ait aucun moyen de douter de sa certitude

(1) cont. from p.99. the Règles: "What he says implies the recognition that so far as intuitus is absent our knowledge is neither genuine nor perfect." Descartes's Rules for the Direction of the Mind, (London, 1957) p.42.

et c'est ce que nous appelons principes ou axiomes; comme par exemple; 'si à choses égales on ajoute choses égales, les touts seront égaux'; ou qu'il se déduise par des conséquences infallibles et nécessaires de tels principes ou axiomes, de la certitude desquels dépend toute celle des conséquences qui en sont bien tirées; comme cette proposition, 'les trois angles d'un triangle sont égaux à deux angles droits,' -- Tout ce qui a une de ces deux conditions est certain et véritable, et tout ce qui n'en a aucune passe pour douteux et incertain." (p.371; G.E.II, p.90-1.)

The Cartesian tone in which this passage is written is misleading,⁽¹⁾ for although Pascal asserts that one should accept as true only self-evident propositions, and what results from following the correct logical expansion of such propositions, he is in reality far removed from the epistemological position of Descartes. For he expressly affirms that self-evident principles or axioms can derive from either the senses or the reason, and implies that it is possible for certain things to confront the senses with the same clarity and distinctness as others confront the reason. Descartes on the contrary, makes it quite plain in the second of his Règles pour la direction de l'esprit, that the reason why the power of knowing attains its perfect realization in geometry, is because the supreme simplicity of the objects there presupposes nothing dependent on sense-observation. By his insertion of the word "sens" in the above context, Pascal thus completely disregards the basic Cartesian distinction between rational intuition and sensible experience.

Since Pascal describes the precepts laid down in this "universal

(1) Pascal himself says of the rule that: "--elle fait la principale de la façon dont on traite les sciences dans les écoles,--" (p.370-1; G.E. II, p.90).

rule" as the "conditions nécessaires pour rendre une démonstration parfaite" (p.372; G.E.II, p.94), hinting that Noël has failed to comply with them, it is evident that he considers it possible to conform to them, and so to achieve "perfect demonstration" in physics. He goes on to examine Noël's supposed refutation of the vacuum thesis in the light of these precepts, and points out that in his attempt to prove the space in question corporeal:

"--vous prenez pour principes deux choses: la première est qu'il transmet la lumière avec réfractions et réflexions; la seconde qu'il retarde le mouvement d'un corps." (p.371; G.E.II, p.92)

These two principles, although Pascal disallows them, are by definition propositions wholly dependent upon evidence furnished by sense-perception. And his rejection of them is correspondingly based on the fact that the former at least "--n'a paru véritable à aucun de ceux qui l'ont voulu éprouver,--" but that precisely the opposite has always been observed to occur: i.e. the only refraction discernible in the light rays which penetrate the space is caused by the glass surrounding it. Noël has simply concluded from the fact that the ray reflected by the glass does pass through this space, and that bodies do take time to fall there, that it must be composed of some material substance in order to transmit such light and cause such retardment. However Pascal claims that:

"--si nous rapportons cela à la méthode de raisonner dont nous avons parlé, nous trouverons qu'il faudrait auparavant être demeuré d'accord de la définition de l'espace vide, de la lumière et du mouvement, et montrer par la nature de ces choses une contradiction manifeste dans ces propositions: 'Que la lumière pénètre un espace vide, et qu'un corps s'y ment avec temps.' " (p.372;G.E.II, p.93).

Until such time as these conditions have been fulfilled, Noël's "proof" remains inadmissible. The "rule" therefore not only sets out the procedure for perfect demonstration, but also acts as the criterion by which to judge the validity of demonstrations already performed. And the implication of what is alleged to result, when Noël's conclusion is referred to the terms of the rule, is that to assert the converse of what appears clearly and distinctly to the senses or the reason amounts to the same thing as to involve oneself in a manifest contradiction.

The opening chapter of Pascal's second treatise illustrates his application to a concrete instance of the tenet⁽¹⁾ propounded in the "rule", that consequences shown to follow with perfect logical rigour ("des conséquences infaillibles et nécessaires") from principles are logically dependent on them, although there is no reciprocal dependence of the principles on consequences. Having postulated the principle that air has weight, he goes on to deduce a number of consequences from it, in respect of which he maintains:

"Il y a une liaison si nécessaire de ces conséquences avec leur principe, qu'il n'en peut être vrai, sans que les autres le soient également: et comme il est assuré que l'air qui s'étend depuis la terre jusqu'au haut de sa sphère a de la pesanteur, tout ce que nous en avons conclu est également véritable." (p.450; G.E.III, p.198).

(1) In his Des principes du devoir et des connoissances humaines, Roberval enunciates an identical tenet: "Il y a des propositions qui d'abord ne paroissent ny fausses ny vraies, comme -- un triangle a trois angles esgaulx à deux angles droits; mais, lorsqu'on fait voir qu'elles sont comprises sous des vérités premières, et tellement conjointes et annexes avec elles qu'elles ne peuvent estre vraies les unes sans les autres, elles sont tenues pour certaines; que si on ne montre aucune de ces connexités, elles demeurent ou doibvent demeurer toujours douteuses." (Cousin, op.cit., p.243). And in his letter to Des Noyers he applies this principle, alleging that in physics the only safe course to follow is: "--dubia pro dubiis, incerta pro incertis habere; nec cuivis placito aut dogmati assentiri, nisi aut lumine naturali ac sensu communi, aut certe evidenti demonstratione ab evidentibus principiis deducta, illud verum esse constat:--" (G.E.II, p.331-2)

Thus it is obvious that Pascal's attitude towards the principle in question is in no way affected by the discovery that it leads to such particular results; and this despite the fact that he takes it more or less for granted as a generally known phenomenon, referring those desirous of additional proof, apart from the significant difference in weight discernible between an inflated and deflated balloon, to writers who have dealt specifically with the question. In such circumstances it would not have been surprising to find him looking to the productiveness of his principle to provide confirmation of its truth, but even here it is only because he accepts the principle first, as clear in itself, that he accepts the consequences to which it leads.

A further indirect illustration of this irreversible pattern of demonstration in physics occurs in the conclusion to the two treatises, where Pascal relates that before experiments had established that water will not rise in pumps beyond a certain level:

"--il n'y avait pas lieu de démontrer que la pesanteur de l'air fût ce qui élevait l'eau dans les pompes; puisque cette pesanteur étant limitée, elle ne pouvait pas produire un effet infini." (p.461; G.E.III, p.263).

The principle that air has weight is certain; but since this weight is limited because the atmosphere is not infinite in extent, it follows that inferences drawn from the principle will be certain only in so far as they take cognizance of this fact and do not attempt to relate an indefinite effect to it - i.e. their certainty does not extend beyond that of the

principle.⁽¹⁾

Additional instruction on the form which a demonstration should take in physics is given in the letter to Le Pailleur. Prompted by Noël's continual confusion of a definition with a proposition, Pascal sets out what he regards as the "véritable ordre" in which things should be treated:

"--l'on doit toujours définir les choses, avant que de chercher si elles sont possibles ou non, et -- les degrés qui nous mènent à la connaissance des vérités, sont la définition, l'axiome et la preuve: car d'abord nous concevons l'idée d'une chose; ensuite nous donnons un nom à cette idée, c'est-à-dire que nous la définissons; et enfin nous cherchons si cette chose est véritable ou fausse. Si nous trouvons qu'elle est impossible, elle passe pour une fausseté; si nous démontrons qu'elle est vraie, elle passe pour vérité;--" (p.380;G.E.II,p.184-5)

Precisely the same "order" is prescribed for a correct geometrical demonstration in the De l'esprit géométrique⁽²⁾ And since it is a question of physics which is being debated, Pascal here carries over into physics, along with the traditional geometrical "order", the geometrical ideal of certain demonstration.

The way in which experimentation is combined with deductive reasoning in order to demonstrate conclusions in physics, is clearly shown in the opening chapter of the second treatise, which commences as follows:

(1) cf. 2nd treatise, ch.III, p.444, where Pascal argues as follows:"Puisque la pesanteur de l'air produit tous les effets -- il doit arriver que, comme cette pesanteur n'est pas infinie, et qu'elle a des bornes, aussi ses effets doivent être limités;--" G.E.III, 225.

(2) "La conduite des preuves méthodiques parfaites" is there alleged to consist in the following three steps: "--à définir les termes--; à proposer des principes ou axiomes évidents, pour prouver la chose dont il s'agit;--" (p.596) cf. above,p.77n.1.

"On ne conteste plus aujourd'hui que l'air est pesant; on sait qu'un ballon pèse plus enflé que déinflé: cela suffit pour le conclure;--" (p.428; G.E.III, p.193)

Pascal's reason for thinking it safe to postulate his fundamental principle in this way, unsupported except by common experience, probably lies in the acquaintance he can presume in his reader with Torricelli's discoveries.⁽¹⁾ That he considers it sufficiently established is evident from the promptness with which he passes on to the business of educing its consequences:

"Ce principe posé, je ne m'arrêterai qu'à en tirer quelques conséquences." (p.429; G.E.III, p.194)

These include: the limited weight of the mass of air, which follows from the fact that the sphere of air is not infinite in extent; the extension, by analogy, of the effects of the weight of water on the ocean-bed to that of air pressing down on all parts of the earth-surface; and most important, the fact that the pressure of air is greater at lower levels, and hence that a balloon half-full of air at sea-level may be expected to expand considerably if carried to a mountain top where less pressure will be exerted upon it. Pascal claims that there is a "liaison si nécessaire" binding these consequences to the principle from which they have been deduced, that it is impossible for the latter to be true without them being true also.⁽²⁾ Yet, however certain these conclusions are found to be, it is desirable to confirm the last consequence by experiment, for if a balloon is actually seen to expand as it is carried higher:

(1) e.g. the passage from the famous letter to Ricci: "Nous vivons submergés au fond d'un océan d'air, et nous savons par des expériences indubitables que l'air est pesant--" Letter dated 11.6.1644. Transl. Ch.Thurot: Note historique sur l'expérience de Torricelli; Journal de Physique, 1872, p.173.

(2) cf. above, p.101. One of the conditions stipulated in the "rule" for certain demonstration.

"--il n'y aurait aucun lieu de douter que cette enflure ne vint de ce que l'air du ballon était plus pressé en bas qu'en haut, puisqu'il n'y a aucune autre chose qui pût causer qu'il s'enflât, -- et cette compression de l'air du ballon ne pourrait avoir d'autre cause que le poids de la masse de l'air; -- et partant cela prouverait absolument que l'air est pesant; que la masse de l'air est pesante; -- Et comme dans la physique les expériences ont bien plus de force pour persuader que les raisonnements, je ne doute pas qu'on ne désirât de voir les uns confirmés par les autres." (p.430-1; G.E.III, p.198-9)

Thus, although it is true in one sense to say that the consequences deduced from the basic principle established by experimentation hang with their whole weight from it, since they remain dependent upon it for their original certainty, they are also supported by cross-reference to further experiments. And the certainty, which Pascal believes it possible to attain by this method, is attested by the sort of language he uses in recording these results. Such phrases as: "il n'y aurait aucun lieu de douter", "cette compression--ne pourrait avoir d'autre cause", "il n'y a aucune autre chose qui pût causer", " cela prouverait absolument," together with the fact that he intends to base the whole of the ensuing treatise on the above conclusion,⁽¹⁾ point to his having regarded the degree of certainty procurable by this method in its demonstrations as equal to any claimed for those of mathematics.

The first letter to M. de Ribeyre contains an admirable summary of this method of dove-tailing induction from experimental data with

(1) A little further on Pascal states with respect to this experiment: "Cette expérience prouve tout ce que j'ai dit de la masse de l'air, avec une force toute convaincante: aussi était-il nécessaire de le bien établir, parce que c'est le fondement de tout ce discours." (p.431; G.E.III, p.200-201.)

reasoned deduction: (1)

"Ces nouvelles nous ayant été en l'année 1646 portées à Rouen, -- nous y fîmes cette expérience d'Italie sur les mémoires du P. Mersenne, laquelle ayant très bien réussi je la répétai plusieurs fois; et par cette fréquente répétition, m'étant assuré de sa vérité, j'en tirai des conséquences, pour la preuve desquelles je fis de nouvelles expériences très différentes de celle-là,--" (p.404; G.E.II, p.482-3)

The procedure which Pascal describes here, as in the previous extract, - establishing the experimental fact as a principle; deducing the consequences it implies; and proving that what is thus found to follow from the fact is in agreement with experimental findings - does not strictly conform to the pattern laid down in the "universal rule". According to it the third step would be superfluous, since the consequences, if deduced with full logical rigour from the principle, are equally with it "certaines et véritables".(p.371) These inconsistencies notwithstanding, Pascal undoubtedly considers the method a fertile instrument for the discovery of certain knowledge in physics.

However, it is not merely with respect to the conclusions arrived at by means of ⁱⁿdeduction from experimental facts, and verified by further experiments, that the language used by Pascal is highly significant. The sort of conviction which he claims is produced by 'crucial experiments' themselves, also shows that he believes it possible to achieve a degree of

(1)Pascal's father seems to have been his precursor in this combined use of induction and deduction. Mersenne, in the course of dedicating the sixth book of his Harmonie universelle to "Président Pascal", remarks: "--cette partie de la Philosophie,--vous est plus obligée qu'à nul autre, à raison du mariage très excellent que vous avez fait de la Pratique avec la Théorie." Quoted G.E. vol.I, p.174.

certainty in demonstrations in physics equal to that attainable in geometry. Thus in the introductory section of the Expériences nouvelles, having listed the various objections which continue to carry some weight with the opponents of the vacuum thesis, despite the success of Torricelli's experiment, he recounts that:

"Je me résolus donc de faire des expériences si convaincantes, qu'elles fussent à l'épreuve de toutes les objections qu'on y pourrait faire;-- (p.363; G.E.II, p.59-60).

In the forward to the Récit de la grande expérience-- he states that his reason for calling it the "grande expérience" is:

"--parce qu'elle est la plus démonstrative de toutes celles qui peuvent être faites sur ce sujet,--" (p.392; G.E.II,p.366)

He claims further of this experiment that in regard to the "horror vacui" notion it provides:

"--une parfaite connaissance de ce que j'en devais croire." (ibid., G.E. ibid.

Again in the first letter to M. de Ribeyre, in the course of outlining the contents of his projected treatise on the vacuum, where the precise extent of his debt to Galileo and Torricelli will be made clear, Pascal affirms with respect to this experiment:

"--il paraîtra par quels degrés on est arrivé aux connaissances que nous avons maintenant sur ce sujet, et que cette dernière expérience du Puy de Dôme fait le dernier de ces degrés." (p.409; G.E.II, p.495)

The "grande expérience" therefore forges the final conclusive link in a chain of discoveries; and when he refers to it in the conclusion to his two treatises, it is in the following almost extravagant terms:

"-- l'expérience qui a été faite sur les montagnes a renversé cette créance universelle du monde, que la nature abhorre le vide, et ouvert cette connaissance qui ne saurait plus jamais périr, que la nature n'a aucune horreur pour le vide, qu'elle ne fait aucune chose pour l'éviter, et que la pesanteur de l'air est la véritable cause de tous les effets--" (1) (p.462, G.E.III, p.266)

And in the concluding paragraph of the Récit--, where he has been again discussing the importance for the problem of the vacuum of this

'experimentum crucis', Pascal writes:

"--le traité entier -- dans lequel je déduirai les conséquences que j'en ai tirées, et que j'avais différé d'achever jusqu'à cette dernière expérience, parce qu'elle y doit faire l'accomplissement de mes démonstrations." (p.401; G.E.II, p.372-3.)

In this case therefore, Périer's experiment carried out on the Puy de Dôme provides the clinching data for the demonstrations of the whole of the projected treatise. Elsewhere in the Récit--, when discussing whether sufficient evidence of a conclusive kind has been produced to justify abandoning the old explanation of the phenomena relating to the vacuum, he affirms:

"En effet, je n'estime pas qu'il nous soit permis de nous départir légèrement des maximes que nous tenons de l'antiquité, si nous n'y sommes obligés par des preuves indubitables et invincibles. Mais en ce cas je tiens que ce serait une extrême faiblesse d'en faire le moindre scrupule, et qu'enfin nous devons avoir plus de vénération pour des vérités évidentes, que d'obstination pour ces opinions reçues." (p.393; G.E.II, p.155)

(1) This merely repeats, with added emphasis, what Pascal has already affirmed at the end of the Récit--, that as a result of the experiments described in the earlier Abrégé--: "--je ne fais plus de difficulté de prendre le principe que la pesanteur et pression de l'air en est la seule et véritable cause,--" (p.400; G.E.II, p.371)

Pascal believes therefore that the sort of evidence which he is in a position to bring forward, as a result of the experiments he has been carrying out, furnishes "indubitable and invincible proof" of the falsity of the "horror vacui" theory. And successful experiments are by implication classified as "obvious truths". A little further on, while describing the difficulty of finally disproving this theory, he speaks of himself as:

"--résolu -- de chercher l'éclaircissement entier de cette difficulté par une expérience décisive. J'en ai imaginé une qui pourra seule suffire pour nous donner la lumière que nous cherchons,-- Vous voyez déjà sans doute, que cette expérience est décisive de la question --" (p.394; G.E.II, 159-60.)

And recounting the gradual stages by which he jettisoned the traditional beliefs, "--cédant à la force de la vérité qui m'y contraint," he alleges that in the end:

"--l'évidence des expériences me force de quitter les opinions où le respect de l'antiquité m'avait retenu." (p.401; G.E.II, p.371.)

Also the letter to Le Pailleur provides two examples of the power of confirmatory experimental data to transform mere opinion into certain knowledge. In regard to Noël's speculations on the capacity of void space to transmit light-rays, Pascal relates that the "opinion" contrary to Noël's was accounted the more likely by other savants:

"--avant même qu'elle reçût les forces que ces expériences lui ont apportées." (p.379; G.E.II, p.182)

Again he writes of Torricelli's conjecture ("pensée"), that the weight of the surrounding air was the true cause of a liquid remaining suspended in an inverted tube, that:

"Nous en attendons -- l'assurance de l'expérience
qui s'en doit faire sur une de nos hautes montagnes,--"
(p.386; G.E.II, p.198)

The belief in the certainty of knowledge attainable in physics by the combined use of induction and deduction, which is amply attested in the foregoing extracts, together with the transference to that domain of the geometrical ideal of demonstration, mark a striking divergence from the views of the anti-Cartesian "school" of savants, ⁽¹⁾ with whom Pascal is generally in such close agreement upon questions of scientific methodology. Mersenne, Roberval and even Gassendi, ⁽²⁾ all sharply distinguish between mathematics and physics, reserving to the former alone the capacity to achieve certain knowledge and true demonstration.

(1)cf. P. Boutroux: L'histoire des principes de la dynamique avant Newton, Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale, 1921, p.679-80.

(2) For Mersenne the essential difference between physics and mathematics lies in the fact that it is impossible to achieve certain demonstration in physics. A demonstration, as Aristotle had laid down, must start from assured principles, and since in physics such principles, so far as the human mind is concerned, are non-existent, demonstration is impossible there. (cf. R. Lenoble: Mersenne, ou la naissance du mécanisme, Paris 1943, p.313) In his Harmonie universelle, after recording one of his experiments, Mersenne gives the following warning: "--je suis bien esloigné de vouloir démonstrer tout ce que je prouve par expérience,-- parce qu'il faut convaincre l'entendement par la raison évidente pour la contraindre d'embrasser une démonstration: ce que je désire que l'on remarque une fois pour toutes afin que l'on ne croie pas que j'use tousjours de la diction démonstrer ou démonstration dans un sens Mathématique: ce que ceux-là concluront aysément qui savent la difficulté qui se rencontre à démonstrer aucune chose dans la Physique, dans laquelle il est tres difficile de poser d'autres maximes plus avantageuses que les expériences bien réglées et bien faites--" (quoted Lenoble, op.cit., p.384). Similarly Gassendi, despite his belief that science must be firmly grounded on "données sensibles", concedes the superiority of mathematics in the matter of demonstration. In his inaugural lecture at the College Royal, he claims that: "--l'usage de la démonstration n'est autre

- (iv) The contrast with Pascal's view of the non-final character of knowledge acquired in physics.

The light in which Pascal regards the conclusions arrived at in physics, at least as this appears in the extracts considered in the previous section, hardly tallies with the attitude which he himself adopts with respect to the discoveries made by that science in other contexts.

In the Préface pour le traité du vide, he states quite unequivocally that:

"Les expériences -- sont les seuls principes de la physique." (p.532; G.E.II, p.136)

And in the conclusion to his two treatises he endorses this view as follows:

"--les expériences sont les véritables maîtres qu'il faut suivre dans la physique--" (1) (p.462; G.E.III, p.266)

These two statements are noteworthy here chiefly for the particular significance which they lend to the following assertion, also from the

Préface--:

(2) cont. from page 112. que la Mathématique, car dans le reste de ce qu'on appelle les sciences, il n'y a point de démonstrations, mais seulement des conjectures, à moins qu'elles ne profitent de quelque lumière venue des Mathématiques". (quoted, H. Berr: Du scepticisme de Cassendi (Paris, 1960) p.96. Roberval too clearly differentiates between the knowledge attainable in mathematics and physics respectively, in a Fragment inédit. (G.E. vol. II, p.50-1) And Mersenne, in his Optique et catoptrique, attributes to someone, "également versé en la Philosophie et en la Mathématique", whom the Abbé Lenoble has identified as beyond question Roberval, the view that, although principles may be all very well in mathematics, none such are available in physics, and that: "au deffaut de tels principes, nous devons avoir recours à une expérience constante faite avec les conditions requises, pour en tirer des conclusions vraisemblables. Et il appelait Science, la cognoissance qui vient des conclusions de la premiere sorte: quant aux conclusions tirées des expériences; il appelait Opinion la cognoissance qui nous en vient." (quoted, Lenoble, op.cit., p.416)

(1) cf. from the first chapter of the second treatise: "--dans la physique les expériences ont bien plus de force pour persuader que les raisonnements,--" (p.430-1; G.E.III, p.199)

"--dans toutes les matières dont la preuve consiste en expériences et non en démonstrations, on ne peut faire aucune assertion universelle que par la générale énumération de toutes les parties ou de tous les cas différents." (p.535; G.E.II, p.144)

By drawing such a sharp distinction between questions where proof takes the form of "expériences", and those where it takes the form of "démonstrations", Pascal directly implies that the methods of induction and demonstration are mutually exclusive, and therefore, in view of the two preceding extracts, that demonstration can have no place in physics. It is nature itself which is responsible for giving this strongly empirical colouring to Pascal's approach, thus in his own terms ruling out the possibility of reaching demonstrative certainty in physics. Although in the Préface-- he is concerned above all to emphasize the ever-expanding character of human knowledge, consequent upon the continuously active object of its interpretation, it is clear that he believes it is also because of this that the investigator must close hand to hand with phenomena if nature is to be induced to reveal her secrets. (1)

Moreover, the conception of scientific knowledge that underlies most of his relevant methodological pronouncements, as something essentially tentative, would seem to exclude, except in the case of a refutation, the possibility of achieving anything in the nature of a demonstration in physics. Illustrative of this are the rules proposed for testing the

(1) "Les secrets de la nature sont cachés; quoiqu'elle agisse toujours, on ne découvre pas toujours ses effets: le temps les révèle d'âge en âge, et quoique toujours égale en elle-même, elle n'est pas toujours également connue. Les expériences qui nous en donnent l'intelligence multiplient continuellement; et comme elles sont les seuls principes de la physique,--" (p.532; G.E.II, p.136)

validity of hypotheses in the letter to Noël. The latter's practice of accounting for the results arrived at in Pascal's experiments by conjuring up a sufficiently elusive substance, whose properties admit of whatever modification may be needful to bring it into line, calls forth the following retort:

"--toutes les fois que, pour trouver la cause de plusieurs phénomènes connus, on pose une hypothèse, cette hypothèse peut être de trois sortes. Car quelquefois on conclut un absurde manifeste de sa négation, et alors l'hypothèse est véritable et constante; ou bien on conclut un absurde manifeste de son affirmation, et alors l'hypothèse est tenue pour fausse; et lorsqu'on n'a pu encore tirer d'absurde, ni de sa négation, ni de son affirmation, l'hypothèse demeure douteuse; de sorte que, pour faire qu'une hypothèse soit évidente, il ne suffit pas que tous les phénomènes s'ensuivent, au lieu que s'il s'ensuit quelque chose de contraire à un seul des phénomènes, cela suffit pour assurer de sa fausseté."
(p.374; G.E.II, p.98-9)

This assertion, that an hypothesis is not necessarily proved veracious just because it accounts for all the phenomena, really means that no amount of positive evidence can ever conclusively confirm an hypothesis, although only one negative instance is needed to conclusively falsify it.⁽¹⁾ In support of his contention, Pascal refers to the various cosmological

(1) Pascal differs radically from Descartes in this rejection of the method of formulating explanatory hypotheses deemed to be verifiable by the products of mere observation. M. Gilson's admirable summary of the way in which Descartes sets about tackling a problem in physics serves to bring this divergence out. Having pointed out that it is their "fécondité explicative", which eventually establishes for Descartes the truth of principles in a deductive chain, he concludes in regard to hypotheses that: "La démonstration d'une hypothèse de physique consiste donc à montrer que ses conséquences régulièrement déduites s'accordent avec les faits; et la seule réfutation quel'on puisse en apporter consiste soit à montrer par l'expérience que les suppositions initiales sont fausses, soit à relever des paralogismes dans la déduction des conséquences que l'on en tire." Etudes sur le rôle de la pensée médiévale dans la formation du système cartésien, (Paris 1951)p.131-2. That the former of these alternatives does not provide for the

explanations which have been advanced. Each of these answers the facts, but only one can be correct; and he continues, addressing Noël:

"Vous voyez par là qu'encore que de votre hypothèse s'ensuivissent tous les phénomènes de mes expériences, elle serait de la nature des autres; et que, demeurant toujours dans les termes de la vraisemblance, elle n'arriverait jamais à ceux de la démonstration."
(p.375; G.E.II,p.101)

The full rigour of the conditions, which an hypothesis must satisfy in order to be accepted as true, or to attain the "terms of demonstration", becomes apparent by contrast with the relative ease with which it can be proved false. After showing that the most favourable judgement it is possible to pass on Noël's "opinion" relating to the vacuum "serait de la mettre au rang des vraisemblables", Pascal adds:

"Mais comme on en conclut nécessairement des choses contraires aux expériences, jugez quelle place elle doit tenir entre les trois sortes d'hypothèses dont nous avons parlé tantôt."(p.376; G.E.II, p.103)

The inference which he plainly intends to be drawn from this statement is that an hypothesis, from which conclusions are deduced contrary to experimental fact, is equivalent to one from the affirmation of which a manifest absurdity follows - i.e. an untenable one. Yet, in view of his express assertion, that no amount of positive evidence of this

cont. from page 115. discounting, in Pascalian fashion, of the hypothesis once accepted, by the emergence of a single piece of contradictory evidence, is shown by Descartes's remark in a letter to Mersenne: "Je me moque du Sr. Petit et de ses paroles, et on n'a, ce me semble, pas plus de sujet de l'écouter, lorsqu'il promet de réfuter mes réfractions par l'expérience, que s'il voulait faire voir, avec quelque mauvaise équerre, que les trois angles d'un triangle ne seraient pas égaux à deux droits." (à Mersenne, 9.2.1639) Thus Descartes believes that once an hypothesis has become established as a scientific law, and has been integrated in his rational framework, it is, so to speak, out of the range of experiments, unless these can be shown to have undermined, by bringing forth fresh data, the initial supposition on which it is based.

kind suffices to certify the truth of an hypothesis, it is not legitimate to continue the inference and equate an hypothesis, from which conclusions are drawn that tally with experimental fact, with one from the negation of which a manifest absurdity follows - i.e. a true one. And since he never undertakes to demonstrate that a manifest absurdity results from the negation of any of the explanatory hypotheses which he himself formulates or takes over,⁽¹⁾ it is clear that Pascal considers physics unable to advance beyond the realm of the "douteuse" and the "vraisemblable".

Pascal's conception of the limits of induction ties in with his insistence that whatever successes an hypothesis may achieve in accounting for phenomena do not serve to establish its validity, whereas only one negative instance is required to prove that it is false. In the Préface-- he sets out a canon of complete induction, maintaining that in order to justify a general postulate regarding any natural fact:

"--ce ne serait assez de l'avoir vu constamment en cent rencontres, ni en mille, ni en tout autre nombre, quelque grand qu'il soit; puisque s'il restait un seul cas à examiner, ce seul suffirait pour empêcher la définition générale, et si un seul était contraire, ce seul--⁽²⁾ Car dans toutes les matières dont la preuve consiste en expériences et non en démonstrations, on ne peut faire aucune assertion universelle que par la générale énumération de toutes les parties ou de tous les cas différents." (p.535; G.E.II, p.144)

(1) For example, Torricelli's "belle pensée", "simple conjecture", which in effect constitutes the groundwork for all Pascal's hydrostatical conclusions, is not established by demonstrating that its negation involves a manifest absurdity. On the contrary it is the positive evidence furnished by the Fuy de Dôme experiment, and the fact that numerous "conséquences -- très belles et très utiles" are deduced from it, which incline Pascal to accept it as true. (p.408-9; G.E.II, p.494-5).

(2) The dots here indicate a lacuna in the text.

This assertion, that no finite number of observations can ever justify a generalization, comes perilously close to depriving induction of any useful function at all in physical science.⁽¹⁾ The context in which it appears,⁽²⁾ makes it quite plain that such a canon is enunciated in order to allow for the possibility of phenomena falling outside the normal pattern of observed occurrence. Moreover, a disparaging reference to "expérience", and by implication to the process of induction, which occurs in the Pensées, indicates that Pascal remained convinced of these limitations to inductive certainty:

"Je puis bien concevoir un homme sans mains, pieds, tête (car ce n'est que l'expérience qui nous apprend que la tête est plus nécessaire que les pieds)." (p.1156; B.339)

Induction therefore can never be the measure of the possible, but is restricted in its coverage to the particular instances from which the generalization is drawn. There is an obvious and close affinity between the reason adduced in the Préface-- for adopting this cautious approach,⁽³⁾ and Pascal's insistence in the letter to Noël that a single piece of negative evidence is sufficient to invalidate any hypothesis, however much it may have been verified otherwise positively.

(1) I can make nothing of W.G.Moore's attempt to explain away this passage by interpreting Pascal's use of the adjective "universelle" to mean that: "Any and every statement about the physical universe is bounded by the known cases; it cannot include cases which may well exist but of which we have as yet no knowledge." (Pascal and the scientific spirit: Cambridge Journal, 1954, p.553). This surely implies the rejection of inductive reasoning, which either means the attempt to establish universal propositions through the examination of selected individual facts or nothing, every bit as much as Pascal's statement in its original form.

(2) cf. below, p.121.

(3) "--puisque, s'il restait un seul cas à examiner, ce seul suffirait pour empêcher la définition générale, et si ce seul était contraire, ce seul--" (p.535).

The final step, of actually affirming that induction is impossible, was taken by the authors of the Port-Royal Logique, who declared that:

"--les seules inductions ne sauraient nous donner une certitude entière d'aucune vérité, à moins que nous ne fussions assurés qu'elles fussent générales, ce qui est impossible;--"(1)

Pascal's exposure, in the conclusion to his two treatises, of the completely groundless nature of the age-old belief that pumps will draw water to any height desired above sea-level, serves to illustrate what these writers describe as an "induction défectueuse".(2) It also sheds further light on his own attitude toward induction. What engendered this belief, which numbered among its adherents Hero~~us~~ himself,(3) was clearly not that those who accepted it had established the fact experimentally, since the attempt to do so could only have disabused them. On the contrary, they had merely observed suction pumps and siphons up to twelve feet long which always worked, and they had never seen water fail to rise in any of their experiments.

"De sorte qu'ils ne se sont pas imaginé qu'il y eût un certain degré après lequel il en arrivât autrement. Ils ont pensé que c'était une nécessité naturelle, dont l'ordre ne pouvait être changé;-- et ainsi tirant une conséquence de ce qu'ils voyaient à ce qu'ils ne voyaient pas, ils ont donné l'un et l'autre pour également véritable." (p.460;G.E.III,p.262)

The last half-sentence here is particularly interesting in the context in view of the contrast it sets up between Pascal and Descartes.

(1) La logique de Port-Royal, (Paris,1869),p.416. For Gassendi's similar views of the limits of induction,cf.G.Sortais: La philosophie moderne,(Paris 1920) vol.I, p.475.

(2) *ibid.* p.345.

(3) Pascal describes Hero~~us~~ as: "--l'un des plus anciens et des plus excellents auteurs qui ont écrit de l'élevation des eaux." (p.460;G.E.III p.261)

For it shows that the former doubts the legitimacy of proceeding beyond immediate experience in physics, and hence of drawing inferences concerning any objects which lie outside its purview. Descartes, on the other hand, affirms in his Principes that:

"--c'est ce me semble, faire grand tort au raisonnement humain, de ne vouloir pas qu'il aille plus loin que les yeux;--"(1)

And he outlines the programme which he has undertaken in this treatise in the following terms:

"--de juger de ce qui arrive en ces petits corps, que leur seule petitesse nous empêche de pouvoir sentir, par l'exemple de ce que nous voyons arriver en ceux que nous sentons, et de rendre raison, par ce moyen, de tout ce qui est en la nature,--"(2)

Descartes's method therefore provides an even better example of the Port-Royalists' definition of an "induction défectueuse", than the groundless inferences of Heron and his followers. Moreover, it brings out by contrast the extent of Pascal's scepticism as to the validity of any line of inference which, starting from observations, assumes by induction that what has been observed is a fair sample of nature in its entirety.

The consequences of Pascal's attitude toward induction and hypotheses for his estimate of the sort of knowledge that physical science can give, becomes clear from the light in which he regards the views held by the "ancients" on questions whose whole aspect has been transformed by recent discoveries. In the Préface-- he points out that most of their false inferences were the result of a lack of experimental knowledge, rather than

(1) Principes, IV, 201: Pléiade ed., p.663.

(2) *ibid.*, p.664.

of any defect in their powers of reasoning, and continues:

"Car n'étaient-ils pas excusables dans la pensée qu'ils ont eue pour la Voie de lait, quand, la faiblesse de leurs yeux n'ayant pas encore reçu le secours de l'artifice, ils ont attribué cette couleur à une plus grande solidité en cette partie du ciel?--N'avaient-ils pas aussi sujet de dire que tous les corps corruptibles étaient renfermés dans la sphère du ciel de la lune, lorsque durant le cours de tant de siècles, ils n'avaient point encore remarqué de corruptions ni de générations hors de cet espace?-- C'est ainsi que, sur le sujet du vide, ils avaient droit de dire que la nature n'en souffrait point, parce que toutes leurs expériences leur avaient toujours fait remarquer qu'elle l'abhorrait:--" (p.534-5; G.E.II,p.142-3)

In each of these cases the fruits of the improved opportunities for observation and experimentation have now removed all ground for clinging to the theories in question. But the significant fact is Pascal's readiness, despite this, to grant that at the time of being formulated they were adequate and justifiable, provided it is recognized that the "ancients" meant to speak of nature only as they knew it. For it follows from this attitude that the only certain knowledge attainable in physics is of a negative kind - the future of existent theories must always remain uncertain, dependent as it is on the non-appearance of any recalcitrant phenomena. Thus it can only be in regard to theories advanced in the past, and since disproved by the results of observation, that one is warranted in considering knowledge indubitable. Finality is not to be looked for in physics. It constantly advances through new discoveries, which take the form of refutations of provisionally accepted theories, to new points of view, themselves always open to rebuttal.

Earlier in the Préface-- Pascal notes with respect to subjects accessible to sense or reasoning, of which physics is one, that the mind's

"--fécondité inépuisable produit continuellement, et ses inventions peuvent être tout ensemble sans fin et sans interruption--"(1) (p.530;G.E.II,p.132)

However, the inability to arrive at any final knowledge in physics by no means stems entirely, nor even chiefly, from this "fécondité inépuisable" of the human mind. Like the tentative character of scientific knowledge generally, it is essentially the result of the ever-active and inexhaustibly subtle nature which the mind seeks to interpret. The fundamental theme of both the Préface--, and the "Disproportion" fragment in the Pensées, emphasizes this fact. Since man's knowledge of the natural world is based very closely on his acquaintance with those phenomena which he is able to observe experimentally, it follows that this knowledge will be conditioned by the limits of his observational capacity. And the completely non-final character of the sciences of nature mirrors the "disproportion" between man's limited powers of observation and the infinitely varied and vast object upon which they are directed. Thus in the Pensées--, Pascal points out that, nature having set her mark and that of her author on all things,

(1) Pascal goes on to affirm that: "--la géométrie, -- la physique, la médecine,-- et toutes les sciences qui sont soumises à l'expérience et au raisonnement, doivent être augmentées pour devenir parfaites. Les anciens les ont trouvées seulement ébauchées par ceux qui les ont précédés; et nous les laisserons à ceux qui viendront après nous en un état plus accompli que nous ne les avons reçues." (p.531;G.E.II,p.132) If the adjective "parfaites" is intended in this context to signify that at some predictable point in time these various sciences will achieve perfection, and with that finality of knowledge, Pascal's thought exhibits an inconsistency. For according to his remarks later in the Préface--, physics anyway will have accomplished the most that can be expected of it in any period, if it revises the theories and conclusions inherited from the previous age, in the light of whatever fresh facts may have been unearthed.

"--elles tiennent presque toutes de sa double infinité." He continues, describing the implications of this for the sciences:

"C'est ainsi que nous voyons que toutes les sciences sont infinies et l'étendue de leurs recherches:--"
(p.1107;B.72)

As far as physics is concerned, this applies with respect to principles as well as to the propositions deduced from them. So-called "first" principles do not reflect anything ultimate in the nature of things, but are imposed on the mind by its own perceptual limits.⁽¹⁾ As if in illustration of the fact, Pascal alleges in the Préface-- that experiments, which alone point the way to knowledge of nature's secrets:

"--multiplient continuellement; et comme elles sont les seuls principes de la physique, les conséquences multiplient à proportion." (p.532; G.E.II, p.136)

It is this inexhaustible potentiality for fresh discovery which nature offers, that justifies the method of scientific advance through the refutation of accepted theories to new points of view. In this way, the knowledge handed on to later generations by the "ancients" has been used as the "steps" by which to advance a stage further, by revising their conclusions in the light of fresh evidence.

"Notre vue a plus d'étendue, et, quoiqu'ils connussent aussi bien que nous tout ce qu'ils pouvaient remarquer de la nature, ils n'en connaissaient pas tant néanmoins, et nous voyons plus qu'eux." (ibid.;G.E.II,p.137)

Here again the implication is that the theories formulated by the "ancients" were as adequate as it was possible for them to be, given the state of their

(1) "Comme nous appelons dans la physique--" (earlier variant)"--nous faisons des derniers qui paraissent à la raison comme on fait dans les choses matérielles, où nous appelons un point indivisible celui au delà duquel nos sens n'aperçoivent rien, quoique divisible infiniment et par sa nature." (ibid.)

empirical knowledge, but that they are superseded once this has been added to by later discoveries.

In view of this attitude, and since he holds that experiments, the sole principles in physics,⁽¹⁾ are constantly multiplying, with the result that there is an ever-present possibility of the emergence of the single contradictory phenomenon, which is all that is needed to upset any explanatory hypothesis, it seems fair to expect from Pascal a readiness to revise such theories as he himself puts forward to account for phenomena, or at least to concede that others will probably find occasion to do so. The following passage from the first letter to M. de Ribeyre, shows that Pascal does recognize that his own findings in physics have no special claim to finality:

"Et comme je suis certain que Galilée et Torricelli eussent été ravi d'apprendre de leur temps qu'on eût passé outre la connaissance qu'ils ont eue, je vous proteste, Monsieur, que j'en n'aurai plus jamais de joie que de voir que quelqu'un passe outre celle que j'ai donnée." (p.409; G.E.II, p.495)

(1) This tentative attitude, with the insistence which more than anything else characterizes Pascal's writings on physics, that experiments constitute the only principles available in this field, where, quite apart from the necessity of comparing deduced consequences with "experiences", general truths themselves require to be both suggested and supported by empirical observation, serves as another illuminating point of contrast between his own and Descartes's methodological ideas. It is true that the latter found himself forced, when he came to deal with the particular facts of the world of nature, to compromise somewhat in regard to his original aim of evolving an all-inclusive natural science based on self-evident first principles, and to concede a not unimportant role to experimentation. However, what he describes in the sixth Discours as "--l'ordre que j'ai tenu en ceci--" (Pléiade ed., p.169), reveals just how far his approach diverges from Pascal's. Thus he relates that he started out with the attempt to discover "--les principes ou premières causes de tout ce qui est ou qui peut être dans le monde, sans rien considérer pour cet effet que Dieu seul qui l'a créé, ni les tirer d'ailleurs que de certaines semences de vérité qui sont

(1) continued from page 124. naturellement dans nos âmes." (ibid.p.169). Having then deduced from these causes "Les premiers et les plus ordinaires effets", which include the basic elements of the physical universe, he desired to descend to more particular effects, and it was at this point that "--il s'en est tant présenté à moi de diverses, que je n'ai pas cru qu'il fût possible à l'esprit humain de distinguer les formes ou espèces de corps qui sont sur la terre d'une infinité d'autres qui pourraient y être si c'eût été le vouloir de Dieu de les y mettre,-- si ce n'est qu'on vienne au-devant des causes par les effets, et qu'on se serve de plusieurs expériences particulières." (ibid.p.170). The abstract method of proceeding is therefore inadequate by itself since, unless one resorts to an empirical test, it is impossible to know what God did actually decide to put into the world. Descartes emphasizes this when he goes on to say that, although his principles account satisfactorily for sensible phenomena, nature's productive power is so inexhaustible, and his principles so general, that it is impossible to determine a priori which particular line of deduction out of all the possible lines actually applies to any individual effect. Appeal must again be made to experiment. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that it is only at the point of practical application of an a priori method of discovery that Descartes acknowledges the need to experiment. And that he regards the scope of empirical investigation as limited to a quite subsidiary role, in comparison with the a priori deductions which are alone capable of furnishing scientific knowledge, is clear from the well-known passage in the Principes (III,4), where he insists that his object is to deduce the reasons of effects from causes and not vice versa. A far cry this both from Pascal's conception of the wholly tentative character of scientific knowledge and the way in which it is acquired, and from his claim that experiments represent the sole principles in physics.

SECTION TWO

Moral values.

Introduction: Morals regarded as more important than mathematics and natural science.

Mme. Périer, in her account of Pascal's life, records that before reaching his twentyfourth year the latter had abandoned his scientific researches and devoted himself entirely to religious pursuits. The chronological inaccuracy of this claim scarcely needs to be pointed out. (1) However, there is evidence in Pascal's own writings of a shift of emphasis from the study of the sciences to that of questions relating to man's condition and destiny, which undoubtedly represents a major watershed in his intellectual development. This evidence, in the form of express statements of a change of interest and of judgements as to the relative value of these two pursuits, shows conclusively that he regards morals as more important than mathematics and natural science.

Even the first section of the treatise De l'esprit géométrique, where he displays such profound admiration for both the subject-matter and method of geometry, concludes on this note. One of the advantages held out to those capable of perceiving that motion, space and number all admit of increase and diminution ad infinitum is that this will enable them to appreciate nature's power and greatness in the twofold infinity observable on all sides, and to learn

"--par cette considération merveilleuse à se connaître eux-mêmes, en se regardant placés entre une infinité et un néant d'étendue, entre une infinité et un néant de nombre,-- Sur quoi on peut apprendre à s'estimer à son juste prix, et former des réflexions qui valent mieux que tout le reste de la géométrie meme." (p.591; G.E.IX, p.270.)

(1) La vie de Monsieur Pascal, p.7 G.E.I p.58-9. In point of fact all Pascal's physics and by far the greater part of his mathematics are posterior to June 1647.

In a passage from the Pensées, which purports to be autobiographical, Pascal writes:

"J'avais passé longtemps dans l'étude des sciences abstraites; et le peu de communication qu'on en peut avoir m'en avait dégoûté. Quand j'ai commencé l'étude de l'homme, j'ai vu que ces sciences abstraites ne sont pas propres à l'homme, --et que (l'étude de l'homme) est la vraie étude qui lui est propre." (p.1104; B.144)

Further evidence of this transition is contained in the letter to Fermat, dated August 1660. Pascal there excuses himself, on the grounds of ill-health, from accepting the former's invitation to meet him at a point between Clermont and Toulouse, and makes the following significant remarks:

"Vous êtes le plus galant homme du monde, et je suis assurément un de ceux qui sais le mieux reconnaître ces qualités-là et les admirer infiniment. --Je vous dirai aussi que, quoique vous soyez celui de toute l'Europe que je tiens pour le plus grand géomètre, ce ne serait pas cette qualité-là qui m'aurait attiré; mais que je me figure tant d'esprit et d'honnêteté en votre conversation, que c'est pour cela que je vous rechercherais." (p.522; G.E.X, p.4)

The almost complete change in outlook which this letter reveals when compared with Pascal's previous correspondence with Fermat is very striking. Not merely is he exclusively preoccupied in earlier letters with geometrical questions, but on one occasion he actually affirms with respect to someone, whose "esprit" and "honnêteté" were unrivalled, that his ignorance of geometry is a ^{fect} desideratum. (1)

Mathematics undergoes a more drastic debasement in the long passage from the Pensées dealing with "divertissement", where it is classified among the pastimes which fall into that category. Dwelling on

(1) cf. above p. 74.

man's need for "divertissement" to prevent him from being overcome by boredom, Pascal notes that something as slight as billiards suffices for his distraction, since the only object he has in playing is to be able to boast of his prowess to his friends. The fragment continues:

"Ainsi, les autres suent dans leur cabinet pour montrer aux savants qu'ils ont résolu une question d'algèbre qu'on n'aurait pu trouver jusqu'ici;--"(p.1104; B 139)

A further short fragment from the Pensées, headed Vanité des sciences, makes a definite comparison between morals and the sciences:

"La science des choses extérieures ne me consolera de l'ignorance de la morale, au temps d'affliction; mais la science des moeurs me consolera toujours de l'ignorance des sciences extérieures." (p.1137; B.67)

In a slightly different vein, but reflecting the same basic attitude, is the following:

"Je trouve bon qu'on n'approfondisse pas l'opinion de Copernic: mais ceci--! Il importe à toute la vie de savoir si l'âme est mortelle ou immortelle." (1)(p.1181;B.218)

These two fragments are especially significant since they point to the notion of utility⁽²⁾ as the criterion behind Pascal's judgements as to the relative importance of morals and physical science. It is obviously this same criterion which is operative in two further valuations. Having cited an example of the perfunctory sort of argument often deemed sufficient to

(1) Pascal's rejection of the metaphysical proofs for the existence of God is similarly based on their alleged non-utility:"Quand un homme serait persuadé que les proportions des nombres sont des vérités immatérielles, éternelles, et dépendantes d'une première vérité en qui elles subsistent, et qu'on appelle Dieu, je ne le trouverais pas beaucoup avancé pour son salut." (p.1281; B.556)

(2) The element of self-interest also implied in such assertions is discussed at length below, p.236 ff.

discount the claims advanced on behalf of the Christian religion, Pascal objects:

"C'en serait assez pour une question de philosophie; mais ici, où il va de tout!" (p.1182; B.226)

And his estimate of Descartes's achievement concludes with the following disparaging remark:

"Et quand cela serait vrai, nous n'estimons pas que toute la philosophie vaille une heure de peine."⁽¹⁾ (p.1137; B.79)

Now it is noteworthy that even Pascal's writings relating to mathematical and scientific subjects are singularly lacking in references to the possible practical application of his discoveries. No doubt the highly abstract character of his mathematics largely explains the deficiency in that sphere.⁽²⁾ Despite the purpose which geometry is shown to serve in prompting man to moral reflexion, by making him aware of his own physical position in the natural scheme, Pascal adjudges it useless in itself. The letter to Fermat continues where the extract quoted earlier left off:

"Car pour vous parler franchement de la géométrie, je la trouve le plus haut exercice de l'esprit; mais en même temps je la connais pour si inutile, que je fais peu de différence entre un homme qui n'est que géomètre et un habile artisan."⁽³⁾ (p.522; G.E.X, p.4)

(1) cf. above, p.31. where the fragment is quoted in full, together with others that bear on Pascal's attitude toward Descartes's "philosophy". M.Brunschvicg points out that Pascal uses the term "philosophie" here in the sense of natural philosophy-i.e.physical science.ed.min.p.361, n.3.

(2) The only reference I have found occurs at the end of a brief treatment of the numerical powers appended to the arithmetical triangle. Pascal there writes:"Je supprime la démonstration de cette règle, que j'ai toute prête, mais qui est longue, quoique aisée, et plus ennuyeuse qu'utile: laissons-la donc, et tournons nous vers un sujet qui promet de rapporter plus de fruits qu'il n'exigera d'efforts."(p.147.Trans.p.1415; G.E.III, p.554-5)

(3) cf. also above, p.75.

However, even in physics the emphasis on practical utility of discoveries is surprisingly slight considering the tendencies of the age in which Pascal lived. ⁽¹⁾ Unlike Bacon and Descartes, ⁽²⁾ he does not seem to have been motivated by a pre-eminently practical aim in undertaking the study of nature. His writings betray none of the hope which animates theirs', that the growth of scientific knowledge will result in the relief of man's estate by harnessing nature to his purposes. Nor is this the end which he looks to in striving after a fuller and surer way of interpreting nature. In the Préface pour le traité du vide he refers to human reason in terms of a stored consciousness capable of indefinite development and increase of content, and insists on the analogous continual overall increase and progress of the body of mankind's scientific knowledge. But even here there is nothing to indicate that he believes any amelioration of man's lot will follow on such progress.

(1) In the Récit de la grande expérience he alleges that in the projected Traité du vide he will deduce "conséquences--aussi utiles que curieuses" from the results of the experiment performed on the Puy de Dôme. (p.400; G.E.II, p.368-9) Again in the first letter to M. de Ribeyre he claims of this experiment that:"Les conséquences en sont très belles et très utiles." (p.409;G.E.II, p.494) In an additional Fragment Pascal propounds a rule for certain of the variations which occur in the effects produced by atmospheric pressure as a result of varying weather conditions, and notes "Cette connaissance peut être très utile aux laboureurs, voyageurs, etc., pour connaître l'état présent du temps, et le temps qui doit suivre immédiatement, mais non pas pour connaître celui qu'il fera en trois semaines: mais je laisse les utilités qu'on peut tirer de ces nouveautés, pour continuer notre projet." (p.467;G.E.II, p.523). Although the fragment concludes here, so that it is not possible to determine the precise nature of the "project" to which Pascal alludes, it is highly significant that he should deliberately neglect in this way to pursue a line of enquiry which promises to be fruitful in practical advantages. Finally, the opening lines of the dedicatory letter for the arithmetical machine show that considerations of utility played some part in its conception: "Si le public reçoit quelque utilité de l'invention que j'ai trouvée pour faire toutes sortes de règles d'arithmétique par une manière aussi nouvelle que commode,--" (p.349;G.E.I, p.298).

(2) cont.from p.131. In the final aphorism of the Novum Organon (II,52) Bacon claims that, consequent on the "emancipation" and "coming of age" of the human understanding effected by his new method of discovery, "there cannot but follow an improvement in man's estate and an enlargement of his power over nature." The Fall resulted in man being deprived of his dominion over creation, but this can be in some part repaired "by arts and sciences. For creation-- is now by various labours -- at length and in some measure subdued to the supplying of man with bread, that is, to the uses of human life." Descartes's dominant concern to promote the welfare of mankind through the study of the sciences is attested notably in the sixth part of the Discours. He there alleges that on recognizing the scope and novelty of some "notions générales touchant la physique", reached through the application of his method, "--j'ai cru que je ne pouvais les tenir cachées sans pécher grandement contre la loi qui nous oblige à procurer autant qu'il est en nous le bien général de tous les hommes. Car elles m'ont fait voir qu'il est possible de parvenir à des connaissances qui soient fort utiles à la vie, et qu'au lieu de cette philosophie spéculative qu'on enseigne dans les écoles, on en peut trouver une pratique, par laquelle, connaissant la force et les actions du feu, de l'eau, de l'air, des astres, des cieux et de tous les autres corps qui nous environnent,-- nous les pourrions employer en même façon à tous les usages auxquels ils sont propres, et ainsi nous rendre comme maîtres et possesseurs de la nature." This is desirable not only in order that man may be able to take advantage of the opportunities which the physical world offers, "--mais principalement aussi pour la conservation de la santé, laquelle est sans doute le premier bien et le fondement de tous les autres biens de cette vie;--" Whence Descartes's intention to devote "his whole life" to the study of medicine - "une science si nécessaire". (Pléjade ed., p.168-9)

Chapter one: "Honnêteté"

(i) The useful as criterion.

Pascal professes to find in "honnêteté" some aspects at least of the utility which he claims is lacking in mathematics and the physical sciences. The criterion of utility, by which the mathematician is adjudged deficient, is precisely that which exhibits most plainly the superior worth of the "honnête homme". A series of fragments included in the Pensées illustrate this preference:

"Il faut qu'on n'en puisse dire, ni: 'Il est mathématicien', ni 'prédicateur', ni 'éloquent', mais: 'Il est honnête homme'. Cette qualité universelle me plaît seule. Quand en voyant un homme on se souvient de son livre, c'est mauvais signe; je voudrais qu'on ne s'aperçût d'aucune qualité que par la rencontre et l'occasion d'en user--: de peur qu'une qualité ne l'emporte, et ne fasse baptiser." (p.1098; B.35)

"L'homme est plein de besoins: il n'aime que ceux qui peuvent les remplir tous. 'C'est un bon mathématicien', dira-t-on. - Mais je n'ai que faire de mathématiques: il me prendrait pour une proposition. - -- Il faut donc un honnête homme qui puisse s'accommoder à tous mes besoins généralement." (ibid.; B.36)

"Peu de tout. Puisqu'on ne peut être universel en sachant tout ce qui se peut savoir sur tout, il faut savoir peu de tout. Car il est bien plus beau de savoir quelque chose de tout que de savoir tout d'une chose; cette universalité est la plus belle." (p.1098-9; B.37)

"On ne passe point dans le monde pour se connaître en vers si l'on n'a mis l'enseigne de poète, de mathématicien, etc. Mais les gens universels ne veulent point d'enseigne et ne mettent guère de différence entre le métier de poète et celui de brodeur.

Les gens universels ne sont appelés ni poètes, ni géomètres, etc.; mais ils sont tout cela, et juges de tous ceux-là. On ne les devine point.-- On ne s'aperçoit point en eux d'une qualité plutôt que d'une autre, hors de la nécessité de la mettre en usage;--" (p.1098; B.34)

The close parallels discernible here with the definition of the "honnête homme" formulated by the most notable seventeenth century exponent of the idea, the Chevalier de Méré, have been pointed out by M. Brunschvicg and other commentators on the Pensées: the same strictures on any inclination to shine, to display exceptional talent in a particular field, the same disparagement of the notion of a special "métier", the same preference for the dilettante as against the specialist. (1) The most important ingredient missing from Pascal's conception as set out in the foregoing extracts, and one upon which Méré insists, is that the prime object of the "honnête homme", and that which secures his own happiness, consists in giving pleasure to others. In place of this Pascal substitutes the notion of utility (2) - the "honnête homme" is to be preferred because he alone will be able to adapt himself to, and so to satisfy, the manifold needs of his fellows. It is this requirement that prompts Pascal's warm recommendation of what he terms "universalité".

In the letter to Fermat also, Pascal's preference for "honnêteté" is linked with the disparagement of the specialist tendencies of mathematics. Not only does he declare mathematics useless, but he further qualifies this judgement:

(1) For Méré's views on these points, cf. M. Magendie, La politesse mondaine et les théories de l'honnêteté, en France, au XVIIe siècle, de 1600 à 1660, (Paris 1925), II, p. 747-782. M. Ch.-H. Boudhors in an article: Pascal et Méré: A propos d'un manuscrit inédit, Rev. d'hist. litt., 1913, discusses very fully the question of the possible influence of Méré on Pascal's conception of Honnêteté. He even suggests the possibility (p. 394) that it was Pascal who provided Méré with some of his basic notions.

(2) Méré also uses utility as a criterion of judgement; for example in regard to the value of mathematics, and even of moral qualities. (Magendie, p. 776)

"Aussi je l'appelle le plus beau métier du monde; mais enfin ce n'est qu'un métier; et j'ai souvent dit qu'elle est bonne pour faire l'essai, mais non l'emploi de notre force: de sorte que je ne ferais pas deux pas pour la géométrie,--" (p.522; G.E.X, p.5)

In thus stigmatizing mathematics as "inutile", and relegating it to the status of a mere "métier", Pascal is clearly using as his yardstick the same conception of practical utility as that alleged in the previous passages to be the peculiar characteristic of the "honnête homme".

The same idea recurs elsewhere in the Pensées, in connection with his emphasis on the importance for ethics of the question of the possibility of a future life. Pascal affirms with respect to those who think to win the esteem of their fellows by 'shaking off the yoke', and showing themselves completely indifferent to the whole issue:

"Cè n'est pas le moyen d'en acquérir, je dis même parmi les personnes du monde qui jugent sainement des choses et qui savent que la seule voie d'y réussir est de se faire paraître honnête, fidèle, judicieux et capable de servir utilement son ami, parce que les hommes n'aiment naturellement que ce qui peut leur être utile." (p.1177;B.194)

The final clause here is strongly reminiscent of the statement which occurs in a fragment cited earlier: "--l'homme n'aime que ceux qui peuvent remplir tous ses besoins."⁽¹⁾ Hence, although the capacity to be of use to one's fellows is not directly predicated of "honnêteté" in the extract in question, as was the case previously, the fact that the two attributes are grouped together in this way may be taken as further evidence that the one implies the other.

Judgements signifying a high value ascribed to the quality of

(1) cf. above, p.133.

"honnêteté" are not however restricted to the Pensées. In the Trois discours sur la condition des grands, in illustration of the distinction which he has drawn between the different sorts of respect which ought to be accorded to "grandeurs naturelles" and "grandeurs d'établissement", Pascal writes:

"Il n'est pas nécessaire parce que vous êtes duc, que je vous estime; mais il est nécessaire qu^e je vous salue. Si vous êtes duc et honnête homme, je rendrai ce que je dois à l'une et à l'autre de ces qualités." (p.619; G.E.IX, p.370)

He then asserts that, in contrast to the mere formal recognition due to rank, "La qualité d'honnête homme mérite l'estime", and that if the person in question has rank without being an "honnête homme" it would be right to have for him "le mépris intérieur que mériterait la bassesse de votre esprit." Quite apart from the express demand for the "respect naturel" of esteem for the quality of "honnête homme", the particular significance of this extract is that Pascal should choose just that quality to typify a "grandeur naturelle". In the terms of his own definition this consists in:

"--des qualités réelles et effectives de l'âme ou du corps, qui rendent l'une ou l'autre plus estimable, comme les sciences, la lumière de l'esprit, la vertu, la santé, la force." (p.618; G.E.IX, p.369)

The fact that ability in the sciences and intellectual capacity are thus classified among the "grandeurs naturelles" but are passed over in favour of "honnêteté" when Pascal wishes to give a concrete illustration, shows that pride of place is accorded to the latter. Moreover, the implication behind the judgement, that a titled person who is not an "honnête homme"

deserves "mépris intérieur", is that anyone lacking the quality of "honnêteté" is automatically convicted of "bassesse d'esprit".

Since Pascal regards "honnêteté" as a "grandeur naturelle", as a "qualité réelle et effective de l'âme", it would seem to follow that it represents a natural endowment, as distinct from an accomplishment to be acquired through any degree of study or application. A rather ambiguous fragment from the Pensées confirms this view:

"On n'apprend pas aux hommes à être honnêtes hommes, et on leur apprend tout le reste; et ils ne se piquent jamais tant de savoir rien du reste, comme d'être honnêtes hommes. Ils ne se piquent de savoir que la seule chose qu'ils n'apprennent point." (p.1104; B.68)

Now this passage can be interpreted to mean either simply that no instruction in the art of "honnêteté" is provided (though it is difficult to see why, if the demand is as pressing as Pascal makes it out to be, no attempt is made to meet it), or that in the nature of the case the task of teaching anyone to be an "honnête homme" is an impossible one. Obviously the latter interpretation, which implies that one is by nature either an "honnête homme" or not, and if not that there is nothing one can do about it, is of a piece with the statements which point to the conception of "honnêteté" as a natural endowment.

Two further extracts from the Pensées refer indirectly to this sort of view. Once again, in regard to those who adopt a nonchalant attitude toward the problem of human destiny, Pascal writes:

"Qu'ils laissent donc ces impiétés à ceux qui sont assez mal nés pour en être véritablement capables; qu'ils soient au moins honnêtes gens s'ils ne peuvent être chrétiens,--" (p.1179; B.194)

"Honnêteté" here seems to have become a matter of good breeding almost, but the underlying assumption that it is a natural quality which inheres in the individual from the outset is still present. The relevant portion of the second fragment reads as follows:

"(Miton) voit bien que la nature est corrompue, et que les hommes sont contraires à l'honnêteté;--"
(p.1200; B.448)

This passage clearly reflects a quite different sort of attitude toward natural man from that which lies behind the judgements expressed in the majority of extracts so far considered. However, its significance at this stage of the enquiry consists in the fact that it underlines the notion of "honnêteté" as a quality which has its roots in nature. For, although men's opposition to "honnêteté" is not directly affirmed to be the corollary of human nature's corruption, the syntax leaves no doubt that such is the meaning Pascal intends to convey.

(ii) "Honnêteté" in the perspective of the "orders".

The positive value ascribed to "honnêteté" has so far been measured solely by comparisons drawn with the qualities which it supersedes in Pascal's esteem; its relation to possible higher terms in his scale of values has not been considered at all. However, since some commentators,

and notably M. Demorest in an ingenious but unconvincing article,⁽¹⁾ have tried to make out a case for regarding "honnêteté" as the stepping-stone to "foi", it seems desirable at this point to examine the precise relation holding between these two terms.

It is sufficient, in order to refute the view that Pascal envisages "honnêteté" as the threshold of "foi", to point out its divergence from the basic notion of the three orders. This specifically eliminates the possibility of any such bridges from the natural order, where "honnêteté" rightly belongs, to the supernatural. But there is ample direct evidence to render M. Demorest's thesis untenable. The counter to one of his main contentions - "l'honnête homme est un chrétien en puissance"⁽²⁾ - is quite simply that this is correct, but that so is any other sort of person. Such an outlook follows from Pascal's conception of the inscrutable character of divine election:

"--cette religion nous oblige de regarder les hommes toujours, tant qu'ils seront en cette vie, comme capables de la grâce qui peut les éclairer, et de croire qu'ils peuvent être dans peu de temps plus remplis de foi que nous ne sommes,--"⁽³⁾ (p.1179; B.194)

I have found nothing in Pascal's writings to indicate that he regards the "honnête homme" as a more likely candidate to receive the gift of grace than any other man. Besides his idea of the infinite gulf separating the various orders is such as to engender the belief that differences on the purely human and natural level are of no account when looked at from the standpoint of the supernatural order.

(1) J.J. Demorest: L'honnête homme et le croyant selon Pascal, Modern Philology, Vol.53, 1956.

(2) art.cit., p.218

(3) cf. also the fifth letter to Mlle. de Roannez, 5.11.1656, p.512; G.E. VI, p.162.

M. Demorest is guilty of a further confusion when he adds:

"Remarquons à cet égard que Pascal, après Montaigne, Du Vair et Guez de Balzac, présente les anciens sous l'apparence d'honnêtes hommes; c'est-à-dire, suivant notre interprétation, comme des préchrétiens."⁽¹⁾ In support of this assertion he cites the following lines from the Pensées:

"On ne s' imagine Platon et Aristote qu'avec de grandes robes de pédants. C'étaient des gens honnêtes--"
(p.1163; B.331)

However, the number of passages to be found in Pascal's works reflecting a harsh attitude toward the virtuous pagans,⁽²⁾ together with the comparisons unfavourable to the ancient philosophers between the moral philosophy taught by them and the sort of conduct inspired by the Holy Spirit in the early Christians,⁽³⁾ set precisely the opposite interpretation on the extract in question. Seen in this light it serves to illustrate the gulf dividing the mere "honnête homme" from the Christian.

Furthermore, in addition to the two "pis aller" references to the concept of the "honnête homme" cited previously,⁽⁴⁾ there is a decisive passage occurring at the end of the Trois discours which is particularly damaging to M. Demorest's case, and which he has entirely failed to take account of. Having completed his advice to the future duke as to how best to use the privileges and discharge the duties attaching to his office,

(1) art.cit.p.218

(2) cf.p.1189;B.432/p.1302;B.466/p.1306-7;B.481/p.1337;B.905/ and below,p.

(3) cf.p.492;G.E.II,p.540-1/p.1256;B.724/p.1295;B.772.

(4) "--qu'ils soient au moins honnêtes gens s'ils ne peuvent être chrétiens."
"--je dis même parmi les personnes du monde-- qui savent que la seule voie d'y réussir est de se faire paraître honnête,--" cf. above, p.

Pascal goes on to say that following out this line of conduct will not however suffice to save him from perdition:

"--mais au moins vous vous perdrez en honnête homme. Il y a des gens qui se damnent si sottement, par l'avarice, par la brutalité, par des débauches, --! Le moyen que je vous ouvre est sans doute plus honnête; mais en vérité c'est toujours une grande folie que de se damner;--"
(p.620; G.E.IX, p.372)

In order to escape this uninviting end Pascal asserts that:

"Il faut méfriser la concupiscence et son royaume, et aspirer à ce royaume de charité où tous les sujets ne respirent que la charité, et ne désirent que les biens de la charité." (p.620-1; G.E.IX, p.373)

The full import of this last statement emerges when it is recalled that Pascal's advice to his young pupil, which if put into practice will result in the latter living as an "honnête homme", is directed toward his future status of "roi de concupiscence". (p.620;G.E.IX, p.372)

Thus the high value which Pascal has been shown to accord to the concept of the "honnête homme", turns out to be an entirely relative one. Although on the purely natural plane this represents his confessed ideal, any attempt to carry it further, and make it appear as if he regards the "honnête homme" as a Christian in embryo, runs counter both to the most fundamental conceptions of his thought and to express statements bearing upon the subject.

(iii) "Honnêteté" and aesthetics.

The extent to which Pascal's conception of "honnêteté" is bound up with his views on aesthetics was evident in the extracts quoted earlier,⁽¹⁾ where the superiority of the "honnête homme's" judgement in the matter of verse-making as against that of the 'professional' poet was continually emphasized. Two further fragments from the Pensées bring out this relation even more clearly:

"Je hais également le bouffon et l'enflé: on ne ferait son ami de l'un ni de l'autre. - On ne consulte que l'oreille, parce qu'on manque de coeur: sa règle est l'honnêteté. Poète et non honnête homme." (p.1096; B.30 and 38)

"Quand on voit le style naturel, on est tout étonné et ravi, car on s'attendait de voir un auteur, et on trouve un homme. Au lieu que ceux qui ont le goût bon, et qui en voyant un livre croient trouver un homme, sont tout surpris de trouver un auteur: 'Plus poetice quam humane locutus es'." (ibid; B.29)

These two fragments contain in germ the two major themes running all through Pascal's pronouncements on aesthetics - the primacy of "finesse" and "sentiment" in aesthetic judgement, and his predilection for the "style naturel". But what is especially relevant for the present consideration of the relation between "honnêteté" and aesthetics is that both "finesse" and the "style naturel" are here declared by implication to be the prerogative of the "honnête homme". The rightful function of the "coeur" in creative literature has been usurped by the ear, with the result that verse has become the preserve of the expert, the "poète" initiated to the approved rhymes instead of the "honnête homme". Obviously therefore when

(1) cf. above p.133.

Pascal asserts that "honnêteté" is the 'rule' followed by the "coeur", it is not the emotive or affective side of that organ which he has in mind, but rather the intuitive or instinctive side, which subsumes the attribute of "finesse" and the activities of "sentir" and "juger". A passage quoted previously makes it quite plain that the "homme" referred to in the second fragment, who emerges unexpectedly in place of the "auteur" as responsible for the work composed in the "style naturel", can only be an "honnête homme":

"Les gens universels ne sont appelés ni poètes, ni géomètres, etc.; mais ils sont tout cela, et juges de tous ceux-là." (p.1098; B.34)

Clearly this adds a fresh dimension to the "honnête homme", and enhances the already relatively high value to which Pascal considers him entitled.

(a) "Finesse" the preserve of the "honnête homme".

The importance assumed by the category of "finesse" in Pascal's views on aesthetics is brought out very plainly in a rather obscure fragment from the Pensées:

"Géométrie, finesse. - La vraie éloquence se moque de l'éloquence, la vraie morale se moque de la morale; c'est-à-dire que la morale du jugement se moque de la morale de l'esprit, qui est sans règles.

Car le jugement est celui à qui appartient le sentiment, comme les sciences appartiennent à l'esprit. La finesse est la part du jugement, la géométrie est celle de l'esprit." (p.1094; B.4.)

There appears to be no justification here for Brunschvicg's opinion that the qualifying relative clause in the first paragraph, "qui est sans règles", applies to the "morale du jugement" and not to the "morale de l'esprit".⁽¹⁾ Quite apart from the grammatical and stylistic arguments against such a clumsy usage, the fragment makes much better sense if the true eloquence and true ethics, based on "jugement", which poke fun at the eloquence and ethics based on rational principles, are regarded as superior in that the latter have in fact no "règles" on which to ground themselves.⁽²⁾ The gist of the passage is clear enough - according to Pascal there can be no true ethics or eloquence which depends on the "esprit" (used here exclusively in the sense of the faculty whose function it is to carry on discursive reasoning). Since ethics and eloquence belong to the domain of "sentiment" and "jugement", the "esprit" will be unable to discover there any palpable principles from which to draw its logical inferences.

The apparent paradox involved in these assertions disappears when the sharp distinction drawn by Pascal between what he designates the "esprit de finesse", and the "esprit de géométrie", is borne in mind. This distinction is readily discernible, he claims, in the principles peculiar to the two types of mind in question - those appropriate to geometry are

(1) ed.min., p321, n.2.

(2) One of the previously unedited "pensées" 'discovered' by M. Jean Mesnard in 1962 corroborates this interpretation: "Les philosophes de l'Ecole parlent de la vertu et les rhéteurs de l'éloquence sans les connaître. Présentez aux uns un homme véritablement vertueux mais sans éclat, et aux autres un discours plein de beautés naturelles mais sans pointes: ils n'y entendront rien". Blaise Pascal: Textes inédits, (Paris, 1962), p.32-3.

'palpable' but recondite, while those with which the "esprit de finesse" is concerned are commonplace and easily accessible: the former demand a somewhat unusual application of mind but no special aptitude, whereas the latter require merely very clear mental vision. (p.1092-3; B.1) In contrast to geometry, where principles are clear and "gross", and where deduction commences only after they have been carefully examined and arranged, in matters of "finesse":

"On les voit à peine, on les sent plutôt qu'on ne les voit; on a des peines infinies à les faire sentir à ceux qui ne les sentent pas d'eux-mêmes; ce sont choses tellement délicates et si nombreuses, qu'il faut un sens bien délicat et bien net pour les sentir, et juger droit et juste selon ce sentiment, sans pouvoir le plus souvent les démontrer par ordre comme en géométrie, -- il faut tout d'un coup voir la chose d'un seul regard, et non pas par progrès de raisonnement, au moins jusqu'à un certain degré." (p.1092; B.1)

Thus Pascal uses the verb "sentir" to denote the apprehensive act appropriate to principles in questions of "finesse", and qualifies this further by prescribing a "sens bien délicat et bien net" as essential to the operation. When the principles have been apprehended - i.e. when the "sentiment" is completed - a true and accurate judgement must be made in the light of it. Two distinct operations are therefore specified here: first, the apprehension of the principles, and then the judgement exercised in the light of this prior "sentiment" as it is described. Since these principles have been grasped "d'un seul regard", and not in a linear sequence, it is impossible to demonstrate them in geometrical fashion, setting out all the intermediate stages.

An even more radical distinction between the two types of mind is set out in the following fragment:

"Ceux qui sont accoutumés à juger par le sentiment ne comprennent rien aux choses de raisonnement, car ils veulent d'abord pénétrer d'une vue et ne sont point accoutumés à chercher les principes. Et les autres, au contraire, qui sont accoutumés à raisonner par principes, ne comprennent rien aux choses de sentiment, y cherchant des principes, et ne pouvant voir d'une vue." (p.1094; B.3)

The minds classified under "finesse" find themselves at a loss in questions requiring familiarity with the processes of "raisonnement", for the immediacy which characterizes their judgements disqualifies them for the task of reasoned analysis of principles. In this way Pascal confines the entire activity of the "esprit de finesse" to the "sentiment", the act of immediate apprehension, separating it off completely from all discursive reasoning. And the phrase, "juger par sentiment", here carries a quite different meaning from the similar one in the other extract - "juger droit et juste selon ce sentiment" - where the context requires that some exercise of reasoning be involved in this act. The different prepositions used in the two phrases provide the clue to the divergence. "Selon" indicates that two successive operations occur, since if a judgement is to be made in the light of, or in accordance with, a "sentiment", this necessarily implies that the "sentiment" is already completed before the judging commences. "Par" on the other hand, is employed to designate the means whereby the judgement is made. In the first passage therefore, as already noted, Pascal uses the verb "juger" of the operation which succeeds the original registering of the "sentiment"; whereas in the second "juger"

is actually identified with the "sentiment" - the "sentiment" constitutes the mental operation, if it can be so described, which issues in a judgement. The primacy ascribed to "judgement" in the extract "Géométrie, finesse",⁽¹⁾ appears to be merely an emphasizing of the fact that in matters of "finesse" "judgement" and "sentiment" are indistinguishable - one's judgement in a given instance actually is a sentiment.

Thus, in refusing to allow any place to the "esprit", denoting the ratiocinative faculty, in ethics and aesthetics ('eloquence' is defined in the Pensées as "une peinture de la pensée" p.1099; B.26) Pascal is no more than consistent, since he regards these as two fields where decisions must be made spontaneously, "d'une vue", without resorting to the apparatus of definition and deductive processes.

Now the significance of all this for Pascal's estimate of the "honnête homme" becomes apparent when it is recalled that the "règle", to which the "esprit de finesse" conforms in aesthetic judgements, is "honnêteté". The advantage which he considers the "honnête homme" enjoys as the result of this fact can be inferred from the following statement:

"Ceux qui jugent d'un ouvrage sans règle sont, à l'égard des autres, comme ceux qui ont une montre à l'égard des autres. L'un dit: 'Il y a deux heures' l'autre dit: 'Il n'y a que trois quarts d'heure'. Je regarde ma montre, et je dis à l'un: 'Vous vous ennuyez', et à l'autre: 'Le temps ne vous dure guère'; car il y a une heure et demie; et je me moque de ceux qui me disent que le temps me dure à moi, et que j'en juge par ma fantaisie: ils ne savent pas que j'en juge par ma montre". (p.1095; B5)

(1) Quoted above, p.143.

Most of Pascal's editors have corrected the first sentence here, making the final verb in it negative. Indeed the fragment is quite meaningless if it is not his intention to point out the advantage of having some standard of judgement in literature and art, by analogy with that which a person in possession of a watch has over those without one when a debate arises as to the amount of time that has passed. It follows from what has gone before that any non-"honnête homme" faced with a work of art must find himself in a position parallel to that of a person who is forced to simply guess at the time which has elapsed.

A further fragment brings out by implication yet another advantage attaching to the attribute of "honnêteté" where aesthetics are concerned.

"Comme on se gâte l'esprit, on se gâte aussi le sentiment. On se forme l'esprit et le sentiment par les conversations. Ainsi les bonnes ou les mauvaises le forment ou le gâtent. Il importe donc de tout de les savoir choisir, pour se le former et ne le point gâter; et on ne peut faire ce choix, si on ne l'a déjà formé et point gâté. Ainsi cela fait un cercle, d'où sont bien heureux ceux qui sortent."(p.1095;B 6)

The "honnête homme" however, breaks out of this circle, or rather is never implicated in it since "honnêteté", in Pascal's own terms a natural endowment, is the model, the "règle", on which the "sentiment", here obviously equivalent to taste, should be formed.

(b) "Style naturel" the preserve of the "honnête homme".

The quality which secures the admiration of the "honnête homme" in whatever he finds aesthetically pleasing, is detailed by Pascal as follows:

"Il y a un certain modèle d'agrément et de beauté qui consiste en un certain rapport entre notre nature, faible ou forte, telle qu'elle est, et la chose qui nous plaît. Tout ce qui est formé sur ce modèle nous agrée: soit maison, chanson, discours, vers, prose, femme, oiseaux, rivières, arbres, chambres, habits, etc. Tout ce qui n'est point fait sur ce modèle déplaît à ceux qui ont le goût bon." (p.1097; B.32)

It is a legitimate, and indeed necessary, inference from the foregoing discussion that those who are described here as having good taste are synonymous with the "honnêtes gens". Conformity to the "modèle" outlined in this fragment can therefore be said to represent the "honnête homme's" criterion in aesthetics. However, the description of this "modèle" raises difficulties. There would not appear to be any devastating objection to positing a spontaneously felt relation between a perceiving subject and object as a model of what is agreeable or beautiful. Nor is it merely tautologous and equivalent to affirming that what affords pleasure is in fact pleasing to the aesthetic sense, but means simply that in a given instance a particular object is found to be beautiful or pleasing because it establishes a particular form of relation. But if this "modèle" is to be used as a norm by which to evaluate the beauty of individual objects, then clearly the real test will be whether or not they evoke this special sort of relation. Thus when Pascal goes on to say that: "Tout ce qui est

formé sur ce modèle nous agréé", he involves himself in a contradiction in terms. To speak of an object being modelled on a relation amounts to just this, since, in the sense in which he has been using that term, it signifies no more than the way in which a particular object and its judging subject stand to each other. If Pascal wished to retain this notion of a relation constituting the "modèle" of what is beautiful, he should have substituted in place of the above phrase something akin to the following: 'All things which are so formed that they set up this special sort of relation are pleasing to us'. However, in this case a further "modèle", independent of the relation, would be required upon which to design things so that they will induce the relation, for obviously, as it is described by Pascal, it is evoked by, and must be attached to, some special quality in the object concerned.

The confusion which marks this fragment would seem to indicate that Pascal never really thought out the implications of his basic ideas in aesthetics. But what does come out in striking fashion even here is the importance assumed by the sort of person who fills the role of judging subject in the relation. As he defines it, the character of this relation never depends upon just one of the terms involved, but is conditioned by the way in which the two terms ("notre nature" and "la chose qui nous plaît") mutually affect each other. Indeed the logical outcome of his "modèle" notion would be that, apart from establishing as a universally valid phenomenon the fact of the relation between subject and object as the basis of aesthetic appreciation, there can be no absolute standard of beauty.

Since human nature as he depicts it is the very opposite of invariable, the criterion or "modèle" will vary with the individual in question.

Pascal however is not content to leave the matter there. Further on in the same fragment he condemns as being in bad taste sonnets composed on a model he deems false, and a woman dressed in what appears to him an outrageous garb, even though if he were strictly consistent he must recognize that, provided the sonnets are found aesthetically pleasing by someone, his own criterion of the "rapport entre notre nature -- et la chose qui nous plaît" is satisfied. Clearly in the case of the sonnets and the female attire Pascal considers there is something defective in the judgement of the persons concerned; and behind his criticisms of contemporary literary style lies the conviction that the wrong sort of persons have undue influence in moulding literary taste: "Poète et non honnête homme". (p.1096; B.38) Thus in a long passage he calls attention to the way in which, as it seems to him, current fashion has so blinded the general taste that the true model of poetic diction is in danger of disappearing:

"Beauté poétique. - Comme on dit beauté poétique, on devrait aussi dire beauté géométrique, et beauté médicinale; mais on ne le dit pas: et la raison en est qu'on sait bien quel est l'objet de la médecine, et qu'il consiste en la guérison, -- mais on ne sait pas en quoi consiste l'agrément, qui est l'objet de la poésie. On ne sait ce que c'est que ce modèle naturel qu'il faut imiter; et, à faute de cette connaissance, on a inventé de certains termes bizarres: 'siècle d'or, merveille de nos jours, fatal', etc.; et on appelle ce jargon beauté poétique." (p.1097; B.33)

The fact that this "jargon", the cachet of the specialist poet ignorant of the "modèle naturel", in contrast to the "honnête homme" who

"ne veut point d'enseigne", (1) has come to be accepted as standard poetic diction testifies to the inordinate influence, at least as Pascal would have it, exerted by the former group in the shaping of the canons of literary expression. His quarrel with the protagonists of such "beautés poétiques" - these overworked and stilted figures and expressions - is that they parade an affected style of writing of little real literary worth under this name. (2) If the quality of their verse genuinely merited the title there would be no occasion for them to label it such, since it would achieve instant and general recognition. Furthermore, such artificial conventions can only have a stagnating effect on verse, by depriving it of what Pascal regards as its roots in nature.

Some indication as to what Pascal believes a natural style of writing consists in, and of the esteem in which he holds it, can be gleaned from the concluding paragraphs of his De l'art de persuader:

"Rien n'est plus commun que les bonnes choses: il n'est question que de les discerner; et il est certain qu'elles sont toutes naturelles et à notre portée, et même connues de tout le monde. Mais on ne sait pas les distinguer. Ceci est universel. Ce n'est pas dans les choses extraordinaires et bizarres que se trouve l'excellence de quelque genre que ce soit. On s'élève pour y arriver, et on s'en éloigne: il faut le plus souvent s'abaisser. Les meilleurs livres sont ceux que ceux qui les lisent croient qu'ils auraient pu faire. La nature qui seule est bonne, est toute familière et commune."

(1) cf. extract quoted above, p. 133.

(2) M.Z. Tourneur, in his commentary on this fragment, after citing contemporary poems in which the usages condemned by Pascal occur, concludes: "Ce n'était pas là des exceptions, des fantaisies individuelles, échappées à quelques versificateurs en mal de rimes; ces "termes bizarres" étaient alors généralement regardés comme la marque même de la poésie". Beauté poétique, histoire critique d'une pensée de Pascal et de ses annexes, (Melun, 1933) p.91.

Then, referring to the methodological rules which he has outlined, he continues:

"Je ne fais donc pas de doute que ces règles, étant les véritables, ne doivent être simples, naïves, naturelles, comme elles le sont. -- Et une des raisons principales qui éloignent autant ceux qui entrent dans ces connaissances du véritable chemin qu'ils doivent suivre, est l'imagination qu'on prend d'abord que les bonnes choses sont inaccessibles, en leur donnant le nom de grandes, hautes, élevées, sublimes. Cela perd tout. Je voudrais les nommer basses, communes, familières: ces noms-là conviennent mieux; je hais ces mots d'enflure --" (p.602; G.E.IX, p.288-290)

Thus Pascal considers that the universal inability to 'distinguish' - to perceive for example what is the natural mode of expression appropriate to a particular literary form - stems from the general acceptance of a sophisticated code, which ordains that one must always as it were set one's sights high, and aim for the extraordinary, the striking, the sublime; from a conviction firmly planted that excellence is synonymous with that and cannot be allied with the everyday, the natural. On the contrary, he most emphatically asserts that, regardless of the genre with which one may be concerned, precisely the opposite holds good, for: "La nature qui seule est bonne, est toute familière et commune".

Nature therefore, and it is significantly a nature accessible to all, constitutes a sort of touchstone for Pascal in all questions of aesthetic appreciation, as well as of linguistics and methodology. It is on this account that he deplores the contemporary practice of regarding mere

(1) cf. the following two extracts from the Pensées which also attest his dislike of a flamboyant style of writing: " 'Eteindre le flambeau de la sédition': trop luxuriant. 'L'inquiétude de son génie': trop de deux mots hardis." (p.1100;B.59). "Je hais également le bouffon et l'enflé:--" (p.1096; B.30)

current fashion as the "arbiter elegantiae". In a cryptic fragment he notes that "--la mode fait l'agrément"--(p.1152;B.309) and alleges elsewhere that the tendency to acquiesce in this state of things results from some weakness inherent in men:

"Raison des effets. - La faiblesse de l'homme est la cause de tant de beautés qu'on établit: comme de ne point savoir bien jouer du luth n'est un mal qu'à cause de notre faiblesse." (p.1164; B.329)

This defect of allowing one's aesthetic judgements to be shaped by the demands of current fashion, like the inability to 'distinguish' in the previously quoted extract ("Ceci est universel".), appears to admit of no exceptions. However, Pascal's conception of "honnêteté", as set out in passages examined earlier, requires that the "honnête homme" should not be included among those thus enslaved by fashion and unable to discern the "modèle naturel".

At least one reason for Pascal's marked predilection for a "style naturel" appears to be because he believes it enables the artist to make his audience experience the truth of his message in themselves. This much emerges from the following extract:

"Quand un discours naturel peint une passion ou un effet, on trouve dans soi-même la vérité de ce qu'on entend, laquelle on ne savait pas qu'elle y fût, en sorte qu'on est porté à aimer celui qui nous le fait sentir;--"
(p.1099; B.14)

Mme. Périer's description of the "règles d'éloquence toutes particulières" which Pascal fashioned for himself, shows that this was the object which he set himself to pursue in his own writings:

"Ce n'était point ce qu'on appelle de belles pensées qui n'ont qu'un faux brillant, et qui ne signifient rien; -- Mais il concevait l'éloquence comme un moyen de dire les choses d'une manière que tous ceux à qui l'on parle les puissent entendre sans peine et avec plaisir, et il concevait que cet art consistait dans de certaines dispositions qui doivent se trouver entre l'esprit et le coeur de ceux à qui l'on parle, et les pensées et les expressions dont on se sert; mais que les proportions ne s'ajustent proprement ensemble que par le tour qu'on y donne."

He was not satisfied that this last requirement had been fulfilled until he was sure that:

"--il fût impossible à l'esprit de l'homme de ne s'y pas rendre avec plaisir. --Ce n'était pas assez pour lui qu'une chose parût belle; il fallait qu'elle fût propre au sujet, --cette manière d'écrire naïve, juste, agréable, forte et naturelle en même temps lui était si propre et si particulière;--"(1)

Besoigne, in reproducing this passage in the form of a series of dictums enunciated by Pascal, reframed the last sentence quoted here as follows:

"Il faut se renfermer, le plus qu'il est possible, dans le simple naturel;--" (2)

The passage emphasizes then that the use of a natural mode of expression is in Pascal's eyes the most effective means of achieving the primary object of art, which consists in establishing a relation between artist and audience, in order that others may be infected with the feelings of the artist.

(1) Vie, p.14-15; G.E.I, p.72-3.

(2) p.1094, note a.;B.15, appendix. Nicole, although more appreciative of the sublime than Pascal, holds similar views in regard to the natural style: "Il y a deux sortes de beautés dans l'éloquence, --L'une consiste dans les pensées belles et solides, mais extraordinaires et surprenantes.--L'autre au contraire ne consiste nullement dans les pensées rares, mais dans un certain air naturel, dans une simplicité facile, élégante et délicate, qui ne bande point l'esprit, qui ne lui présente que des images communes, -- et qui sait si bien le suivre dans ses mouvements, qu'elle ne manque jamais de lui proposer, sur chaque sujet, les objets dont il peut être touché, et d'exprimer toutes les passions et les mouvements que les choses qu'elle présente y doivent produire." Essais de morale (Liège, 1767), vol.2, p.293.

Such a warm recommendation of the natural, as the best model for literary style, would appear to set Pascal very much in his age. As René Bray has pointed out: "L'art doit imiter la nature. Voilà la première des règles dictées par la raison, le premier commandement de la poétique classique -- toute la génération 'préclassique' a voulu suivre la nature et a prétendu la suivre aussi bien que Boileau et ses amis--"(1) It is to the generation of Chapelain and the 'pre-classics', rather than to Boileau's, that Pascal truly belongs, and indeed, as Bray would have it, he put his finger on the reason for his contemporaries' lack of success in achieving this aim when he wrote: "On ne sait ce que c'est que ce modèle naturel qu'il faut imiter."(2) And the close resemblance in idea between the following brief fragment from the Pensées:

"Eloquence. - Il faut de l'agréable et du réel; mais il faut que cet agréable soit lui-même pris du vrai." (p.1099;B.25)

and Boileau's famous dictum from the 9th Epitre:

"Rien n'est beau que le vrai, le vrai ^{seul} est aimable."

seems to indicate that for Pascal as for Boileau truth, beauty and nature are but different names for one and the same thing. However, the elevation of reason into a sort of sovereign principle, which represents the cornerstone of classical aesthetics, even if it did not imply all that M. Bray claims when he equates "raison" with "une entité métaphysique", (3) rather than with mere "bon sens", has no counterpart in Pascal's writings. For whereas, as

(1) La formation de la doctrine classique en France, (Paris 1931) p.140-1.

(2) op.cit., p.145, cf.above, p.151.

(3) op.cit., p.126.

Ernst Cassirer notes, "the theory of French classicism has nothing to do with any philosophy of common sense; it does not concern itself with the everyday and trivial use of the understanding but with the highest powers of scientific reason";⁽¹⁾ Pascal deliberately asserts that:

"Rien n'est plus commun que les bonnes choses: -- La nature qui seule est bonne, est toute familière et commune. -- Je voudrais nommer les bonnes choses basses, communes, familières:--"
(p.602; G.E.IX, p.288-290)

The context shows that this declaration of confidence in the natural and the everyday is a conscious revulsion against just such an attitude of intellectualism as that described by Cassirer.

(1) The Philosophy of the Enlightenment, (Boston 1955), p.282.

Chapter two: Natural ethics.

(i) Positive attitude in the Pensées and minor works

The emphatic language used by Pascal in the passage at the end of the Art de persuader, where he insists that excellence is to be sought in all spheres in the natural, in the commonplace and in what is readily accessible to all men, taken together with the fact that his description of the "honnêtes gens" makes it quite plain that he sees in them the exponents of this sort of approach, leads one to expect from him some comments at least on the possibility of a natural ethics. There appears to be no prima facie reason for excepting ethics from the expressly general statement that:

"La nature qui seule est bonne, est toute familière et commune." (p.602; G.E.IX, p.289)

Moreover, in the Trois discours sur la condition des grands, "vertu" is cited as an example of the "grandeurs naturelles", and is therefore to be regarded as a "qualité réelle et effective de l'âme." (p.618; G.E.IX, p.369). And in a fragment from the Pensées, discussed earlier in connection with aesthetics, some such natural ethics seems to be definitely envisaged.

"Géométrie, finesse. - La vraie éloquence se moque de l'éloquence, la vraie morale se moque de la morale; c'est-à-dire que la morale du jugement se moque de la morale de l'esprit, qui est sans règles. (p.1094: B.4)

The textual problem involved in this fragment has already been treated, ⁽¹⁾ and it remains to point out that its significance for the present

(1) cf. above p.144.

discussion consists chiefly in the two assumptions which it makes: (a) that there is such a thing as a "vraie morale", and (b) that a knowledge of what comprises this "vraie morale" can be had by man, for how otherwise would it be possible to ascertain that it makes light of the false ethics? Furthermore, since this "vraie morale", like the "vraie éloquence", belongs to the sphere of "finesse" and "jugement", (1) it must be accessible to the natural man unaided by any supernatural grace, and will require no supernatural sanctions to ensure that its precepts are observed. The store which Pascal sets by this natural ethics is sufficiently attested by the fact that he declares it to be the true ethics.

Also very significant in this regard is the following fragment from the Pensées:

"Ceux qui sont dans le dérèglement disent à ceux qui sont dans l'ordre que ce sont eux qui s'éloignent de la nature, et ils la croient suivre: comme ceux qui sont dans un vaisseau croient que ceux qui sont au bord fuient. Le langage est pareil de tous côtés. Il faut avoir un point fixe pour en juger. Le port juge ceux qui sont dans un vaisseau; mais où prendrons-nous un port dans la morale."
(p.1112; B.383)

This passage implies that nature is the yardstick by which conduct must be judged; but that difficulties arise over the question as to what, in a given instance, the natural act will be. However, the important point for the present enquiry is that those who are "dans l'ordre" are alleged to be so because they are following nature. Thus, even if in the latter part of the fragment Pascal does take up the stock objection that what may be 'natural'

(1) It will be recalled that the fragment continues: "Car le jugement est celui à qui appartient le sentiment, comme les sciences appartiennent à l'esprit. La finesse est la part du jugement, la géométrie est celle de l'esprit."

for one person will not necessarily be so for another, so that some external criterion, "un point fixe", is required, the fact remains that he sets up nature here as the standard of action and the source of "order", and points to it by implication as the foundation of ethics.

Some indication of the sort of questions such an ethics is concerned with can be obtained from another fragment:

"Vanité des sciences. - La science des choses extérieures ne me consolera pas de l'ignorance de la morale, au temps d'affliction; mais la science des moeurs me consolera toujours de l'ignorance des sciences extérieures."
(p.1137; B.67)

The phrase "la science des moeurs", used here as a synonym for "la morale", may well have been chosen in part with an eye to the symmetry of the sentence. But the very fact that Pascal does use it in the second clause, in place of the noun "morale", is sufficient evidence that he conceives of ethics as dealing with practical questions relating to conduct and life, and not with the search for a rational basis for such conduct, nor with abstract notions of 'duty' or 'justice'. Equally clear is the fact, according to this definition, that "morale" is not simply a code of divine legislation, but is drawn from the sort of experience common to all mankind.

This preoccupation with the practical aspect of morals comes out very plainly in a short fragment from the Pensées:

"Il faut se connaître soi-même: quand cela ne servirait pas à trouver le vrai, cela au moins sert à régler sa vie, et il n'y a rien de plus juste." (p.1104; B.66)

As it stands this extract implies that the business of ordering one's life, in Pascal's view the primary concern of "morale", presupposes no external aid

of any kind, even in the shape of a set of rules prescribing right conduct. That such practical measures are possible for man in his natural capacity is also the force of the passage from the conclusion to the De l'esprit géométrique, where Pascal maintains that those who realize that motion, space and number are potentially infinite in respect of addition and division:

"--pourront admirer la grandeur et la puissance de la nature dans cette double infinité qui nous environne de toutes parts et apprendre par cette connaissance merveilleuse à se connaître eux-mêmes--" (591; G.E.IX, p.269-270)

The notion that nature, if attended to, represents an adequate guide to moral conduct appears to lie behind the following fragment from the Pensées:

"L'Écriture a pourvu de passages pour consoler toutes les conditions, et pour intimider toutes les conditions.

La nature semble avoir fait la même chose par ses deux infinis, naturels et moraux; car nous aurons toujours du dessus et du dessous, de plus habiles et de moins habiles, de plus élevés et de plus misérables, pour abaisser notre orgueil, et relever notre abjection." (p.1300; B.532)

Nature therefore, according to the relevant portion of this extract, by means of the infinite diversity of types and corresponding range of abilities that characterize the individuals who make up the human race, sets forth what amounts to an admirable system of checks and counterbalances which restore man to a state of equilibrium when he indulges in excesses, and make plain the sort of conduct befitting his condition.

Finally, even when, in despite of his claim that "naturellement on aime la vertu, et on hait la folie" (p.1122; B.97), Pascal asserts that

for man to continue in a virtuous state recourse must be had to the method of counterpoise, (1) there is no suggestion that the "vertu" in question is not a purely natural quality.

"Nous ne nous soutenons pas dans la vertu par notre propre force, mais par le contrepoids de deux vices opposés, comme nous demeurons debout entre deux vents contraires: ôtez un de ces vices, nous tombons dans l'autre." (p.1169;B.359)

In fact, since the method of counterpoise is declared to be necessary only in order to keep in the right path so to speak, it follows that "vertu" is originally attained "par notre propre force".

(ii) Negative attitude in the Pensées and minor works

In order to obtain a complete picture of Pascal's views on this subject, alongside such passages as the foregoing where he shows himself ready to accord a definite place and value to a natural ethics, must be set the more numerous ones in which it is denied any positive value.

Particularly interesting in this respect is the Entretien avec M. de Saci, reported by Fontaine, and dating from the very early days of Pascal's close association with Port-Royal in 1655. In this dialogue, which took place before the full force of the Jansenist influence can have had time to make its impact on his outlook, the more tolerant attitude toward naturalism which one is led on that account to expect fails to appear.

(1) The expression is used by Professor A.O. Lovejoy in his Reflections on Human Nature, (Baltimore, 1961), ch.II, where he shows that the device is a common one in the writings of 17th and early 18th century moralists.

This is all the more remarkable in that, although Pascal condemns Montaigne's whole approach to "morale" as pagan (p.569; G.E.IV, p.49), when he goes on to depict the former's conception of "vertu" the chief component noted is one which he himself takes over in a later treatise:

"Il rejette donc bien loin cette vertu stoïque qu'on peint avec une mine sévère, -- La sienne est naïve, familière, plaisante, enjouée, et pour ainsi dire folâtre; elle suit ce qui la charme,--" (p.570; G.E.IV, p.50-1)

The similarities between this description and the extract previously cited from the conclusion to the first part of the De l'esprit géométrique, where Pascal asserts that: "La nature qui seule est bonne, est toute familière et commune", are manifest. Indeed, the passage from the essay De l'institution des enfans,⁽¹⁾ on which Pascal draws for his description of Montaigne's conception of "philosophie" and "vertu", is the self-same one which provides the inspiration for this conclusion to the De l'esprit géométrique, with its denunciation of those who claim that in order to achieve excellence in any sphere one must "guinder l'esprit", and fervent declaration of faith in the everyday and the natural. Although Pascal does not specifically treat of "vertu" there, nonetheless, as was argued earlier in the case of "morale", there is no prima facie reason for excepting it from such general statements as that:

"Rien n'est plus commun que les bonnes choses:-- il est certain qu'elles sont toutes naturelles et à notre portée, et même connues de tout le monde."

Despite all this however, the condemnation of Montaigne's "morale" stands, and again in the Pensées Pascal notes concerning him that:

(1) Essais, vol.I, p.172-3 (Garnier ed.)

"--on ne peut excuser ses sentiments tout païens sur la mort;--" (p.1104; B.63)

Pascal's indictment of Epictetus's version of the stoic philosophy in the Entretien, as "principes d'une superbe diabolique" (p.563; G.E.IV,p.36), involves him in a wholesale rejection of the possibility of a natural ethics.

The offending principles are outlined as follows:

"Il dit que Dieu a donné à l'homme les moyens de s'acquitter de toutes ses obligations; que ces moyens sont en notre puissance; -- que l'esprit ne peut être forcé de croire ce qu'il sait être faux, ni la volonté d'aimer ce qu'elle sait qui la rend malheureuse; que ces deux puissances sont donc libres, et que c'est par elles que nous pouvons nous rendre parfaits; que l'homme peut par ces connaissances parfaitement connaître Dieu, l'aimer, lui obéir, lui plaire, se guérir de tous ses vices, acquérir toutes les vertus, se rendre saint ainsi et compagnon de Dieu." (ibid; G.E.IV, p.35-6)

There is nothing particularly remarkable in the explanation advanced by Pascal to account for these errors of Epictetus - the latter simply failed to realize that man is essentially a fallen being, and, unaware of his corruption, on discerning traces of his former "grandeur" treated human nature as intrinsically sound.⁽¹⁾ It follows from this that Pascal's own refusal to endorse Epictetus's tenets stems from his conviction that the consequences of the fall have been so dire, and so far-reaching for human nature, as to make it inconceivable that man should attain to any good through his own efforts, and hence to rule out the possibility of any such natural ethics as Epictetus envisaged.⁽²⁾

(1) p.571; G.E.IV, p.52

(2) The most Pascal will concede in the way of benefits to be derived from a combined study of both Epictetus and Montaigne is summed up in the judgement that this cannot lead to "la vertu, mais seulement troubler dans les vices:--" (p.574; G.E.IV, p.56)

This line of reasoning is made more explicit in a passage from the Pensées, where Pascal again comments on Epictetus's ethical teaching:

"Quand Epictète aurait vu parfaitement bien le chemin, il dit aux hommes: 'Vous en suivez un faux'; il montre que c'en est un autre, mais il n'y mène pas. C'est celui de vouloir ce que Dieu veut; (1) Jésus-Christ seul y mène: 'Via, veritas'.

Les vices de Zénon même." (p.1302; B.466)

The conjectural preterite used in the first clause here allows that Epictetus was justified in one of his claims mentioned in the Entretien - that man's "esprit" is quite 'free', and able to guide him aright on moral questions, since it would be self-contradictory otherwise to assert that he (Epictetus) may perfectly well perceive what is the right path to follow. This admission on Pascal's part is not perhaps as startling as may at first sight appear, for he has already acknowledged in the Entretien that Epictetus "a si bien connu les devoirs de l'homme." (p.563; G.E.IV, p.35) Moreover, the proof of original sin in the Pensées, drawn from the paradoxes discernible in human nature, depends for its cogency on recognition of the fact that man combines a real awareness of what constitutes his true nature and 'end' with an impotence to realize them. Several passages directly testify to this hiatus between the knowledge of the good accessible to man and the power to do it which he lacks:

"Toutes les bonnes maximes sont dans le monde; on ne manque qu'à les appliquer." (p.1149; B.380)

"--il y a bien des gens qui voient le vrai, et qui n'y peuvent atteindre." (2) (p.1061; B.915)

(1) cf. Entretien: "Epictète ne se lasse point de répéter que toute l'étude et le désir de l'homme doit être de reconnaître la volonté de Dieu et de la suivre." (p.563; G.E.IV, p.34)

(2) cf. from the same group of fragments dealing with casuistry: "Encore qu'on ne puisse assigner le juste, on voit bien ce qui ne l'est pas." (p.1061; B.931)

Thus it is in his other claim - that man's "volonté" is equally 'free', and that his natural capacity suffices to ensure him access to and perseverance in the state of highest "vertu" - that Epictetus reveals the extent of his ignorance of the actual condition of human nature. Even though he may act as a signpost to the true path, neither Epictetus nor any other human being can lead man along it. In Pascal's opinion a supernatural guide is required for that purpose. But an ethics which, even if it does by itself point man in the right direction, yet depends upon external aid to enable him to travel in that direction, cannot consistently be termed a natural ethics.

The following short fragment from the Pensées completely undermines any doctrine that holds up obedience to, or conformity with, nature as an ethical maxim:

"Quand la malignité a la raison de son côté, elle devient fière. -- Quand l'austérité ou le choix sévère n'a pas réussi au vrai bien, et qu'il faut revenir à suivre la nature, elle devient fière par ce retour." (p.1127;B.407)

This passage implies both that evil is natural to man, and that the moral worth of any act derives from the stern effort it involves to overcome the impulse to follow nature. If "nature" is to be construed here as meaning specifically human nature - the obvious sense of the extract - then no really fresh development is implied. For, granting Pascal's postulate that human nature has become corrupt consequent on the fall, it is clear that such good actions as man may perform will be carried out in despite of the promptings of his nature.

Nor are passages lacking in which Pascal explicitly asserts that vice in some form or other is natural to man in his present condition.

"-- le vice, qui nous est naturel,--" (p.1308;B.498)

"L'homme n'est donc que déguisement, que mensonge et hypocrisie, -- et toutes ces dispositions, si éloignées de la justice et de la raison, ont une racine naturelle dans son coeur." (p.1125-6;B.100)

"Du désir d'être estimé de ceux avec qui on est. - L'orgueil nous tient d'une possession si naturelle au milieu de nos misères,--" (p.1128;B.153)

"--les vertus nous sont étrangères,--" (p.1294;B.668)

"Si l'on ne se connaît plein de superbe, d'ambition, de concupiscence, de faiblesse, de misère et d'injustice, on est bien aveugle." (p.1201; B.450)

For man to attain to "vertu" in this state of nature Pascal believes that external aid is necessary. In contradiction to his remarks concerning Epictetus in the Entretien, he notes in the Pensées that:

"La vraie nature de l'homme, son vrai bien, et la vraie vertu, et la vraie religion, sont choses dont la connaissance est inséparable." (p.1203;B.442)

Elsewhere he goes even further and alleges that:

"Sans Jésus-Christ, il faut que l'homme soit dans le vice et dans la misère; avec Jésus-Christ, l'homme est exempt de vice et de misère. En lui est toute notre vertu et toute notre félicité; hors de lui il n'y a que vice, misère erreurs,--" (1) (p.1301; B.546).

It would be difficult to conceive of a more direct repudiation of an ethics based on the principle that "vertu" consists in obeying the dictates of

(1) cf. also: "La corruption de la raison paraît par tant de différentes et extravagantes moeurs. Il a fallu que la vérité soit venue, afin que l'homme ne véquît plus en soi-même." (p.1202;B.440) Pascal is obviously alluding here to the passage in St. John's Gospel where it is alleged that "grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." (I.17) Again in the 7th letter to Mlle. de Roannez he maintains that "vertu" is a product of "piété" (p.516;G.E.VI, p.222) and in the Pensées one of the reasons adduced why God has instituted the practice of prayer is: "Pour nous apprendre de qui nous tenons la vertu." (p.1296;B.513)

nature than that contained in these two fragments. Not merely does the second stand in sharp contrast to the extracts quoted earlier where "vertu" was declared to be a natural attribute, but taken together they cut away the ground from under much that is claimed for Epictetus in the Entretien, and in particular the approval of the aim, there alleged to inform all his teaching, to bring man to consider God "comme son principal objet". (p.562; G.E.IV, p.32)

The dualism which has been shown to characterize Pascal's thought on this subject is so radical as to make the task of determining the precise value which he assigns to a natural ethics, and the sort of "vertu" achieved by following out its precepts, an almost impossible one. Any attempt to set up a graduated scale is defeated by his practice of affirming quite definitely in one place that in this respect nature has a positive value, and in another categorically denying that very fact. Nor, as is apparent from the differing viewpoints adopted in the Entretien and the De l'esprit géométrique, to say nothing of the Pensées themselves, is it possible to explain this dualism in terms of a chronological development.

(iii) Positive attitude in the Provinciales

This dualism appears to be resolved in the Provinciales, for on the rare occasions when Pascal does accord some positive value to nature there as a standard of action, the judgement takes the form of a comparison

with some higher term in his scale.

Thus, denouncing the Jesuit casuists at the beginning of the fourteenth letter for their decisions relating to the legitimacy of homicide, he alleges that:

"--vous êtes éloignés des sentiments de l'Eglise, et même de la nature.--- vous avez tellement oublié la loi de Dieu, et tellement éteint les lumières naturelles, que vous avez besoin qu'on vous remette dans les principes les plus simples de la religion et du sens commun; car qu'y a-t-il de plus naturel que ce sentiment: 'Qu'un particulier n'a pas droit sur la vie d'un autre?'"

And he goes on to quote approvingly a very significant passage from Saint Chrysostom:

"'Nous en sommes tellement instruits de nous-mêmes,---que, quand Dieu a établi le précepte de ne point tuer, il n'a pas ajouté que c'est à cause que l'homicide est un mal; parce, dit ce Père, que la loi suppose qu'on a déjà appris cette vérité de la nature'."

Pascal here reproduces the traditional scale, according to which nature is assigned a positive, even if low, value. More noteworthy however, is that his citing this particular assertion of Saint Chrysostom implies that he considers a morals based on "lumières naturelles", on natural sentiment, forms the groundwork upon which the more specifically Christian ethic has been built. Certainly such natural truths, as that homicide is evil - "les principes les plus simples du sens commun" as they are also denominated -, a knowledge of which is presupposed by the Christian precepts, are regarded as being somehow more basic to man than the latter. This fact, although it does not entitle them to a higher rank in the scale, nonetheless assures such natural moral principles of a positive value.

It is the same conception which lies behind a further very similar condemnation of the Jesuit casuistry occurring later in the letter:

"Il est aisé de juger par tout ce que j'ai dit jusqu'ici combien le relâchement de vos opinions est contraire à la sévérité des lois civiles, et même païennes. Que sera-ce donc si on les compare avec les lois ecclésiastiques, qui doivent être incomparablement plus saintes,--?" (p.826; G.E.VI, p.145)

In an earlier letter it had been affirmed with respect to the Jesuits that:

"Comme leur morale est toute païenne, la nature suffit pour l'observer." (p.707; G.E.IV, p.304)

Now despite the fact that the Jesuit position has worsened in the interval between these two extracts (the second is taken from the fifth letter), it remains true that in the former the pagan legal code is assigned a definite value, while the latter makes it plain that such a code is grounded on a natural ethics. Thus the normal traditional scale - natural, civil, ecclesiastical in an ascending order - is implied here too, and Christian morality is made to appear as merely the perfected version of the natural.

Also in the fourteenth letter, referring to Lessius's opinion that the right of self-defence covers any action necessary to preserve oneself from hurt, Pascal objects:

"Que d'étranges suites sont enfermées dans ce principe inhumain et combien tout le monde est-il obligé de s'y opposer,--" (p.826; G.E.VI, p.144)

Here again Pascal seems to be appealing to some moral sentiment natural to man, which should prompt him to resist such an innovation. The eighth letter contains a somewhat similar reference. Pascal is reporting one of his interviews with the Jesuit father:

"Il me fit voir ensuite, dans ses Auteurs, des choses de cette nature si infâmes, que je n'oserais les rapporter, et dont il aurait eu horreur lui-même (car il est bon homme), sans le respect qu'il a pour ses Pères,--" (p.748;G.E.V, p.152)

But in order to legitimately infer that the effect of scandal, which Pascal implies would be produced in any "bon homme" by the sort of proposition here in question, is the response of a natural moral sense, it would be necessary to have a definition of "bon homme" from him. In the Provinciales at least, no such definition is forthcoming.

However, two eminent critics, M. M. Lanson and Pellisson have put forward the view that it is the conscience, the natural moral sense in man, to which Pascal continually appeals in the Provinciales in his denunciation of Jesuit practices, and that moreover his whole case against the Jesuits depends upon establishing the fact that their principles run counter to the dictates of this conscience.⁽¹⁾ Clearly if these contentions are justified the extracts so far examined from the Provinciales have been misleading as to the relative value which Pascal really accords to natural ethics in that work.

(1) M. Pellisson, in an article entitled: La sécularisation de la morale au XVIIIe siècle, maintains, "Quand Pascal intenta aux jésuites le grand procès, où il dénonce les restrictions mentales, -- ce n'est pas au tribunal de l'Eglise qu'il cite ses adversaires; c'est à la conscience qu'il en appelle. Il sent qu'en pareille cause il n'appartient à aucune religion de rendre la sentence; et, à cette heure, pélagien inconscient, il met son suprême recours dans cette morale qui, comme eût dit Montaigne, a été plantée au coeur même de l'homme." La révolution française, 1903, p.397. In a similar vein, in his article La transformation des idées morales et la naissance des morales rationnelles de 1680 à 1715, G.Lanson writes, "Bayle fut le premier qui démontra le principe de la souveraineté de la conscience. Mais ce principe existait déjà -- C'est en y faisant appel que Pascal pouvait rendre ridicule le jésuite qui parlait d'après la conscience du P. Bauny, et non d'après la sienne." Revue du mois, IX, 1910, p.18-19.

(iv) Negative attitude in the Provinciales

Although Pascal nowhere in the Provinciales uses the actual term "conscience" in the sort of context which would give substance to the views of M.M.Lanson and Pellisson, this by no means proves conclusively that it is not at the bar of conscience that he sets out to indict the Jesuits. It is significant nonetheless that the word does appear frequently in the letters in its usual acceptation:

"Vous êtes obligés en conscience, -- de dire--" (2nd, p.679; G.E.IV, p.165)

"--dites-moi, en conscience,-- Vous parlez donc, contre votre conscience? Point du tout, dit-il: je ne parlais pas en cela selon ma conscience, mais selon celle de Ponce et du Père Bauny." (5th, p.709; G.E.IV, p.309)

"La plaisante comparaison, -- des choses du monde à celles de la conscience!" (p.710; G.E.IV, p.311)

"Et ainsi, -- un seul docteur peut tourner les consciences et les bouleverser à son gré,--" (ibid.; G.E.IV, p.310)

"--vous avez bien mis ceux qui suivent vos opinions probables en assurance à l'égard de Dieu et de la conscience;--" (6th, p.726; G.E.V, p.50)

"-- les cas de conscience--" (ibid.; G.E.V, p.51)

"C'est par cette subtilité de conscience qu'il a prouvé--" (12th, p.802-3; G.E.V, p.382)

"Je vous demande donc si cette maxime d'Escobar peut être suivie en conscience--" (p.804; G.E.V, p.386)

"Quand vous avez entrepris de décider les cas de conscience d'une manière favorable et accommodante,--" (13th, p.810; G.E.VI, p.28)

"--les questions de contrition, --qui ne touchent que l'intérieur des consciences." (ibid)

"--en leur déclarant qu'ils le peuvent faire en sûreté de conscience,--" (p.816; G.E.VI, p.39)

"--je ne puis sortir de l'hérésie, ou qu'en trahissant ma conscience, ou qu'en réformant la vôtre." (15th, p.839; G.E.VI, p.198)

In none of these cases can Pascal be said to make an appeal to the conscience as man's natural guide in moral questions. The role which he does assign it in such questions becomes more evident in the following two extracts. In connection with Lessius's opinion, that the right of self-defence covers all that is necessary to preserve oneself from any hurt, Pascal points out that it is in the interests especially of those holding public office to oppose such views, which would expose them to the attacks of would-be disturbers of the order of the realm who,

"--n'auront plus à vaincre les remords de la conscience, qui arrêtent la plupart des crimes dans leur naissance, et ne penseront plus qu'à surmonter les obstacles du dehors." (p.826; G.E.VI, p.144)

In the fifteenth letter, commenting on the Jesuit maxim that it is "probable et sûr en conscience qu'on peut calomnier sans crime pour conserver son honneur," Pascal remarks that:

"L'inclination corrompue des hommes s'y porte d'elle-même avec tant d'impétuosité qu'il est incroyable qu'en levant l'obstacle de la conscience, elle ne se répande avec toute sa véhémence naturelle." (p.835; G.E.VI, p.191)

Now if M.M.Lanson and Pellisson are right in their contention that Pascal regards the conscience as the natural moral sense whose primacy he is concerned to uphold, then ipso facto one would expect to find him exhibiting it as emphatically rejecting those Jesuit principles which it recognizes as violating its own most certain principles. But manifestly this is not the case. The chief ostensible reason for Pascal's exposure of the morally pernicious consequences of the Jesuit principles is precisely that, on this most crucial issue, the individual conscience stands in need of instruction. Its voice is silenced by the weight of the Jesuit assurances,

and it requires to have the right and the wrong of the matter clearly pointed out before it can exercise its sanctioning function. (1)

A further passage from a later fragment, criticizing the Jesuit approach to the problems of moral theology, shows just how far Pascal is from considering the conscience as such as the source of some natural code of morals:

"Les Jésuites ont voulu joindre Dieu au monde et n'ont gagné que le mépris de Dieu et du monde. Car du côté de la conscience cela est évident, et du côté du monde --" (p.1063;B.935)

The implication here is quite definitely that the "conscience" is simply the faculty which registers the precepts of the divine will, and reflects on their consequences for human conduct.

And what might appear to be a tacit appeal to some natural moral sense in an extract from the eleventh letter, turns out on close examination to be little more than an empirical statement of fact.

"Quoi! faut-il employer la force de l'Écriture et de la tradition pour montrer que c'est tuer son ennemi en trahison que de lui donner des coups d'épée par derrière, et dans une embûche; et que c'est acheter un bénéfice que de donner de l'argent comme un motif pour se le faire résigner?" (p.783; G.E.V, p.316)

Since Pascal clearly considers that the second example cited here falls within the same category as the first, it is plain that he does not intend the latter to carry any appeal to the conscience.

In addition to such negative evidence as the foregoing, the view that Pascal, in his criticisms of Jesuit moral theology, invokes as criterion

(1) cf. from the Pensées: "En montrant la vérité, on la fait croire;-- On assure la conscience en montrant la fausseté;--" (p.1331;B.893) "Jamais on ne fait le mal si pleinement et si gaiement que quand on le fait par conscience." (ibid.;B.895)

a natural code of ethics completely fails to take account of the fact that one of his favourite devices for heaping approbrium on the Jesuits is to show that their innovations have had the effect of aligning Christian and natural morality, and that their's is a purely pagan ethic.

Thus in the fifth letter his Jansenist colleague alleges that the errors of the Jesuit doctrine of grace spring from the laxity of their morals:

"Comme leur morale est toute païenne, la nature suffit pour l'observer. Quand nous soutenons la nécessité de la grâce efficace, nous lui donnons d'autres vertus pour objet.--c'est pour une vertu plus haute que celle des pharisiens et des plus sages du paganisme. La loi et la raison sont des grâces suffisantes pour ces effets. Mais pour dégager l'âme de l'amour du monde, pour la retirer de ce qu'elle a de plus cher, -- ce n'est l'ouvrage que d'une main toute-puissante. Et il est aussi peu raisonnable de prétendre que l'on a toujours un plein pouvoir, qu'il le serait de nier que ces vertus, destituées d'amour de Dieu, lesquelles ces bons Pères confondent avec les vertus chrétiennes, ne sont pas en notre puissance." (p.707;G.E.IV, p.304) ⁽¹⁾

Pascal therefore is not concerned to deny the possibility of a pagan ethics orientated toward "vertus" wholly within man's natural capacity; his object is to mark the sharp distinction between such an ethics and what he considers to be the true Christian conception of morality, and to show just how far the Jesuit system diverges from this by equating it with the former. Hence, although such a statement, as that the Christian ethic has as its goal "une vertu plus haute que celle des -- plus sages du paganisme," does assign a

(1) This radical disparity between the range of man's natural power and that of divine grace with respect to "vertu", is insisted on in the *Pensées* also. In a fragment devoted to showing how the Old Testament predictions were fulfilled, Pascal claims: "--il est arrivé qu'en la quatrième monarchie,-- les païens en foule adorent Dieu et mènent une vie angélique;--les hommes renoncent à tous plaisirs. Ce que Platon n'a pu persuader à quelque peu d'hommes choisis et si instruits, une force secrète le persuade à cent millions d'hommes ignorants,--Qu'est-ce que tout cela? C'est l'esprit de Dieu qui est répandu sur la terre." (p.1256;B.724) In another fragment

positive though low value to the pagan "vertu", and by implication to the natural morals which produces it, this in no way reflects to the credit of the Jesuits. Nor can Pascal be said to refer to the latter as criterion - the criterion here is quite plainly "l'amour de Dieu".

In the thirteenth letter, pointing out that the explanation for the variety of opinions offered by the Jesuit casuists on any one point is to be sought in the fact that they set out to satisfy all comers, Pascal relates that:

"A ceux qui voudront tuer on présentera Lessius; à ceux qui ne voudront pas tuer on produira Vasquez, afin que personne ne sorte mal content, -- Lessius parlera en païen de l'homicide, et peut-être en chrétien de l'aumône; Vasquez parlera en païen de l'aumône, --" (p.817; G.E.VI, p.41)

Since it is Lessius's views as to the circumstances in which homicide is excusable which Pascal is particularly concerned to denounce earlier in this letter, it is clear that the label "païen" in this context is a derogatory one. And since, as has already appeared, "païen" and "nature" are correlative terms in Pascal's vocabulary in the Provinciales, it would be ridiculous to maintain that the invective which he directs at the Jesuit principles bearing on this problem stems from some natural sense of right.

A further example of the use of the epithet "naturel" as a means of inducing disapproval of the Jesuit position occurs in the tenth letter, where Pascal recounts his reaction to the exposition of their doctrine of attrition:

"Vous me surprenez, mon Père; car je ne vois rien en toute cette attrition-là que de naturel; et ainsi le pécheur se pourrait rendre digne de l'absolution sans aucune grâce surnaturelle." (p.774; G.E.V, p.267)

cont. from p.175. he notes: "La conversion des païens n'était réservée qu'à la grâce du Messie. Les Juifs ont été si longtemps à les combattre sans succès:-- Les sages comme Platon et Socrate, n'ont pu le persuader." (p.1295; B.769)

Here again it is their failure to discriminate between the Christian and the purely natural way of approaching such a question that brings down Pascal's censure on the Jesuits.

Perhaps the most significant passage in this regard however, is found near the beginning of the Factum pour les curés de Paris, where he alleges that the whole aim of the Jesuit moral theology has been to accommodate Christ's teaching to the demands of human nature, instead of to raise the standard of human life to conform to that teaching. He continues:

"C'est par cet horrible renversement qu'on a vu ceux qui se donnent la qualité de docteurs et de théologiens, substituer à la véritable morale, qui ne doit avoir pour principe que l'autorité divine et pour fin que la charité, une morale toute humaine qui n'a pour principe que la raison et pour fin que la concupiscence et les passions de la nature." (p.907-8; G.E.VII, p.280)

A little further on in the same Factum, after listing some of the 'most abominable propositions' advanced by the casuists, Pascal concludes:

"Enfin tout sera permis, la loi de Dieu sera anéantie, et la seule raison naturelle deviendra notre lumière en toutes nos actions,--" (p.913;G.E. VII, p.290-1)

That Pascal should consider it an "horrible renversement" that the effect of the Jesuit innovations has been to substitute a purely human ethics in place of the true ethics grounded on the divine will, not only provides an example of his practice of stigmatizing the Jesuit doctrines by treating them as identical with a natural morals, but also indicates very plainly the relative value he is prepared to accord the two types of ethic in question. The same point is made in rather more extreme terms when he goes on to affirm that the final degradation in morals will have been reached

if the Jesuits have their way, and the natural light of reason is recognized as man's sole guide to the principles of action.

This substitution of human for divine authority in ethics, which results from the Jesuits' corrupting influence, is referred to again in the Second écrit des curés de Paris, when Pascal maintains that their "detestable morale" consists in setting up,

"--leurs traditions humaines sur la ruine des traditions divines." (p.923;G.E.VII, p.318)

The gulf which separates these two types of morality, despite what may appear to be superficial resemblances, is effectively brought out in a highly figurative passage from some notes obviously intended for the Provinciales:

"Un bâtiment également beau par dehors, mais sur un mauvais fondement. Les païens sages le bâtissaient; et le diable trompe les hommes par cette ressemblance apparente fondée sur le fondement le plus différent." (p.1051; B.921)

Once again the contrast is worked in to expose the Jesuit moral theology to odium by showing that it is based upon natural principles; and the implication of the extract is that such "vertus" as the pagan ethical teaching may yield when judged by the Christian criterion will not be seen as real "vertus" at all.

Finally, in the Cinquième écrit, in the course of comparing the culpability of schismatics like the Calvinists with that attaching to the Jesuits for propagating moral laxity, Pascal notes that, although the evil of which the latter are guilty is not nearly as serious in itself as schism,

"--il est néanmoins plus dangereux, en ce qu'il est plus conforme aux sentiments de la nature,--"(1) (p.938;G.E.VII,p.373)

(1) cf. from the Factum:--"comme il y a des hérésies dans la foi, il y a aussi des hérésies dans les moeurs-- d'autant plus dangereuses qu'elles sont conformes aux passions de la nature, et à ce malheureux fonds de concupiscence--" (p.917; G.E.VII, p.298)

Thus, far from using some conception of a natural morals as his touchstone in decrying the Jesuit system of casuistry, it is precisely their attempt to bring Christian ethics into line with such a purely natural morals that has excited Pascal's antipathy. As the second half of the sentence quoted here abundantly testifies,⁽¹⁾ his view of human nature is altogether too sombre for him to be able to subscribe to the belief in a close relation between what is and what ought to be, which the use of the term 'nature' as an ethical criterion implies.

Two further passages, although not illustrative, at least directly, of Pascal's practice of equating the Jesuit with the pagan approach to morals, may be cited here as evidence that the resultant low value ascribed to any ethical scheme which sets up conformity to nature as the primary rule of action is not simply part of a polemical device. In the fourth letter his Jansenist colleague is represented as objecting in the following terms to the Jesuit tenet that no one sins without prior knowledge of his 'infirmity' and 'doctor', nor without having previously experienced the desire to be cured and to implore God to that end:

"Pensera-t-on que ces philosophes, qui vantaient si hautement la puissance de la nature, en connussent l'infirmité et le médecin? Direz-vous que ceux qui soutenaient, comme une maxime assurée, 'que ce n'est pas Dieu qui donne la vertu, et qu'il ne s'est jamais trouvé personne qui la lui ait demandée', pensassent à la lui demander eux-mêmes?" (p.697; G.E.IV, p.258-9)

Since Pascal introduces this objection by the phrase, "Mais mon second, soutenant mon discours, lui dit--," it is plain that he endorses the views

(1) "--il est néanmoins plus dangereux, en ce que-- les hommes y ont d'eux-mêmes une telle inclination qu'il est besoin d'une vigilance continuelle pour les en garder." (ibid.; G.E.VII, p.373)

put forward, which therefore do not merely amount to an exposé of the 'official' Jansenist position. In the light of its context this extract amply attests Pascal's estimate of the sort of ethical theory which treats nature as of itself capable of motivating and effecting virtuous acts, and has as its object a "vertu" whose source is elsewhere than in some God-given movement of the heart.

The other fragment, criticizing the Jesuit doctrine of probabilism, contains an indirect disparaging reference to any natural morals:

"Il y a du plaisir de pouvoir bien faire et de savoir bien faire: 'scire et posse'. La grâce et la probabilité le donnent, car on peut rendre compte à Dieu en assurance sur leurs auteurs." (p.1064; B.942)

When Pascal's opinion of probabilism has been taken into account, this passage implies that not only the power of performing good acts, but even the knowledge as to what constitutes such acts, depends upon divine grace. An ethics, therefore which relies solely on natural capacity will not only fail to realize any good in practice, but will be incapable of attaining even to the idea of the good.

An admirable summary of the various points considered in this section is set out in a passage from a single fragment usually included in the Pensées, but obviously written with the Jesuits very much in mind.

"Toutes les religions et les sectes du monde ont eu la raison naturelle pour guide. Les seuls chrétiens ont été astreints à prendre leurs règles hors d'eux-mêmes, et à s'informer de celles que Jésus-Christ a laissées aux anciens pour être retransmises aux fidèles. Cette contrainte lasse ces bons Pères. Ils veulent avoir, comme les autres peuples, la liberté de suivre leurs imaginations." (p.1336;B.903)

It is interesting to note that in an earlier variant of this fragment, afterwards deleted, Pascal wrote:

"Ils ont dit aux peuples: 'Venez à nous; nous suivrons les opinions des nouveaux auteurs; la raison sera notre guide; nous serons comme les autres peuples qui suivent chacun sa lumière naturelle.' " (ibid. n.; B. ibid. n.)

The fact that the principles of Jesuit moral theology, which Pascal wishes to decry, are treated as indistinguishable from those of any secular or pagan morality, whereas the Christian ethic derives superiority from its very uniqueness in not being natural, ⁽¹⁾ provides an index to the value he assigns to these different conceptions. Moreover, the readiness which he alleges the Christian shows to allow the religious tradition to mould his ethical judgements, ⁽²⁾ together with the denial it implies of the competency of "raison" and "lumière naturelle" in this regard, hardly seem to justify the claims of M.M. Lanson and Pellisson with respect to his supposed vindication of a natural moral sense.

(1) cf. also from the Pensées: "La seule religion contre la nature, contre le sens commun, contre nos plaisirs, est la seule qui ait toujours été." (p.1309; B. 605)

(2) This claim, that there is a religious tradition which is the guide to the true Christian morality, is a constantly recurring one in the Provinciales: "--je me moque de ces auteurs-là, s'ils sont contraires à la tradition." (4th, p.693; G.E.IV, p.252) "Je croyais ne devoir prendre pour règle que l'Écriture et la tradition de l'Église, mais non pas vos casuistes." (5th, p.709; G.E.IV, p.309) "C'est-à-dire, mon Père, qu'à votre arrivée on a vu disparaître saint Augustin, saint Chrysostome, -- et les autres, pour ce qui est de la morale." (p.713; G.E.IV, p.317) "--je prévois-- de puissantes barrières qui s'opposeront à votre course.-- l'Écriture sainte, les papes et les Conciles --qui sont dans la voie unique de l'Évangile." (p.714; G.E.IV, p.319) "O mon Père! d'où Molina a-t-il pu être éclairé pour déterminer une chose de cette importance, sans aucun secours de l'Écriture, des Conciles, ni des Pères?" (7th, p.737; G.E.V, p.104) "Saint Augustin en a le plus, --Outre une chose qu'on peut considérer, qui est une tradition sans interruption de 12,000 papes, conciles, etc." (notes, p.1049; B.925) "Aquavivae. Ep.XVI. Lire les Pères pour les conformer à son imagination, au lieu de former sa pensée sur celle des Pères." (notes, p.1058; B.958) "Il y a contradiction, car d'un côté ils disent qu'il faut suivre la tradition et n'oseraient désavouer cela, et de
cont. p.182

It is clear from the foregoing discussion not merely that Pascal limits the role of the conscience to applying the appropriate sanctions when presented with two possible lines of choice, one of which has been marked out as right and the other wrong, but that his own moral sense, if it is this which is responsible for the purported indignant outbursts, is not shocked by the Jesuit propositions in isolation. It is their divergence from what he conceives to be the Christian norm which causes such expressions, and there is nothing in the Provinciales to indicate that, had the Christian standards of behaviour never been set up, his moral sense would still be scandalized by the Jesuit casuistical practices. The Jesuit position is not denounced in the abstract, but in relation to what Pascal regards as the established Christian position, and the office of the conscience is in effect reduced to registering disapproval at the degree to which the former falls away from the latter. Such evidence points to the conclusion that Pascal's dominant concern throughout the Provinciales is, not to uphold the autonomy of any natural moral sense, but to reassert the primacy of the Christian ethic as he sees it. (1)

cont. from p. 181 l'autre ils diront ce qu'il leur plaira. On croira toujours ce premier,--" (notes, p. 1062; B. 944) "Je ne crains pas même vos censures, paroles si elles ne sont fondées sur celles de la tradition." (notes p. 1074; B. 920. cf. also below, p.

(1) The essentially polemical nature of the Provinciales makes it very difficult to ascertain precisely what it is that characterizes this ethic as against what Pascal claims is the Jesuits' modified version of it. There are references to: "les règles les plus saintes de la conduite chrétienne--" (p. 778; G.E.V., p. 273), "les saintes règles de l'Évangile,--" (p. 798; G.E.V., p. 373), "les règles de la morale de l'Église--" (p. 907; G.E.VII, p. 279-80) "les règles évangéliques--" (p. 915; G.E.VII, p. 295); but Pascal never undertakes to define these. (The 14th letter constitutes an exception to this general pattern. However, the aspect of Christian morality treated there - the precepts relating to homicide - is an isolated one.) There is

cont. p. 183.

cont. from p.182 considerable truth in Vinet's assessment of the Provinciales as an 'ouvrage de morale': "A parler proprement, ce n'en est pas un. Non seulement l'auteur n'apporte sur ce sujet aucun nouveau système, mais rarement il s'engage dans l'exposition des idées reçues." Etudes sur Blaise Pascal, (Lausanne, 1936), p.255. Thus in his attack on the Jesuit casuistical practices, as debasing moral standards and destroying all principles of right action, Pascal takes for granted in his reader an acquaintance with the basic moral tenets of Christianity. Confident that it will suffice his purpose to expose such practices in a clear light, he is content, having done so, simply to affirm that they entail a "renversement" of, or an "égarement" from, the Christian ethic without specifying in detail what this is. Even such a resounding manifesto as that with which the Factum opens is not followed by any exposition: "Notre cause est la cause de la morale chrétienne. Nos parties sont les casuistes qui la corrompent." (p.906; G.E. VII, p.278) One of the most recent commentators on the Provinciales claims that in this respect, "the positions (Pascal) chose to attack indicate clearly enough what he himself stood for." A.J.Krailsheimer, Studies in Self-Interest, (Oxford, 1962) p.99. But the most that can be inferred by this indirect means, apart from some such banal conclusion as that he stands for the Gospel precepts in their pristine purity, is, in M. Adam's words, that: "Toute la critique de Pascal sous-entend que l'amour de Dieu est l'unique maxime de la morale." Histoire de la littérature française au XVIIe siècle, (Paris 1951), t.II, p.253. This is backed by explicit assertions on Pascal's part: "On viole 'le grand commandement, qui comprend la loi et les prophètes'; on attaque la piété dans le coeur; on en ôte l'esprit qui donne la vie; on dit que l'amour de Dieu n'est pas nécessaire au salut;--" (p.778; G.E. V, p.274) "--vous anéantissez la morale chrétienne en la séparant de l'amour de Dieu,--" (p.868; G.E. VI, p.345)

(v) Pascal's anti-rationalism in ethics in the Provinciales.

It is Pascal's 'traditionalist' approach to ethics in the Provinciales which leads him to this uncompromising rejection of the rationalizing tendencies of the Jesuit moral theologians, and to the virtual abandonment of the critical office of the conscience. He plainly regards the moral injunctions implicit in the Christian faith as forming part of what he believes is a revealed system of truth. And the two factors which chiefly determine this authoritarian approach are his conception of theology, the discipline that properly concerns itself with revealed truth, and his view of human nature.

A passage from a fragment, where Pascal undertakes to justify the position he adopts in the Provinciales, illustrates the gulf which such an approach to moral questions sets between him and the Jesuits:⁽¹⁾

"S'ils ne renoncent à la probabilité, leurs bonnes maximes sont aussi peu saintes que les méchantes, car elles sont fondées sur l'autorité humaine. Et ainsi si elles sont plus justes, elles seront plus raisonnables; mais non pas plus saintes; elles tiennent de la tige sauvage sur quoi elles sont entées." (p.1073; B.920)

The derogatory implications of the expression "tige sauvage" in this context are sufficiently indicative of Pascal's anti-rationalism. Moreover, by equating from an ethical standpoint 'good' Jesuit maxims with 'evil' ones,

(1) M. Brunschvicg, in the introduction to the Provinciales in the Grands Ecrivains edition, cites numerous examples to show how the Jesuit replies to the letters completely miss the mark. The main reason for this lies in the Jesuits' failure to comprehend that, after joining battle over a question of moral theology, Pascal should refuse to debate the issue according to the juristic conceptions with which the subject had become overlaid in the course of a long and almost exclusive association with the scholastic tradition. cf. G.E. IV, p.xxxviii ff.

simply because both have a common origin in mere human authority, and by setting up "sainteté" as the criterion of judgement, he emphasizes the conception of true moral principles as grounded in the authority of divinely revealed precepts.

The influence of his pessimistic view of human nature on Pascal's attitude toward the Jesuit moral theology comes out in a significant passage from the Factum.⁽¹⁾ He there alleges that the Jesuits' casuistry amounts to a complete reversal of the groundwork of Christian ethics, which is essentially orientated to the task of raising human motives to a different plane in order that they may measure up to divine standards. The principle of casuistry on the other hand, by definition, involves the attempt to achieve exactly the opposite - to water down those standards so that they become more practical from the human point of view, and more compatible with human nature as it actually is.⁽²⁾ Such a reversal of the fundamental direction of Christian ethics results in a confusing of its true principle and aim, with man setting up his own reason as the yard-stick to which moral choices may be referred, and looking to the gratification of his sensual appetites and passions as the goal of his every act. Now although the context shows that even here it is his reverence for what 'tradition' leads him to regard as revealed authority which has

(1) cf. also above, p.

(2) There is a companion fragment to this passage in the Pensées, where Pascal again claims that the Jesuits' method of compromise lays axe to the very roots of Christian ethics by introducing modifications to the revealed precepts: "Ceux qui aiment l'Eglise se plaignent de voir corrompre les mœurs; mais au moins les lois subsistent. Mais ceux-ci corrompent les lois: le modèle est gâté." (p.1332; B.894)

most weight in swinging Pascal's preference so decidedly away from the Jesuit position, his low opinion of human nature plays at least a contributory role. For two paragraphs earlier, justifying his allegation that the Jesuits are exercising a particularly pernicious influence by corrupting the "règle des moeurs" through their 'perversion' of the scriptural 'laws', he writes:

"--comme la nature de l'homme tend toujours au mal dès sa naissance, et qu'elle n'est ordinairement retenue que par la crainte de la loi, aussitôt que cette barrière est ôtée, la concupiscence se répand sans obstacle, de sorte qu'il n'y a point de différence entre rendre les vices permis, et rendre tous les hommes vicieux."
(p.907; G.E. VII p.279)

Such a gloomy view alone would be sufficient motivation for flinging himself on a revealed system of authoritarian doctrine in ethics. Small wonder then that Pascal refuses to take any account, at least on the positive side, of the tendencies of human nature, or to concede any part to human reason, where moral principles are concerned.

Another passage from the Factum, coming after some examples cited of the way in which the Jesuits do convert ethics into an entirely human affair, elevating reason into the criterion, further illustrates the extent to which Pascal's estimate of human nature influences his outlook in this regard:

"On voit en ce peu de mots l'esprit de ces casuistes, et comme en détruisant les règles de la piété ils font succéder aux préceptes de l'Écriture qui nous oblige de rapporter toutes nos actions à Dieu, une permission brutale de les rapporter toutes à nous-mêmes;--" (p.908; G.E. VII, p.281-2)

The expression "permission brutale" eloquently testifies to the light in which Pascal regards this reversal of criteria. And that his opposition stems at least in part from an unfavourable view of human nature in its present state is made clear in the latter part of the sentence. ⁽¹⁾ The only palpable reason which emerges from the passage why man is disqualified from the office of arbiter of his own acts, is that his judgement has been warped consequent on the corruption of his nature. By contrast, the primary assumption underlying the Jesuit moral theology, at least as Pascal sees it, is that the human faculties are competent guides on ethical questions. ⁽²⁾

The other and more decisive factor combining to make him set his face against the Jesuit approach is his conception of theology as a discipline. In this respect the attack on the Jesuits' casuistry in the Provinciales amounts to little more than a putting into effect of principles enunciated some nine years previously in the Préface pour le traité du vide. Pascal there draws the sharp distinction between the "sciences", where reason and observation must be left unhampered if knowledge is to expand, and those disciplines like history, geography and jurisprudence, where what he designates 'authority' is alone capable of adding to our knowledge. In order to ascertain, for example, who was the first king of the French, or what words were used in a 'dead' language, he claims that it is necessary to have recourse to written records, and that knowledge on these points

(1) "--c'est-à-dire qu'au lieu que Jésus-Christ est venu pour amortir en nous les concupiscences du vieil homme et y faire régner la charité de l'homme nouveau, ceux-ci sont venus pour faire revivre les concupiscences--" (p.908; G.E. VII, p.282)

(2) The implications of this for Pascal's assessment of casuistry are strikingly brought out in the following fragment: "Les casuistes soumettent la décision à la raison corrompue et le choix des décisions à la volonté

cannot extend beyond the information which they contain. He continues:

"C'est l'autorité seule qui nous en peut éclaircir. Mais où cette autorité a la principale force, c'est dans la théologie, parce qu'elle y est inséparable de la vérité, et que nous ne la connaissons que par elle: -- parce que ses principes sont au-dessus de la nature et de la raison,--"
(p.530; G.E. II, p.131)

The source of the authority in this case is the "livres sacrés". Further on in the Préface he refers to the "malice" of those who rely on reason alone in theology instead of the authority of Scripture and the Fathers, and notes that it will be necessary to 'confound the insolence' of those who have been rash enough to introduce novelties in theology. ⁽¹⁾ (p.531;G.E.II, p.133) This clearly foreshadows the attitude of the Provinciales. And Pascal sums up his own view in a short categorical assertion:

"-- les inventions nouvelles sont infailliblement des erreurs dans les matières quel'on profane impunément ;--"(ibid.,G.E.II, p.134)

The same distinction reappears in a slightly different form in the eighteenth Provinciale, where Pascal, in the course of refuting the Jesuit claim to have discovered heretical statements in the writings of

cont.from p.187 corrompue, afin que tout ce qu'il y a de corrompu dans la nature de l'homme ait part à sa conduite. (p.1061; B.907)

(1) According to Nicole in his introduction to the Latin translation of the Provinciales, Pascal fully realized that as far as the subject matter of the Provinciales was concerned such a sharp break-away from the scholastic tradition entailed a fresh approach in both method and terminology: "Il croit pouvoir traiter ces questions, qui faisoient alors tant de bruit, et les débarasser des termes obscurs et équivoques des scolastiques, des vaines chicanes de mots,-- Il eseroit, dis-je, les expliquer d'une maniere si aisée et si proportionnée à l'intelligence de tout le monde,--"(G.E.VII,p.68) Pascal's own remarks in this regard in the 12th letter endorse this view: "--quoique vous ayez pensé qu'en embrouillant les questions par des termes d'Ecole, les réponses en seraient si longues, si obscures et si épineuses qu'on en perdrait goût, cela ne sera peut-être pas tout à fait ainsi; car j'essaierai de vous ennuyer le moins qu'il se peut en ce genre d'écrire.-- c'est vous qui m'engagez d'entrer dans cet éclaircissement,--"(p.793;G.E. V, p.363)

Jansenius, outlines three principles of knowledge, the senses, reason and faith. Each of these has its own particular field of operation where it is capable of attaining certain knowledge. This means that the preliminary step in examining any proposition must always be to determine its nature in order to ascertain to which of the three principles it should be referred:

"S'il s'agit d'une chose surnaturelle, nous n'en jugerons ni par les sens, ni par la raison, mais par l'Écriture et les décisions de l'Église. S'il s'agit d'une proposition non révélée, et proportionnée à la raison naturelle, elle en sera le propre juge." (p.898; G.E. VII, p.50)

Since Pascal also asserts in the same context that faith is the legitimate arbiter of "choses surnaturelles et révélées" (p.897; G.E. VII, p.49), it is plain that in his terminology the adjectives 'supernatural' and 'revealed', if they do not denote precisely the same thing, are used at least to qualify things belonging to the same category. Scripture and the decisions of the Church therefore, not reason, must be regarded as the appropriate referees where anything relating to a 'revealed proposition' is in question.

Elsewhere he insists that 'tradition' is the sole reliable guide to revealed truth. Thus in the Cinquième écrit des curés de Paris it is claimed that:

"Comme notre religion est toute divine, c'est en Dieu seul qu'elle s'appuie, et n'a de doctrine que celle qu'elle a reçue de lui par le canal de la tradition qui est notre véritable règle, -- nous ne croyons aujourd'hui que les choses que nos évêques et nos pasteurs nous ont apprises, et qu'ils avaient eux-mêmes reçues de ceux qui les ont précédés -- et les premiers qui ont été envoyés par

les apôtres, n'ont dit que ce qu'ils en avaient appris." (1)
(p.932; G.E. VII, p.362)

The true Christian tradition can therefore be traced back in a direct line to its divine source, a valuable safeguard for doctrine from aberrations like those implicit in the Jesuit moral theology. A passage from a fragment usually included in the Pensées further illustrates this conception of the role of tradition:

"--l'Eglise aujourd'hui -- a toujours la maxime supérieure de la tradition, de la créance de l'ancienne Eglise; et ainsi cette soumission et cette conformité à l'ancienne Eglise prévaut et corrige tout." (2) (p.1336; B.867)

And in the fifth Provinciale the Jesuit doctrine of 'probable opinions' is rejected on the following grounds:

"--comme si la foi, et la tradition qui la maintient, n'était pas toujours une et invariable dans tous les temps et dans tous les lieux; comme si c'était à la règle à se fléchir pour convenir au sujet qui doit lui être conforme; --" (p.706; G.E.)

Now since the true principles of ethics form part of a system of revealed truth, it follows that those who treat of ethical questions must abide by these categories. Revelation is a self-sufficient and self-contained order of truth whose ultimate foundation is divine authority and not natural reason. And in terms of the principles outlined in the passages from the Préface and the eighteenth Provinciale the Jesuit

(1) cf. the Premier écrit sur la grâce, where Pascal maintains that in order to determine the truth of the Church's 'opinion' as against that of her opponents "La règle que nous prendrons pour cet effet sera la tradition successive de cette doctrine depuis Jésus-Christ jusqu'à nous." (p.957-8)

(2) Another fragment dealing with miracles contains the significant judgement that: "--la vraie source de la vérité-- est la tradition,--" (p.1066; B.832)

casuistry amounts to illegitimately setting up "raison naturelle" as arbiter in matters quite beyond its compass. As a result the Jesuits have been induced to make innovations just as if moral theology were a branch of the 'sciences', whereas rightly they should have confined themselves to ascertaining and relating the decisions recorded by the Church and the Fathers. This deviation in itself would have sufficed to secure Pascal's opposition; but that they should go further and presume to attenuate the very revealed precepts themselves, transmitted "par le canal de la tradition", in order to bring them into line with what he regards as the corrupt tendencies of human nature, and having done so that they should defend "comme la vraie morale de l'Eglise cette morale corrompue",⁽¹⁾ appears to him tantamount to rejecting the true Christian ethic in its entirety.

(vi) Pascal and the moral standards of the nobility.

(a) The rejection of casuistry

There also lies behind Pascal's attack on the Jesuit casuistry in the Provinciales what is essentially a demand for a reversal of the moral values prized by the contemporary nobility. Several passages attest his belief that the various casuistical devices employed by the Jesuits are designed to make the Christian ethic more palatable to the worldly aristocracy.

(1) Second écrit des curés de Paris, p.919; G.E. VII, p.310

In the Second écrit des curés de Paris he remarks that the Jesuits form the most powerful and numerous order in the Church, "qui gouverne les consciences presque de tous les grands."⁽¹⁾ (p.926;G.E. VII, p.323) And some notes for the Provinciales contain two significant references to the Jesuits' 'politics', the word used by Pascal to designate their attempt to come to terms with the code of behaviour accepted by that class:

"Politique. - Nous avons trouvé deux obstacles au dessein de soulager les hommes: l'un, des lois intérieures de l'Évangile, l'autre, des lois extérieures de l'État et de la religion. Les unes, nous en sommes maîtres, les autres,--" (p.1056; B.926)

"Le monde veut naturellement une religion, mais douce, --On ne vit pas longtemps dans l'impiété ouverte, ni naturellement dans les grandes austérités. Une religion accommodée est propre à durer."⁽²⁾ (p.1056-7; B.956)

One of the means whereby the Jesuits seek to achieve their aim of a "religion douce", whose demands will not prove offensive to their aristocratic clientele, is the doctrine of "grace actuelle" which greatly restricts the range of acts that can be imputed sins. In the fourth letter Pascal claims that this plays into the hands of those whose whole life is taken up with:

"--une recherche continuelle de toutes sortes de plaisirs, dont jamais le moindre remords n'a interrompu le cours." (p.695; G.E. IV, p.255)

(1) Pascal emphasizes the influential position occupied by the Jesuits with respect to the privileged classes in two brief passages from some notes for the Provinciales: "Je suis seul contre trente mille? Point. Gardez, vous la cour, vous l'imposture; moi la vérité." (p.1052;B.921) Again he implies that they specially cater for those of royal blood: "Il importe aux rois et aux princes d'être en estime de piété. Et pour cela, il faut qu'ils se confessent à vous." (p.1053;B.924)

(2) M. Bénichou describes the sort of compromise which the Jesuits set themselves to effect as: "--à la fois une conquête du christianisme sur la société laïque et un recul du christianisme devant les valeurs issues spontanément des conditions de la vie noble." Morales du grand siècle, (Paris,1948),p.81-2.

And in reply to the Jesuit's attempt to get round this difficulty by alleging that even such persons as these do experience a God-given desire to avoid their sinful actions, Pascal objects:

"--je me tiens obligé -- de vous désabuser, et de vous dire qu'il y a mille gens qui n'ont point ces désirs, qui pêchent sans regret, qui pêchent avec joie, -- Et qui peut en savoir plus de nouvelles que vous? Il n'est pas que vous ne confessiez quelqu'un de ceux dont je parle; car c'est parmi les personnes de grande qualité qu'il s'en rencontre d'ordinaire." (p.696; G.E. IV, p.257)

Similarly in the seventh letter the method of 'directing the intention' is represented as having been developed specifically with a view to condoning the 'dominant passion' of the privileged classes for the "point d'honneur", and the violent means usually resorted to in vindicating it. (1)

When the Jesuit describes the gulf separating the "loi de l'Evangile" from the "lois du monde", which the casuists believe they have managed to bridge by this principle, Pascal is forced to admit that his first reaction of astonishment at their success was not strong enough.

"Je tiendrais la chose impossible, si, après ce que j'ai vu de vos Pères, je ne savais qu'ils peuvent faire facilement ce qui est impossible aux autres hommes. C'est ce qui me fait croire qu'ils en ont bien trouvé quelque moyen,--" (p.728; G.E. V, p.85)

The restrained irony of this purported reply shows plainly enough that Pascal regards the two terms which the Jesuits attempt to reconcile in this way - "piété" and "honneur" - as utterly irreconcilable.

Moreover, according to him the whole doctrine of probabilism has its roots in the desire to come to terms with current aristocratic values.

(1) By means of this method the casuists are allegedly enabled to permit "les violences qu'on pratique en défendant son honneur. Car il n'y a qu'à détourner son intention du désir de vengeance, qui est criminel, pour la porter au désir de défendre son honneur, qui est permis selon nos Pères. Et c'est ainsi qu'ils accomplissent tous leurs devoirs envers Dieu et envers les hommes." (p.728-9; G.E.V, p.86-7) In Pascal's terms this procedure
cont.p.194.

"Que serait-ce que les Jésuites sans la probabilité, et que la probabilité sans les Jésuites? Otez la probabilité, on ne peut plus plaire au monde; mettez la probabilité, on ne peut plus lui déplaire." (p.1063;B.935)

"Peut-ce être autre chose que la complaisance du monde qui vous fasse trouver les choses probables? Nous ferez-vous accroire que ce soit la vérité, et que, si la mode du duel n'était point, vous trouveriez probable qu'on se peut battre, en regardant la chose en elle-même?"(1) (ibid.,B.910)

By decreeing that any opinion which can claim the authority of even just a single doctor is 'probable', and may therefore be followed in conscience, the Jesuits are enabled to expunge, or at least to play down to such an extent that they cease to obtrude, those elements in the Christian ethical system which the worldly aristocracy finds obnoxious. And it is clear that Pascal regards the terms of the Jesuit moral theology as not merely orientated toward, but in effect dictated by, what is current practice among the mass of those men who count socially.

Pascal nowhere questions that the design of embracing the whole world within the arms of the Christian faith, which leads the Jesuits to adopt this "conduite 'obligeante et accommodante' "(p.705;G.E. IV,p.300) toward the code of behaviour favoured by the privileged classes, is in itself a perfectly laudable one; but he alleges that in their case it has its springs in self-esteem, in the desire for the advancement of their own

cont.from p.193. amounts to effecting a compromise of "les lois humaines avec les divines." (ibid.)

(1)Brunetière maintains that the Jesuits saw in probabilism "un moyen de concilier les exigences de la morale chrétienne avec le train du monde;-- Les textes sont formels sur ce point: 'Combien n'ont-ils pas tort,s'écrit Escobar, dans le Préambule de sa grande Théologie morale, ceux qui se plaignent qu'en matière de conduite, les docteurs leur produisent tant et de si diverses décisions! Mais ils devraient plutôt s'en réjouir, en y voyant autant de motifs nouveaux de consolation et d'espérance. Car la diversité des opinions en morale, c'est le joug du Seigneur rendu plus facile et plus doux!--' Et il dit encore plus loin,--: 'La Providence a voulu, dans son infinie bonté, qu'il y eût plusieurs moyens de se tirer d'affaire en

cont. p.195.

(1)
 cause rather than that of the Christian religion itself. Furthermore he considers that, in order to realize their ideal of a Church co-extensive with the world, they are stooping to unworthy compromises. His own insistence in this regard is that the Christian ethic requires the world to be levelled up and not the Church to be levelled down. And the reason why the casuistical decisions authorizing such aristocratic pastimes as duelling should be singled out so frequently for condemnation is, not simply because this represents the most vulnerable point in the Jesuit armour, but more basically because the aristocratic way of life requires more numerous and more serious attenuations than any other in the standard of Christian conduct prized so highly by Pascal if the sort of compromise aimed at by the Jesuits is to be secured.

(b) Rejection of the 'ethical' values of the contemporary aristocracy

M. Bénichou describes in the following terms the code of values subscribed to by the great majority of Pascal's aristocratic contemporaries:

cont. from p.194. morale, et que les voies de la vertu fussent larges, 'patescere', afin de vérifier la parole du Psalmiste: 'Vias tuas, Domine, demonstra mihi.' Voilà le dernier terme du probabilisme,--" Etudes critiques sur l'histoire de la littérature française, Quatrième série, (Paris 1898) p.93-4.

(1) cf. from the 5th letter: "Ils ont assez bonne opinion d'eux-mêmes pour croire qu'il est utile et comme nécessaire au bien de la religion que leur crédit s'étende partout, et qu'ils gouvernent toutes les consciences." Hence the scriptural precepts are enforced with full rigour or relaxed as the circumstances require. (p.704-5; G.E., IV, p.299-300) In the 16th letter Pascal comments on the permission granted by numerous casuists to take communion after committing even the most abominable sins: "Voilà ce que c'est, mes Pères, d'avoir des Jésuites par toute la terre. Voilà la pratique universelle que vous y avez introduite -- Il n'importe que les tables de Jésus-Christ soient remplies d'abominations, pourvu que vos églises soient
 cont.p.196.

"Dans ce qui subsistait alors de la société féodale, les valeurs suprêmes étaient l'ambition, l'audace, le succès. Le poids de l'épée, la hardiesse des appétits et du verbe faisaient le mérite; le mal résidait dans la faiblesse ou la timidité, dans le fait de désirer peu, d'oser petitement, de subir une blessure sans la rendre: on s'excluait par là du rang des maîtres pour rentrer dans le commun troupeau."⁽¹⁾ A passage from the fourteenth Provinciale shows very plainly that it is precisely these values which Pascal rejects so emphatically in his attack on the Jesuit casuistry. Adapting Saint Augustine's division between the "civitas Dei" and the "civitas terrena" to his own purposes, he notes that:

"Il y a deux peuples et deux mondes répandus sur toute la terre, -- le monde des enfants de Dieu qui forme un corps dont Jésus-Christ est le chef et le roi; et le monde ennemi de Dieu, dont le diable est le chef et le roi."
(p.830; G.E. VI, p.152)

Christ, Pascal claims, has established in the Church, his 'empire', such laws as seemed good to him, and the devil has done likewise in the world, his 'kingdom'.

"Jésus-Christ a mis l'honneur à souffrir; le diable à ne point souffrir. Jésus-Christ a dit à ceux qui reçoivent un soufflet de tendre l'autre joue; et le diable a dit à ceux à qui on veut donner un soufflet de tuer ceux qui voudront leur faire cette injure.

Jésus-Christ déclare heureux ceux qui participent à son

cont. from p. 195 pleines de monde." (p.854;G.E.VI, p.270) And in a brief fragment included in the Pensées he maintains: "Ils ne peuvent avoir la perpétuité, et ils cherchent l'universalité; et pour cela ils font toute l'Eglise corrompue, afin qu'ils soient saints." (p.1332; B.898)

(1)op.cit., p. 19. In his chapter entitled "la démolition du héros," M.Bénichou shows how the Jansenist strain in French Literature generally in the 17th century tended to undermine the 'heroic' values to which the nobility looked as their ideals in conduct. What represented to the contemporary aristocracy an ideal, was treated by the pessimistic moralists as basically vicious, the manifestation of man's fallen condition, cf. also Lovejoy, op.cit., ch. 1+2.

ignominie, et le diable déclare malheureux ceux qui sont dans l'ignominie. Jésus-Christ dit: Malheur à vous, quand les hommes disent du bien de vous! et le diable dit: Malheur à ceux dont le monde ne parle pas avec estime!"(1)
(p.830-1; G.E. VI, p.153)

The values which Pascal here declares to be of diabolical origin, a judgement which vividly attests his own estimate of their worth, mirror in all important respects those enumerated by M. Bénichou. Thus the position Pascal adopts on this question involves him in a thorough-going rejection of the whole basis of the current aristocratic code of behaviour, with which the Jesuits set themselves to effect a workable compromise from the nobility's point of view.

Further judgements significant in this respect occur earlier in the same letter, when Pascal takes the Jesuits to task over their endeavour to adjust the demands of the Christian moral law to those of the "point d'honneur" cherished by the nobility. He maintains that no amount of equivocation on their part can disguise the fact that their casuists make it permissible to kill in order to defend one's honour, thereby authorizing duels. The only authority which can be adduced in support of such "maximes diaboliques" is a piece of what Pascal describes as "raisonnement impie":

(1) Pascal goes on to point out that on this reckoning the Jesuit decisions making it permissible to kill in the event of receiving an affront, rather than to turn the other cheek, and agreeing that to let an affront go unavenged would involve loss of honour, classify their authors as "enfants du diable". (p.831; G.E. VI, p.154) It is this 'honour', which they, in common with their aristocratic clientele, show themselves so anxious to preserve unsullied, that the devil "a transmis de son esprit superbe en celui de ses superbes enfants. C'est cet honneur qui a toujours été l'idole des hommes, possédés par l'esprit du monde.--l'honneur des Chrétiens consiste dans l'observation des ordres de Dieu et des règles du christianisme, et non pas dans ce fantôme d'honneur que vous prétendez, tout vain qu'il soit, être une excuse légitime pour les meurtres." (p.831-2; G.E. VI, p.154-5)

" 'L'honneur est plus cher que la vie. Or, il est permis de tuer pour défendre sa vie. Donc il est permis de tuer pour défendre son honneur?' Quoi! mes Peres, parce que le dérèglement des hommes leur a fait aimer ce faux honneur plus que la vie que Dieu leur a donnée pour le servir, il leur sera permis de tuer pour le conserver? C'est cela même qui est un mal horrible, d'aimer cet honneur-là, plus que la vie. Et cependant cette attache vicieuse, qui serait capable de souiller les actions les plus saintes, si on les rapportait à cette fin,--" (p.825; G.E. VI, p.142-3)

Despite the considerable element of clever tactics here, Pascal's own standpoint, as distinct from what he claims to be the 'Christian' one, emerges clearly enough in regard to the aristocratic practices which the Jesuits set out to condone. For it is by no means just the Jesuit casuistry that comes in for denunciation in this passage. When he describes maxims which no French aristocrat of the time would have hesitated to endorse, at least in word if not in deed, as "raisonnement impie", and adherence to them as a "mal horrible" and "attache vicieuse", which stems from man's "dérèglement", Pascal undermines the foundations of a whole body of accepted values, and sets up by contrast a criterion which would have found little favour in the eyes of the privileged classes.

Pascal's use of the term "honneur" elsewhere without the derogatory implications which it carries in the foregoing extracts, suggests that his opposition to it as the principle determining conduct is limited to the interpretation placed on it in such a context by the worldly aristocracy. Thus in the last-quoted passage when he designates as "faux" this aristocratic honour, ⁽¹⁾ devotion to which if looked to as the 'end' in

(1) cf. also from the Second écrit, where Pascal again denounces this 'false' honour: "Nous les voyons--autoriser opiniâtement la vengeance, l'avarice, la volupté, le faux honneur,--" (p.926; G.E. VII, p.323)

conduct suffices to contaminate even the holiest acts, the implication is that there is a true honour which may legitimately be proposed as a criterion of action. And in the fourteenth letter he actually refers to "l'honneur des Chrétiens", which prompts them to act in accordance with the divine will, (1) contrasting it with what in the nobility's case is a mere "fantôme d'honneur" since this forms the motivating force behind such depraved practices as duelling. Again, in some notes obviously intended for the Provinciales, he describes the Jesuits as:

"Gens sans parole, sans foi, sans honneur, sans vérité,--"
(p.1053; B.924)

Honour is here accorded a very definite positive value in a moral context, since it is placed by implication on a par with such virtues as keeping one's word and speaking the truth. (2)

Moreover, when occasion demands Pascal shows himself quite ready to vindicate his own personal 'honour'. In his second letter to M. de Ribeyre, protesting against the accusation that he claimed Torricelli's experiment as his own invention, he writes:

"-- le reproche -- de larcin est de telle nature, qu'un homme d'honneur ne doit point souffrir de s'en avoir accusé, sans s'exposer au péril que son silence tienne lieu de conviction. Ainsi étant très ponctuellement averti comme j'étais,-- de toutes les circonstances de cet acte, jugez, Monsieur, si je pouvais m'en taire à mon honneur; et, puisque cet acte avait été public, si je ne devais pas repousser cette injure de la même manière." (p.410; G.E.II, p.301)

(1) cf. passage cited above, p.

(2) cf. also from the Cinquième écrit des curés de Paris, where Pascal alleges that in the present state of confusion, which has resulted from the Jesuits treating as Calvinists all those not subscribing to their views, and from the Calvinists classifying all Catholics as Jesuits, it is impossible to postpone the work of clarification "sans exposer l'honneur de l'Eglise et le salut d'une infinité de personnes." (p.935; G.E.VII, p.367)

The action which Pascal seeks to justify here in the name of 'honour' can scarcely be defined as 'turning the other cheek', nor does such concern for his own 'honour' tally in the least with his critical attitude in the Provinciales to the interest which the nobility displays in that regard. (1)

In the seventh letter the account of the decisions which have resulted from the application of the Jesuit principle of 'directing the conscience' to concrete instances again draws strictures from Pascal on the aristocratic "point d'honneur" that lies behind it. Commenting on the judgement of Hurtado and Escobar, that it is permissible to fight a duel in order to defend one's honour, he notes:

"J'admire sur ces passages de voir que la piété du roi emploie sa puissance à défendre et à abolir le duel dans ses Etats, et que la piété des Jésuites occupe leur subtilité à le permettre et à l'autoriser dans l'Eglise."
(p.731; G.E. V, p.92)

And following the Jesuits' exposition of Escobar's maxim, that it is legitimate to kill in order to avenge an affront and so preserve one's honour, Pascal remarks:

"Cela me parut si horrible, que j'eus peine à me retenir; mais, pour savoir le reste, je le laissai continuer ainsi--"
(p.734; G.E. V, p.96)

(1) cf. the similar example in the letter to Le Pailleur, where Pascal gives his reasons for discontinuing his correspondence with Noël. In compliance with Noël's express wish that the contents of his last letter be kept private Pascal has refrained from replying. As a result he has been accused by other Jesuit adversaries of concealing the contents of the letter because they carry a decisive refutation of his own views. And Pascal appeals to Le Pailleur as follows: "Voyez, Monsieur, combien cette conjoncture m'était contraire, puisque je n'ai pu cacher sa lettre sans désavantage, ni la publier sans infidélité; et que mon honneur était également menacé par ma réponse et par ma silence,--" (p.378; G.E.II, p.180) In the Pensées however, care for honour is classified as a "divertissement". "Divertissement. - On charge les hommes, dès l'enfance, du soin de leur honneur,--on leur fait entendre qu'ils ne sauraient être heureux sans que--leur honneur--soit en bon état,--" (p.1145; B.143) Elsewhere it is described as a manifestation of that desire for the esteem of our fellows which leads us eventually to replace our real selves by the facade we wish to appear as: "--nous voulons
cont. p.201.

A little further on he describes his reaction when asked by the Jesuit if he desired additional proof of the general acceptance of this tenet by the casuists:

"Je l'en remerciai, car, je n'en avais que trop entendu.
Mais pour voir jusqu'où irait une si damnable doctrine,--"
(ibid.; G.E. V, p.98)

When allowances have been made for the tactical devices which Pascal employs, his evident approval of the king's action in prohibiting duels, together with the use in this context of such expressions as "si horrible", "si damnable", and indeed the whole tone of the two last-quoted extracts, still amply attest his rooted antipathy not merely to the Jesuit principle in question, but also to the aristocratic 'right' and practice it is designed to sanction.

Yet further examples of this criticism of Jesuit concessions to contemporary social standards occur in the ninth letter in connection with the conception of what Christian devotion entails. Pascal's Jesuit is there represented as saying that since the worldly are commonly frightened off by the uninviting aspect under which 'devotion' is presented, the members of his order have considered it a step of the first importance for the success of their ministry to the privileged classes to remove this obstacle:

"--pour vous faire voir en détail combien nos Pères en ont ôté de peines, n'est-ce pas une chose bien pleine de consolation pour les ambitieux, d'apprendre qu'ils peuvent conserver une véritable dévotion avec un amour désordonné pour les grandeurs?⁽¹⁾ Eh quoi! mon Père, avec

cont. from p.200. vivre dans l'idée des autres d'une vie imaginaire, et nous nous efforçons pour cela de paraître.--qui ne mourrait pour conserver son honneur, celui-là serait infâme. (p.1128; B.147)

(1) cf. from the same letter: "Voilà, lui dis-je, de belles décisions en faveur de la vanité, de l'ambition, et de l'avarice." (p.758; G.E.V, p.201)
And in the Pensées Pascal affirms: "Les conditions les plus aisées à vivre
cont. p. 202.

quelque excès qu'ils les recherchent? Oui, dit-il;--"
(p.756-7; G.E. V, p.199)

Once again it is not merely the Jesuit attempt to accommodate the requirements of what he claims to be true Christian piety to worldly ambition that Pascal is here concerned to expose to odium; the criticism, veiled though it may be, goes deeper. What he is attacking behind the Jesuits is the way in which the influential element in society has come to regard such ambition as normal and even desirable, accepting it as the basis of their code of behaviour.

Similar implications lie behind the charge brought against the casuists' attenuations, in favour of the wealthy, of the established Christian practice of giving alms to relieve the poor. Having cited passages from Cajetan and Aquinas in support of the view that Christians are obliged to give all their 'superfluous' wealth in alms, Pascal continues:

"Et cependant il ne plaît à Vasquez qu'on soit obligé d'en donner une partie seulement, tant il a de complaisance pour les riches, de dureté pour les pauvres, et d'opposition à ces sentiments de charité qui font trouver douce la vérité de ces paroles de Saint Grégoire, laquelle paraît si rude aux riches du monde:--" (p.797;G.E.V, p.372)

The phrase "tant il a de complaisance pour les riches" indicates the mainspring, as Pascal would have it, of the Jesuit ethical system - to conform 'Christian' morality to current values. However, despite this strategic opposition, it is plain that the view to which he subscribes on

cont. from p. 201 selon le monde sont les plus difficiles à vivre selon Dieu; et au contraire:-- Rien n'est plus aisé que d'être dans une grande charge et dans de grands biens selon le monde; rien n'est plus difficile que d'y vivre selon Dieu, et sans y prendre de part et de goût." (p.1308; B.906)

this question, at least as it is summarized in the passage quoted from Saint Gregory, involves a complete transvaluation of such values. It is because his opinion - that alleviating the hardship of the poor means simply restoring to them what is legitimately their's - implies the absolute denial of a worldly code grounded in ambition orientated toward self-aggrandizement, that the truth it sets forth appears "si rude aux riches du monde".

Finally a passage from the Second écrit des curés de Paris is particularly significant in this regard, since Pascal there implies that the aristocratic values which he is concerned to repudiate are the offshoots of man's corrupt nature. Thus one of the reasons advanced for calling the Jesuits to account is that:

"Nous les voyons malgré tous les avertissements charitables qu'on leur a donnés -- autoriser opiniâtement la vengeance, l'avarice, la volupté, le faux honneur, l'amour-propre et toutes les passions de la nature corrompue,--"(p.926; G.E.VII,p.323)

The Jesuits therefore, in their quest for easier terms of sympathy between God and the nobility, degrade religious values to conformity with what Pascal regards as the corrupt tendencies of human nature, thereby undermining what is for him the whole purpose of ethics - to direct men to live up to their own true nature. The evil of casuistry, as practised in relation to the privileged classes, lies in the attempt to reconcile two fundamentally disparate orders of values simply by permitting the individual to persist in his pursuit of values belonging to the lower order while guaranteeing him access to those of the higher without having to fulfil the essential condition, viz eliminating from his conduct of life precisely those values which go to make up the content of the lower order.

Chapter three: The primacy of the 'end' in Pascal's moral values

(i)(a) The pursuit of truth and happiness interpreted as the pointer to man's 'end'

The importance which Pascal assigns in a moral context to man's desire and pursuit after truth and happiness is brought out by implication in several fragments from the Pensées, where he employs his stock 'proof' that something has gone awry with human nature from the fact of its present dichotomy and manifest incompleteness. The form of argument is familiar enough: despite the fact that man is impelled by his very nature to embark upon the quest for truth and happiness,⁽¹⁾ and that his native potential in this direction seems unimpaired, yet the quest inevitably results in disillusionment. And in this universal consciousness (as he claims it to be) of the hiatus in man's nature Pascal finds evidence of an historic fall from a state where that nature was complete - a notion which he develops along lines rather similar to those of the Platonic theory of reminiscence.

"Nous souhaitons la vérité, et ne trouvons en nous qu'incertitude. Nous recherchons le bonheur, et ne trouvons que misère et mort. Nous sommes incapables de ne pas souhaiter la vérité et le bonheur, et sommes incapables ni de certitude ni de bonheur." (p.1158; B.437)

(1) In view of the constant association of these two terms in the ensuing passages, and since Pascal leaves the precise nature of the 'truth' here in question undefined, it seems legitimate to infer that he believes the attainment of ultimate happiness consists in vision of the truth. It is clear that he considers the satisfaction of the yearning for full and perfect truth, for knowledge of the inmost core and reality of things, can only be achieved in some form of beatific vision. In the Pensées he not only expressly identifies truth with God - "Dieu, qu'on sait être la vérité" (p.1115; B.536) - but even goes so far as to virtually deprive of all positive value any truth apart from God: "On se fait une idole de la vérité même; car la vérité hors de la charité n'est pas Dieu, et est son image et une idole qu'il ne faut point aimer, ni adorer;--" (p.1277; B.582)

"--c'est être malheureux que de vouloir et ne pouvoir. Or l'homme veut être heureux, et assuré de quelque vérité; et cependant il ne peut ni savoir, ni ne désirer point de savoir." (p.1184; B.389)

"Voilà l'état où les hommes sont aujourd'hui. Il leur reste quelque instinct impuissant du bonheur de leur première nature, et ils sont plongés dans les misères de leur aveuglement et de leur concupiscence,--"(p.1224;B.430)

"Instinct, raison. - Nous avons une impuissance de prouver, invincible à tout le dogmatisme. Nous avons une idée de la vérité, invincible à tout le pyrrhonisme." (p.1159;B.395)

"Tous les hommes recherchent d'être heureux: cela est sans exception; quelques différents moyens qu'ils y emploient, ils tendent tous à ce but." (p.1184; B.425)

"Notre instinct nous fait sentir qu'il faut chercher notre bonheur hors de nous." (p.1190;B.464)

"Nonobstant ces misères, il veut être heureux, et ne veut être qu'heureux, et ne peut ne vouloir pas l'être;--" (p.1147; B.169)

"--enfin si l'homme n'avait jamais été corrompu, il jouirait dans son innocence et de la vérité et de la félicité avec assurance; et si l'homme n'avait jamais été que corrompu, il n'aurait aucune idée ni de la vérité ni de la béatitude. Mais, malheureux que nous sommes, et plus que s'il n'y avait point de grandeur dans notre condition, nous avons une idée du bonheur et ne pouvons y arriver; nous sentons une image de la vérité, et ne possédons que le mensonge:--" (p.1207; B.434)

The very fact that Pascal does thus construe the presence of these seemingly incompatible components in our nature, as it now is, as evidence that "nous avons été dans un degré de perfection dont nous sommes malheureusement déchus" (ibid), testifies to the importance which he ascribes to the pursuit of truth and happiness in the moral life of man. For in the last passage quoted the present dim, but unmistakable, awareness of truth and happiness, which persists in despite of all vicissitudes, and renders us incapable of finding any real or lasting satisfaction among

the objects that surround us in our actual condition, is expressly stated to be the residuum of our previous "grandeur". The desire for truth and happiness is therefore but the expression of man's desire to regain what Pascal holds to be his true status.

It is this, viewed in the perspective of the Fall, that enables him to go further and identify the object that will give completion to man's desire for happiness with the 'end' for which he has been created. The fragment from the Pensées where Pascal contrasts the two standpoints, from which he alleges it is possible to judge human nature, is illuminating in this regard since it shows how he envisages the question of the 'end' in terms of the familiar "grandeur - misère" opposition, and also how he sets up this 'end' as the criterion of action.

"La nature de l'homme se considère en deux manières:
l'une selon sa fin, et alors il est grand et incomparable:
l'autre selon la multitude, comme on juge de la nature du cheval et du chien, par la multitude, d'y voir la course, 'et animum arcendi'; et alors l'homme est abject et vil.
Et voilà les deux voies qui en font juger diversement,--"
(p.1155; B.415)

Man's nature when regarded in the light of the 'end', to which Pascal believes his potential and aspirations point, is adjudged therefore "grand et incomparable": a judgement which reflects back on the value of the pursuit of truth and happiness. M. Brunschvicg's interpretation of this contrast between "multitude" and "fin", to mean the opposition of the generality of cases, which defines man's real nature, to the ideal nature which is his true destiny,⁽¹⁾ seems to me misleading. Quite apart from the fact that the whole drift of the Pensées is to demonstrate that what is

(1) ed. min., p.514, w.1.

here designated "la multitude" does not correspond to man's 'real' nature, the term "fin" in Pascal's vocabulary is never synonymous with "nature" even construed in an ideal sense. Man's 'end', wherein he finds fulfilment, is always ascribed to a centre and source beyond the self. Nor does his 'true destiny' consist in the attainment of any 'ideal nature', precisely because that destiny is an otherworldly one, which can be realized only by attaining to union with God. It is for this reason Pascal displays such concern to affirm that in man which points beyond the self to the infinite and eternal, as the 'end' wherein alone it can find rest. Thus he claims that man's nature, with its unrealized capacity for truth and happiness, bears witness to this otherworldly destiny.

However, there is a curious inconsistency in Pascal's reasoning in this passage, for the derogatory adjectives, "abject et vil", alleged to be appropriate to describe man's nature when assessed according to his actual performance in the course of life⁽¹⁾ ("selon la multitude"), carry a very definite adverse moral judgement. Clearly therefore this estimate has not been made "selon la multitude", from a purely external point of view, as it might be in the case of a horse or dog. That view-point presupposes a close relation between what actually is and what ought to be, and sets up as standard of judgement the normal specimen of the particular class in question. Since Pascal is plainly using the noun "l'homme" in the generic sense to denote mankind at large, he must, in order to adjudge

(1) Both the further qualifying phrase, "d'y voir la course", and the fact that the worth of a horse or dog is assessed in this way, make it clear that such is the meaning which Pascal here intends to convey.

it "abject et vil", appeal beyond what men's performance shows their nature to be to some further criterion. Even when he professes to be judging man's nature "selon la multitude" therefore, Pascal is in fact measuring his achievements against the end for which his aspirations after truth and happiness show him to be destined.

(b) The goal of this pursuit identified with the 'true good'

Yet not merely does Pascal see in this desire for truth and happiness the pointers to man's final 'end', but he also explicitly aligns the pursuit of them with the "recherche du vrai bien". In a long fragment from the Pensées, having declared that all men without exception seek happiness in an indeterminate sense,⁽¹⁾ and that this desire forms the dominant motive actuating all human behaviour, he goes on:

"Et cependant, depuis un si grand nombre d'années, jamais personne, sans la foi, n'est arrivé à ce point où tous visent continuellement. -- Une épreuve si longue, si continuelle et si uniforme, devrait bien nous convaincre de notre impuissance d'arriver au bien par nos efforts;--"
(p.1185; B.425)

Men universally desire to be happy therefore, but there is no universal desire for happiness in what Thomas Aquinas calls its "specific notion,"⁽²⁾ no agreement about the object external to the self in which happiness is

(1) cf. above, p. 205. "Tous les hommes recherchent d'être heureux: cela est sans exception: quelques différents moyens qu'ils y emploient, ils tendent tous à ce but."

(2) S.T. Ia IIae. q.5, a.8.

to be attained. And Pascal concludes his account of the great variety of opinions as to the quarter in which the "véritable bien" is to be looked for, with the reflection that they have come closest to the truth in this matter who claim that it cannot consist in particular things, in which one man's gain is another's loss, but that it must be such that all men may possess it at once without anyone being worse off in respect of it because another has it:

"Ils ont compris que le vrai bien devait être tel -- et leur raison est que ce désir étant naturel à l'homme, puisque'il est nécessairement dans tous, et qu'il ne peut pas ne le pas avoir,--" (p.1186; B.425)

Thus, despite the insistence that all men's attempts to realize it by their own strength have left this most fundamental need of their nature unsupplied, the desire after truth and happiness is identified with the pursuit of the 'true good'. Moreover, Pascal's language here makes it plain that he intends by the expression "vrai bien" something quite apart from man's own peculiar goodness, in the sense of a native potential which merely requires to be developed.

- (ii) Man's power of conscious thought has value in so far as it enables him to pursue the 'end'.

This identification of man's pursuit of truth and happiness with that of the true good, and of the attainment of them with the attainment by man of his 'end', has important implications for Pascal's conception of the dignity that attaches to human thought. For this dignity is seen to consist

precisely in the fact that man's power of reflection enables him to act deliberately in view of what he recognizes to be conducive to the attainment of his end and final happiness. It is this that raises him above the level of the purely instinctive behaviour which characterizes other animals.

Pascal follows the Aristotelean tradition of the Schoolmen in considering the capacity for conscious thought as the 'differentia' that marks off man from inanimate things and the sentient brutes.

"Je puis bien concevoir un homme sans mains, pieds, tête,
-- Mais je ne puis concevoir l'homme sans pensée: ce serait
une pierre ou une brute." (p.1156; B.339)

For Pascal it follows not only that, looked at simply as one object among others in nature, man's whole dignity resides in this capacity, but further that 'ethics' can be defined as the right exercise of it:

"Tout notre dignité consiste donc en la pensée. C'est de là qu'il faut nous relever -- Travaillons donc à bien penser: voilà le principe de la morale." (p.1157; B.347)

This view is reiterated in another very significant fragment, where Pascal goes on to outline the framework within which this 'right thinking' should be conducted:

"L'homme est visiblement fait pour penser; c'est toute sa dignité et tout son mérite, et tout son devoir est de penser comme il faut. Or l'ordre de la pensée est de commencer par soi, et par son auteur et sa fin." (p.1146; B.146)

Now although Pascal thus replaces the objective scholastic conception of the 'end' by an entirely subjective one stipulating a personal enquiry on the part of the individual, this cannot be taken to mean that he envisages

the 'end' in terms of some ideal human nature. To equate the 'end' with man's dignity as a rational animal, or anything of that sort, results in his terms in something very like tautology, viz man's dignity lies in the fact that it is in his nature to be a rational animal and this constitutes his 'end': man's end is to attain the dignity of his true nature which is to be a rational animal.

When the last sentence quoted is considered in the light of the definition in the previous extract, and of Pascal's alignment of man's 'end' with that which fulfils the desire of happiness and truth inalienable from his nature, it becomes apparent that the individual, his needs and their satisfaction, are of supreme moment in Pascalian 'ethic'. Such a frankly egocentric moral outlook, characteristic of his age,⁽¹⁾ results in a conception of 'ethics' as primarily concerned, not with abstract notions of justice or duty, nor even with practical "bienfaisance", but with problems relating to the individual's hopes and fears regarding his estate and destiny. For Pascal the vital question is: What is the ultimate good in which happiness is to be found? And it is not until the satisfactory answer to this question has been found that he considers it possible to go on and ask the further question: What course of action will be appropriate for a particular individual in a given instance? Thus ethical action in his view is motivated by the desire for the supreme good that

(1) According to Lanson even in the 18th century in France this kind of outlook was predominant: "Si l'on excepte la morale de Rousseau, --toutes les morales se ramènent à la morale du bonheur, à celle de l'intérêt bien entendu, et à celle de la bienfaisance." art.cit.,p.7-8. Cassirer also emphasizes the originality of Rousseau's approach to ethics in this regard. op.cit., p.153 ff.

constitutes man's true end wherein his yearning for happiness will be assuaged, and not by the desire to do what one ought. Nowhere in his extant writings does he recognize acts done for duty's sake as the distinctive type of ethical behaviour.

That Pascal does conceive of the dignity of human thought as wholly dependent on its being used to direct man to the attainment of the goal of his existence is sufficiently attested by two further passages from the Pensées. In the second half of the fragment already quoted, where he insists on the rightful priority in the "ordre de pensée" of man's own nature, ground and end, he goes on to enumerate what supersedes these in the thinking of the mass of men:

"Or à quoi pense le monde? Jamais à cela; mais à danser, à jouer du luth, à chanter, à faire des vers, à courir la bague, etc., à se battre, à se faire roi, sans penser à ce que c'est qu'être roi, et qu'être homme." (p.1146; B.146)

The picture presented by this misusage, as he regards it, of the precious capacity which alone sets man at an advantage over the natural and physical orders by enabling him to reflect on the ends of his actions - allowing it to become absorbed in such aimless and frivolous pursuits - draws from Pascal the following conclusion:

"Pensée: - Toute la dignité de l'homme est en la pensée. Mais qu'est-ce que cette pensée? Qu'elle est sotte!

La pensée est donc une chose admirable et incomparable par sa nature. Il fallait qu'elle eût d'étranges défauts pour être méprisable; mais elle en a de tels que rien n'est plus ridicule. Qu'elle est grande par sa nature! qu'elle est basse par ses défauts!" (p.1156; B.365)

Since the 'defects' of thought here referred to consist simply in its being engrossed in what Pascal regards as futile distractions, he obviously overlooks, in bringing out the contrast between the promise and condition of this natural capacity, the distinction between the power of thought and the actual content of thought, which latter is determined by the objects upon which the former is directed. Such an oversight does not however weaken the force of his contention that man's power of conscious thought retains its dignity only so long as it is occupied with such objects as conduce to the attainment of his supreme good and final happiness.

(iii) Non-values opposed to the true good: the passions.

In view of the preceding discussion of the meaning of "morale" in its peculiar Pascalian sense, when Pascal shows himself anxious that men should come to see the true value of the ends they pursue in life, and that they should be brought to realize what principle they should order their lives on, it is hardly surprising that he should again emphasize the desire inherent in the nature of all men for truth and happiness as the guiding purpose in conduct:

"Contrariétés. -- Que l'homme maintenant s'estime son prix. -- il a en lui la capacité de connaître la vérité et d'être heureux; mais il n'a point de vérité, ou constante, ou satisfaisante.

Je voudrais donc porter l'homme à désirer d'en trouver, à être prêt, et dégagé des passions, pour la suivre où il la trouvera, sachant combien sa connaissance s'est obscurcie par les passions; je voudrais bien qu'il hait en soi la concupiscence qui le détermine d'elle-même, afin qu'elle ne l'aveuglât point pour faire son choix, et qu'elle ne l'arrêtât point quand il aura choisi."
(p.1170; B.423)

The programme of moral direction that Pascal outlines for himself here has as its sole object the promotion of man's pursuit of truth and happiness. And a short passage from the De l'art de persuader, in which he describes the "principes et les premiers moteurs des actions de la volonté", sets out the reason why it is necessary to take such steps to ensure that man will not allow deceptive influences in the form of the passions to sway him in this matter:

"Ceux de la volonté sont de certains désirs naturels et communs à tous les hommes, comme le désir d'être heureux, que personne ne peut pas ne pas avoir, outre plusieurs objets particuliers que chacun suit pour y arriver, et qui, ayant la force de nous plaire, sont aussi forts, quoique pernicious en effet, pour faire agir la volonté, que s'ils faisaient son véritable bonheur." (p.593; G.E.IX, p.273)

The will therefore is the faculty in virtue of which man is drawn to desire conclusive happiness, and as to that he has no option, since this desire is part of his inmost nature. However, diverse means may be adopted to gratify this desire which will not in fact serve that purpose. Part of a fragment from the Pensées, quoted earlier,⁽¹⁾ amplifies the basic notion here:

(1) cf. above, p.205.

"Tous les hommes recherchent d'être heureux: -- quelques différents moyens qu'ils y emploient, ils tendent tous à ce but. -- La volonté ne fait jamais la moindre démarche que vers cet objet. C'est le motif de toutes les actions de tous les hommes,--"(1) (p.1184-5; B.425)

It is clear then that Pascal's concern to promote the desire for happiness, which he declares to be natural and common to all men and to form the most potent motivation of human behaviour, by no means involves an indiscriminate sanctioning of whatever has the power to give pleasure to man. For some things which have this power, and announce themselves as necessary steps to the attainment of happiness, are in fact steps away from it. And it is because the will is apt to be misled by these pretenders from the proper path to true happiness, the goal of its desires, that Pascal declares himself anxious to ensure that man's whole attention is focussed thereon. (2)

This tendency on the part of the will to yield to the importunity of passing passions, the gratification of which presents itself as the condition of happiness whereas it is really the reverse, is accounted for by the Augustinian conception of man's enslavement to concupiscence since the Fall.

"La concupiscence nous est devenue naturelle, et a fait notre seconde nature. Ainsi il y a deux natures en nous: l'une bonne, l'autre mauvaise." (p.1262; B.660)

"La concupiscence et la force sont les sources de toutes nos actions: la concupiscence fait les volontaires;--" (p.1154; B.334)

(1) Pascal therefore endorses the Thomist view that the will is necessarily set toward the final or ultimate good of man, possession of which constitutes happiness, and that it is under the impulse of this innate orientation of the will that all particular choices are made. cf. Aquinas. S.T. Ia IIae, q.13, art.6. Contra Gentiles, lib III, cap.3.

(2) cf. from the Pensées: "L'esprit croit naturellement, et la volonté aime naturellement; de sorte que, faute de vrais objets, il faut qu'ils s'attachent aux faux." (p.1115-6; B.81)

"--la concupiscence est la source de tous nos mouvements;--"
(p.1126; B.41)

"--la malice de la concupiscence se plaît à faire tout le contraire de ce qu'on veut obtenir de nous sans nous donner du plaisir, qui est la monnaie pour laquelle nous donnons tout ce qu'on veut."(1) (p.1099; B.24)

Concupiscence is therefore a rival with man's natural desire for happiness in providing the springs of action that chiefly move him, and, as earlier fragments showed, Pascal believes it frequently hoodwinks the will into choosing mere pleasure as the object of pursuit instead of true happiness. And the way in which concupiscence, as the result of Adam's sin, thus seduces the will from the proper path to the consummate happiness, which in Pascal's eyes represents man's end, is elaborated in the Deuxième écrit sur la grâce.

"La concupiscence s'est donc élevée dans ses membres et a chatouillé et délecté sa volonté dans le mal, et les ténèbres ont rempli son esprit de telle sorte que sa volonté, auparavant indifférente pour le bien et le mal, sans délectation ni chatouillement ni dans l'un ni dans l'autre, mais suivant, sans aucun appétit prévenant de sa part, ce qu'il connaissait de plus convenable à sa félicité,⁽²⁾ se trouve maintenant charmée par la concupiscence--" (p.965;G.E.XI, p.147)

(1) Pascal nowhere defines the precise relation between "concupiscence" and "passions", but the following passages from the Pensées make it plain that, if not exactly synonymous, the two terms at least refer to the same basic psychological phenomenon. In the "Pari" fragment the passions are alleged to be the chief obstacles to belief in God: "Travaillez donc -- à vous convaincre -- par la diminution de vos passions. -- cela diminue les passions, qui sont vos grands obstacles."(p.1215-6;B.233) "Alors Jésus-Christ vient dire aux hommes -- que ce sont leurs passions qui les séparent de Dieu,--" (p.1295;B.783) "--Jésus-Christ et les apôtres--nous ont appris--que les ennemis de l'homme sont ses passions." (p.1266;B.678) "--le mot d'ennemi dépendant de la dernière fin, les justes entendaient par la leurs passions,--" (p.1271;B.571) cf. also above p.187 n.1.

(2) In the De l'art de persuader also Pascal insists that the act of volition should follow on the conscious recognition by the intellect that something is congenial to our happiness and therefore desirable. The fact that in practice it is the passions which govern the process of volition, so that the will makes its choice independently of the intellect, is a sign of disorder. The intellect ("esprit") is reduced to merely claiming that it should be "juge
cont. p.217.

It follows from this, according to Pascal, that the freewill ("le libre arbitre"), though retaining its power of choice, nevertheless:

"--a une suavité et une délectation si puissante dans le mal par la concupiscence qu'inafailliblement il s'y porte de lui-même comme à son bien, et qu'il le choisit volontairement et très librement et avec joie comme l'objet où il sent sa béatitude." (1) (p.966; G.E.XI, p.148)

The first of these two passages from the Ecrits sur la grâce makes it clear that Pascal adopts the traditional scholastic 'psychology', according to which the will is the faculty that makes man choose and appropriate to his affections something which the intelligence has presented

cont. from p.216 des choses que la volonté choisit," while the will "s'est toute corrompue par ses sales attachements." (p.592; G.E.IX, p.272) Thus "bien peu de vérités entrent dans l'âme par l'esprit, au lieu qu'elles y sont introduites en foules par les caprices téméraires de la volonté, sans le conseil du raisonnement." (p.593; G.E.IX, p.273)

(1) Descartes's conception of the relation between the passions and the will provides a marked contrast to Pascal's views as set out in these two extracts. In his treatise on the Passions de l'âme Descartes maintains that the will, although powerless to subdue violent passions, is not necessarily carried away by them itself, and moreover possesses the means whereby to thwart even such passions as these. "Le plus que la volonté puisse faire pendant que cette émotion est en sa vigueur, c'est de ne pas consentir à ses effets et de retenir plusieurs des mouvements auxquels elle dispose le corps. Par exemple, si la colère fait lever la main pour frapper, la volonté peut ordinairement la retenir;--" (Pléiade ed., p.718). The will has a power of veto therefore which prevents the force of passions from issuing in any action. Besides on Descartes's view the passions in themselves are equally susceptible of being directed to either good or bad ends, and are thus morally indifferent. In an article entitled "Quel est le mouvement des esprits en ces passions", he writes: "--je ne vois point de raison qui empêche que le même mouvement des esprits qui sert à fortifier une pensée lorsqu'elle a un fondement qui est mauvais, ne la puisse aussi fortifier lorsqu'elle en a un qui est juste;--" (ibid., p.772) And the utility of the passions consists mainly in the fact that they serve to strengthen intellectual conviction: "--l'utilité de toutes les passions ne consiste qu'en ce qu'elles fortifient et font durer en l'âme des pensées, lesquelles il est bon qu'elle conserve, et qui pourraient facilement, sans cela, en être effacées." (ibid., p.730) In the same treatise he argues that if the enquiry is limited to the physiological level the passions appear for

cont. p.218.

to him as good.⁽¹⁾ Thus Pascal's criticisms of the misuse of the power of conscious thought,⁽²⁾ wherein lies man's whole dignity, are not called forth merely because those who permit the thought of illusory pleasures to assume the central place in their consciousness, and direct their whole attention to frivolous pastimes, controvert the fundamental principle of ethics as he defines it. More serious than this, they are guilty thereby of actively conniving at deluding the will, already weakened through having the harmony of its impulses disturbed by the attacks of concupiscence, in presenting objects to it as congenial to its supreme desire of happiness which are in reality obstacles to its attainment.

Pascal's claim in these extracts, that when his will is led astray by concupiscence from the pursuit of what is "convenable à sa félicité" man's conduct becomes evil, implies that right conduct in his view is synonymous with the pursuit of true happiness, the right direction of the self toward its final 'end'. However, in the Deuxième écrit he goes on to affirm that the only effective remedy to the domination of the will by concupiscence, the sole means whereby it may be reorientated toward such objects as do truly conduce to happiness, is the redemptive grace of Christ.

cont.from p.217 the most part as geared to meet man's physical requirements, and hence beneficial. Thus he claims that: "--nous voyons qu'elles sont toutes bonnes de leur nature, et que nous n'avons rien à éviter que leurs mauvais usages ou leurs excès,--" (ibid., p.794) Thomas Aquinas likewise regards the passions as in themselves morally indifferent: when in accordance with right reason and subject to its control they are good, but when allowed to obscure reason they are bad. (S.T.Ia IIae, q.14, art.2; q.59, art.2.) Should they anticipate the action of the will however, even if they make for the good, their influence is injurious and detracts from the moral quality of the act. On the other hand they may be called into existence and 'used' by the will, and in this case the passions will increase the goodness of the act. (De veritate, q.26, art.7.) cf. A.D. Sertillanges: La philosophie morale de Saint Thomas d'Aquin, (Paris 1916), p.68-72.

(1) It is clear that Pascal's "will" is properly the scholastic intellectual appetite, by which man desires a good consciously apprehended by the
 cont. on p.219.

With respect to this he alleges that:

"--elle n'est autre chose qu'une suavité et une délectation dans la loi de Dieu, répandue dans le coeur par le Saint - Esprit, qui non seulement égalent, mais surpassant encore la concupiscence de la chair, remplit la volonté d'une plus grande délectation dans le bien, que la concupiscence ne lui en offre dans le mal, et qu'ainsi le libre arbitre, charmé par les douceurs et par les plaisirs que le Saint-Esprit lui inspire, plus que par les attrait du péché, choisit infailliblement lui-même la loi de Dieu par cette seule raison qu'il y trouve plus de satisfaction et qu'il y sent sa béatitude et sa félicité." (1) (p.966-7; G.E.XI, p.148-9)

Thus even the operation of divine grace takes the form of a 'delectation' of the will, by means of which it is redirected to the pursuit of man's true happiness. Like Thomas Aquinas, Pascal seems to regard the will as most 'free' when, all alternatives having been excluded by the final supremacy of the ultimate 'end', it adheres to this and rests in it. (2) And the implication of this passage is that the efforts of man, when reduced to his own natural resources, to progress toward the goal of his desires, to conform to right conduct, will be of no avail in the face of a will enthralled by

cont. from p.218 intelligence. For the Schoolmen the primary function of the will is "electio", by which man recognizes, and takes to himself as his good, that which his intelligence has already represented as desirable. (cf. P.H. Wicksteed: The Reactions between Dogma and Philosophy Illustrated from the Works of S. Thomas Aquinas, Excusus I) According to Pascal however, the will has become so enthralled by concupiscence since the Fall that all conscious choice is excluded from its purview, so that the resultant action does not follow upon the 'election' of that which the judgement has presented as good.

(2 from p.218) Cited above, p.212.

(1) The substance of this passage has been derived from St. Augustine, De Spiritu et Littera, 5, where Augustine sums up his teaching on the "delectatio institutiae". Pascal also follows St. Augustine in holding that, as the result of the enslavement of man's will, "our activity must be directed in accordance with that which delights us the more". (Exp. Ep. ad Gal., 49) Thus in the Troisième écrit, where he quotes this statement, Pascal alleges that man is "maintenant esclave de la délectation; ce qui le délecte davantage l'attire infailliblement: --l'on fait toujours ce qui délecte le plus." (p.1003; G.E.XI, p.226)

(2) cf. the following extract from the Prière pour le bon usage des maladies: "Oh! qu'heureux sont ceux qui avec une liberté entière et une pente
cont. p.220.

concupiscence.⁽¹⁾ Indeed, as Martineau has said, on this view "man--- as an ethical agent sinks into nonentity, and becomes the mere prize contended for by the spirits of darkness and of light".⁽²⁾ Since the powers of concupiscence and grace are conceived of as rival 'delectations', the will becomes a sort of mechanical reflex which responds to the pull of the 'delectation' strongest at the moment.

cont. from p.219 invincible de leur volonté aiment parfaitement et librement ce qu'ils sont obligés d'aimer nécessairement!" (p.609; G.E.IX, p.329) The description in the 18th Provinciale of the action of divine grace on the human will concludes on the same note: "--trouvant sa plus grande joie dans le Dieu qui le charme, l'homme s'y porte infailliblement de lui-même, par un mouvement tout libre, tout volontaire, tout amoureux;--" (p.887; G.E.VII, p.29) cf. Aquinas, De veritate, q.22, art.6; S.T. Ia IIae q.5, art.8.

(1) cf. also the cryptic but telling assertion in the Pensées: "-- toute la morale consiste en la concupiscence et en la grâce." (p.1299; B.523)

(2) Referring to the moral implications of the 'Augustinian theology' in: Types of Ethical Theory, (Oxford, 1886, 2nd ed.) p.18.

(iv) The true good and its attainment.

In the long fragment from the Pensées, where he affirms that the desire for happiness is natural and common to all men,⁽¹⁾ Pascal once again argues, from the fact that this basic desire to happiness remains unsatisfied by the outcome of all the particular choices it dictates, to a state of happiness previously enjoyed by man, and of which but an empty trace now survives. Man tries in vain to fill this with the various finite things which surround him, but:

"--ce gouffre infini ne peut être rempli que par un objet infini et immuable, c'est-à-dire que par Dieu même.

Lui seul est son véritable bien; et depuis qu'il l'a quitté, c'est une chose étrange, qu'il n'y a rien dans la nature qui n'ait été capable de lui en tenir la place:--" (p.1185; B.425)

In the context of a fragment where the expressions, "le vrai bien" and "son véritable bien", are used as synonymous with that which when attained will satisfy man's desire "d'être heureux", such an argument indicates that Pascal sees man's unlimited potency in respect of truth and happiness as pointing to an infinite object God, alone capable of realizing it, as the good connatural to him, and hence as the goal, "fin",⁽²⁾ to which he is destined. And that Pascal regards man's supreme good, the good and God as synonymous terms, that he even conceives of the very possibility of man being able to attain to his sovereign good as in some sense dependent on there being a God, comes out in the Entretien avec M. de

(1) Cited above, p.205

(2) cf. from an early letter to Mme. Périer: "--il n'y a que Dieu qui doit être la dernière fin comme lui seul est le vrai principe." (p.484-5; G.E.II, p.250) In the brief Sur la conversion du pécheur, the soul in its aspiration after God is represented as desiring that he should be "lui-même son chemin, son objet et sa dernière fin." (p.551; G.E.X, p.426)

Saci. He there claims that Epictetus and Montaigne are the most illustrious exponents of the two most famous philosophical 'sects', which are alone:

"--conformes à la raison, puisqu'on ne peut suivre qu'une de ces deux routes, savoir: ou qu'il y a un Dieu, et lors il y place son souverain bien; ou qu'il est incertain, et qu'alors le vrai bien l'est aussi, puisqu'il en est incapable." (p.571; G.E.IV, p.51)

Further examples of this alignment occur as follows in the Pensées:

"Que les biens temporels sont faux, et que le vrai bien est d'être uni à Dieu. Ps.143." (p.1232; B.610)

"--ces oppositions que nous avons à Dieu et à notre propre bien." (p.1223; B.430)

"Le bonheur n'est ni hors nous, ni dans nous; il est en Dieu, et hors et dans nous." (p.1190; B.465).

"Si l'homme n'est fait pour Dieu, pourquoi n'est-il heureux qu'en Dieu?" (p.1200; B.438)

"Seconde partie: Félicité de l'homme avec Dieu."
(p.1103; B.60)

"Le Dieu des Chrétiens est un Dieu ^{qui} fait sentir à l'âme qu'il est son unique bien, que tout son repos est en lui,--"
(p.1308; B.544)

In the short treatise, Sur la conversion du pécheur, the soul is depicted as recognizing that it is a condition of attaining to full and indefectible "félicité,"

"---de se joindre à un bien véritable et subsistant par lui-même, qui peut la soutenir et durant et après cette vie." (p.549; G.E.X, p.423)

And the culmination of its "^cre^hcherche du véritable bien" (p.550; G.E.X, p.424) is reached when it is brought to realize that God constitutes the "bien souverain" (p.551; G.E.X, p.425) for which it thirsts, and that "il n'y a rien de plus aimable que Dieu".(p.550). Similarly in the fifth strophe of the Prière pour le bon usage des maladies Pascal writes:

"O mon Dieu, qu'un coeur est heureux qui peut aimer un objet si charmant,-- O mon Dieu, qu'une âme est heureuse dont vous êtes les délices, ---
Que son bonheur est ferme et durable,--" (p.608;G.E.IX, p.328-9)

Finally in a passage from the eighteenth Provinciale God, the good and man's ultimate happiness are identified with one another:

"--Dieu change le coeur de l'homme par une douceur céleste qu'il y répand, qui --- fait que l'homme ---- conçoit du dégoût pour les délices du péché qui le séparent du bien incorruptible; trouvant sa plus grande joie dans le Dieu qui le charme, il s'y porte infailliblement de lui-même;--"
(p.887;G.E. VII, p.29)

Man's desire for happiness is therefore fully realized, according to Pascal, only when he is cleaving to God, his "end" and the sole self-subsisting true good. ⁽¹⁾ But although this good is proportionate to man's nature, in the sense that the desire for it is natural to him, Pascal is emphatic that

(1) There is a radical divergence discernible between Pascal's approach to this question of the 'good', and that adopted by Descartes. The latter, in a letter to Queen Christina 20.11.1647, affirms that: "On peut considérer la bonté de chaque chose en elle-même, sans la rapporter à autrui, auquel sens il est évident que c'est Dieu qui est le Souverain. Bien, parce qu'il est incomparablement plus parfait que les créatures; mais on peut aussi la rapporter à nous, et en ce sens, je ne vois rien que nous devons estimer bien, sinon ce qui nous appartient en quelque façon, et qui est tel, que c'est perfection pour nous de l'avoir." (Pléiade ed., p.1281-2) Now Pascal in effect telescopes these alternative standpoints. He declares that man is unable to find what will appease his natural desire for happiness in himself (cf. Sur la conversion --p.550), and that since the sovereign good considered objectively, God, is alone capable of giving him complete and eternal happiness, it must also constitute the individual's particular good. Descartes, on the other hand, enlarges on the above definition as follows: "--le Souverain Bien -- d'un chacun en particulier --- ne consiste qu'en une ferme volonté de bien faire, et au contentement qu'elle produit. Dont la raison est que je ne remarque aucun autre bien qui me semble si grand, ni qui soit entièrement au pouvoir d'un chacun." (ibid., p.1282) In an earlier letter to the Princess Elizabeth, 18.8.1645, Descartes distinguishes between the 'sovereign good' and the 'contentment' it produces, denominating the latter 'beatitude'. (p.1198) The definition of 'beatitude' which is then given corroborates that of the 'sovereign good' in the later letter: "--la

it transcends his natural powers of attainment. Indeed, the unenviable position assigned in this regard to the centuries antedating the Christian era, and the repeated assertions of the inadequacy of the attempts of the secular philosophers to discover by their unassisted intellectual effort what is the supreme good for man, testify to Pascal's conviction that not merely the power to progress toward the goal of his desires, but also the knowledge as to the way, and as to what actually constitutes it, must come to man from outside himself.

"Le pyrrhonisme est le vrai. Car, après tout, les hommes, avant Jésus-Christ, ne savaient où ils en étaient, ni s'ils étaient grands ou petits. Et ceux qui ont dit l'un ou l'autre n'en savaient rien, et devinaient sans raison et par hasard; et même ils erraient toujours, en excluant l'un ou l'autre. 'Quod ergo ignorantes quaeritis, religio annuntiat vobis'." (p.1189;B.432)

In other words, in the pre-Christian era of history man was completely debarred from any genuine knowledge with respect to his nature and end for the simple reason that the Christian revelation had not then occurred - an outlook which coincides with Pascal's uncompromising attitude toward the 'virtuous pagans'.⁽¹⁾ Unlike others of his contemporaries he

cont. from p.223 béatitude ne consiste qu'au contentement de l'esprit, c'est-à-dire au contentement en général; -- pour avoir un contentement qui soit solide, il est besoin de suivre la vertu, c'est-à-dire d'avoir une volonté ferme et constante d'exécuter tout ce que nous jugerons être le meilleur, et d'employer toute la force de notre entendement à en bien juger." (p.1199-1200) Since 'beatitude' has already been described as the 'contentment of mind' which results from possession of the 'sovereign good', it follows that the 'sovereign good' is equivalent to "vertu" as Descartes has defined it; and the reason why "vertu" is ascribed as the source of 'beatitude' is because it in turn is the product of man's free will, the distinctive characteristic of human nature. (to Christina, p.1282, and 4) An extract from another letter to Elizabeth, 4.8.1645, shows how far Descartes is from agreeing with Pascal in placing man's end, wherein alone the aspirations of his nature can find fulfilment, in an infinite and eternal good incommensurable with any data of finite human experience: "---'vivere beate', vivre en béatitude consiste, ce me semble, en un parfait contentement d'esprit et une satisfaction intérieure, --- il me semble qu'un chacun se peut rendre content de soi-même et sans rien

cont. p.225.

inherited none of that gentle spirit of tolerance displayed two centuries previously by Nicolas of Cusa, when he asserted that all religions can be seen to reflect some rays of the Eternal Truth. Furthermore, in quoting from memory the line from Acts, 17, 23, where Paul announces to the Areopagites that he has come to declare to them the true God whom they already worship in the guise of the "Unknown God", Pascal, as M. Brunschvicg has noted, ⁽¹⁾ introduces significant modifications to the sense of the original. Paul believed that the pagans had glimpsed the truth, whereas, according to Pascal, they have never emerged from error.

The Pensées contain numerous references to the fruitless endeavours on the part of the secular philosophers to locate what constitutes the final end of man and his supreme good:

"Recherche du vrai bien. - Le commun des hommes met le bien dans la fortune et dans les biens du dehors, ou au moins dans le divertissement. Les philosophes ont montré la vanité de tout cela et l'ont mis où ils ont pu."
(p.1187; B.462)

"Que l'homme sans la foi ne peut connaître le vrai bien,--"
(p.1184; B.425)

"280 sortes de souverains biens dans Montaigne." (p.1135; B.74)

"Le souverain bien. Dispute du souverain bien. - --Il y a contradiction, car ils conseillent enfin de se tuer."
(p.1187; B.361)

"C'est en vain, ô hommes, que vous cherchez dans vous-mêmes le remède à vos misères. Toutes vos lumières ne peuvent arriver qu'à connaître que ce n'est point dans vous-mêmes que vous trouvez ni la vérité ni le bien. Les philosophes vous l'ont promis, et ils n'ont pu le faire. Ils ne savent ni quel est votre véritable bien,--" (p.1225; B.430)

cont. from p.224 attendre d'ailleurs, pourvu seulement qu'il observe trois choses, auxquelles se rapportent les trois règles de morale, que j'ai mises dans le Discours de la Méthode." (p.1193)

p.224-(1) cf. below, p.339f.

(1) ed.min., p.528, n.l.

(v) The 'end' and duty

Yet so important does Pascal esteem the natural desire for happiness that, having adjudged man's own efforts powerless to direct him to the supreme good wherein this desire will find completion, he goes on to require of the 'true religion' that it comply with the following conditions:

"---que, pour rendre l'homme heureux, elle lui montre qu'il y a un Dieu; qu'on est obligé de l'aimer; que notre unique félicité est d'être en lui, et notre unique mal d'être séparé de lui; qu'elle reconnaisse que nous sommes pleins de ténèbres qui nous empêchent de le connaître et de l'aimer; et qu'ainsi nos devoirs nous obligent d'aimer Dieu, et nos concupiscences nous en détournant,--" (p.1223; B.430)

Thus man's fundamental impulse to, and capacity for, happiness dictates a priori the content of the revelation which the 'true religion' must proffer.⁽¹⁾ Not only this, but Pascal here derives the concept of duty from this desire. Man has a duty to love God, he implies, not in virtue of any universal moral law that commands him to do so, but because in God alone can he find the full satisfaction of his whole nature.⁽²⁾ An earlier variant of another part of the same fragment also illustrates this:

"Ne cherchez pas de satisfaction dans la terre: --- Votre bien n'est qu'en Dieu, et la souveraine félicité consiste à connaître Dieu, à s'unir à lui pour jamais dans l'éternité. Votre devoir est à l'aimer de tout votre coeur." (p.1225,n;B.p.524,n.1.)

(1) The process whereby Thomas Aquinas also arrives at an a priori definition of the conditions with which an authentic revelation must comply, although more complex than Pascal's, is basically the same. Revelation must make available the supplementary information both as to the ultimate goal wherein man's natural desire for blessedness will find fulfilment, and to the appointed means for its attainment, which his own unaided faculties are incapable of providing. S.T. Ia, q.1, art.1; Contra Gentiles, lib.III, cap.118. (cf. Wicksted, op.cit., p.154-6)

(2) Saint Augustine had been Pascal's predecessor in making the ethical

In this way it becomes apparent to what extent the idea of the good for man is paramount in Pascal's ethical thinking, and how its realization, demanded by the promise implicit in man's very nature, in the shape of a yearning for ultimate happiness which his own powers cannot satisfy, determines duty in an almost logical fashion. (1)

A further fragment from the Pensées shows how Pascal sets up man's supreme good or 'end' as the moral criterion, assigning the labels 'good' and 'bad' to human acts and finite objects of desire according as they conduce or not to the attainment of this ultimate goal:

"Or, la dernière fin est ce qui donne le nom aux choses. Tout ce qui nous empêche d'y arriver est appelé ennemi. Ainsi les créatures, quoique bonnes, sont ennemies des justes quand elles les détournent de Dieu,---" (2) (p.1271;B.571)

cont. from p.226 quality of any action thus directly dependent on its relation to God as the supreme good for man: "Non arbitrator cum de moribus et vita fit quaestio, amplius esse requirendum, quod sit hominis summum bonum, quo referenda sunt omnia. Id enim esse patuit, et ratione quantum valuimus, et ea quae nostrae rationi antecellit auctoritate divina, nihil aliud quam ipsum Deum. Nam quid erit aliud optimum hominis, nisi cui inhaerere est beatissimum? Id autem est solus Deus,---" De moribus Ecclesiae Catholicae, cap.14.

(1) Domat's treatment of the 'end' in his Traité des lois, as the basis of all law, shows a remarkable affinity with Pascal's conception of it as the determining factor in morals. Domat maintains that because laws are no more than the rules of human conduct, and because conduct can be defined as "les démarches de l'homme vers sa fin", in order to discover the first principles of law it is necessary to know what this 'end' is "--parce que la destination de l'homme à sa fin sera la première règle de la voie et des démarches qui l'y conduisent, et par conséquent sa première loi et le fondement de toutes les autres." Now to know what constitutes the 'end' of anything is to know why it has been created. Since an inspection of man's nature reveals that he possesses the faculties of mind for knowing and of heart for loving, it is evident that God has created man to know and love, and "par conséquent pour s'unir à quelque objet, dont la connaissance et l'amour doivent faire son repos et son bonheur; et que c'est vers cet objet que toutes ses démarches doivent le conduire. D'où il s'ensuit que la première loi de l'homme est sa destination à la recherche et à l'amour de cet objet qui doit être sa fin, où il doit trouver la félicité,-- De tous les objets qui s'offrent à l'homme

cont. p.228

Thus in a particular context certain things or actions will be condemned as bad or wrong, not because they are bad or wrong in themselves, but because they are recognized to be such as will deter man from achieving his true good. Action therefore should be regulated by considering what will lead up to the goal of man's desire. It is from this 'end' that everything must hang, and it provides the fixed point from which man must work down, by connecting it with the things which will lead up to it, until he comes to the particular choice open to him as a step towards reaching the 'end'. And not only do human acts thus derive their moral quality in Pascal's view from their relation to man's final 'end', but the value-determinant of finite things themselves is their tendency to promote this ultimate good of man.

Cont. from p.227. dans tout l'univers, en y comprenant l'homme lui-même, il ne trouvera rien qui soit digne d'être sa fin. --- il faut enfin apprendre de celui qui a formé l'homme, que c'est lui seul qui, étant son principe, est aussi sa fin, et qu'il n'y a que Dieu seul qui puisse remplir le vide infini de cet esprit et de ce coeur qu'il a faits pour lui." I,3.

(2) from p. 227. M. Gilson has shown how this conception of the 'end', as identified with the sovereign good, God, distinguishes the specifically Christian ethic from that propounded by the philosophers, who also conceived of the 'end' as determining morals. He points out that for Aristotle the 'end' is not something which transcends and completes the moral life: the sole 'end' and true good is the moral life itself. L'esprit de la philosophie médiévale, p.336 f.f. The practice of declaring human acts and objects of desire morally good or bad in so far as they are compatible or not with the attainment of man's final 'end' seems to have been generally adopted by Jansenist writers. Arnauld, echoing Saint Augustine, maintains that: "-- la principale distinction des vertus d'avec les vices, et des bonnes actions d'avec les péchés, se doit prendre de la fin à laquelle elles doivent être rapportées, et cette fin n'est autre que Dieu,---" Seconde apologie pour Monsieur Jansénius, Oeuvres, (Paris, 1775) vol.17, p.342. Nicole likewise asserts: "--- la religion est si étroitement liée à toutes les choses du monde, par le rapport qu'elles ont à la fin dernière qui est Dieu, que l'on ne sauroit juger d'aucune que par ce rapport. C'est par là qu'elles sont avantageuses ou désavantageuses, innocentes, ou dangereuses, estimables, méprisables, bonnes ou mauvaises. Le prix qu'elles ont

cont. p.229.

Indeed the two are inextricably bound up for, according to Pascal's 'psychology', it is the desire or love of some thing that dictates all man's motives, which are in turn effective in shaping his actual behaviour. The need for grace to exercise a superior 'delectation', in order to release man from his enslavement to concupiscence, brought this out clearly enough. (1)

Hence right conduct for Pascal consists simply in a steadfast cleaving to right desires; i.e. to those conducive to the attainment of that which is alone capable of yielding the sort of satisfaction necessary to effect man's total happiness. A passage from the Pensées, rather excessively ascetic in tone, illustrates this:

"S'il y a un Dieu, il ne faut aimer que lui, et non les créatures passagères. -- Donc tout ce qui nous incite à nous attacher aux créatures est mauvais, puisque cela nous empêche, ou de servir Dieu, si nous le connaissons, ou de le chercher, si nous l'ignorons." (p.1203-4; B.479)

Pascal's suspicion of personal attachments likewise stems from the conviction that they are apt to divert men's desires from their proper 'end' wherein alone these will find true fulfilment:

cont. from p.228. en elles-mêmes n'est rien. Elles l'empruntent du rapport qu'elles ont au souverain bien." Essais de morale, vol.2, p.57. Jansenius himself insists on the importance, as far as virtue is concerned, of duly differentiating between "officium" and "finis", between the act itself and the 'end' which the agent has in view in performing it. According to him the essential difference between vice and virtue lies not in the action considered in itself, but in the 'end' which alone 'specifies' the action and makes it what it is. It is the 'end' that determines the will, thus motivating the action; and man's final 'end', to which all his acts must be referred, is God. Augustinus, t.II, bk.IV, ch.12. Despite the different connotation which the term itself bears in his case, Descartes too considers that the 'end' should rightly determine conduct. In his letter to Elizabeth, 18.8.1645, he notes: "-- la dernière fin où le but auquel doivent tendre nos actions: -- par la fin de nos actions, on peut entendre le souverain bien et la béatitude; car le souverain bien est sans doute la chose que nous nous devons proposer pour but en toutes nos actions, et le contentement d'esprit qui en revient, étant l'attrait qui fait que nous le recherchons, est aussi à bon droit nommé notre fin." (Pléiade ed., p.1198)

(1) cf. also from the De l'art de persuader: "--- aussitôt qu'on fait
cont. p.230.

"Il est injuste qu'on s'attache à moi, quoiqu'on le fasse avec plaisir et volontairement. Je tromperais ceux à qui j'en ferais naître le désir, car je ne suis la fin de personne et n'ai pas de quoi les satisfaire." (p.1343; B.471.)

In Pascal's terms no finite being can be the 'end' of any other finite being, since he (or she) is by definition incapable of giving completion to the desire for an infinite good that characterizes human nature. And to get things so far out of perspective as to allow finite objects to usurp the rank of 'final end' of one's desires, amounts to sacrilege.

In an early letter to Mme. Périer, Pascal writes concerning such objects that:

"--l'on voit que dans les ténèbres du monde on les suit par un aveuglement brutal, que l'on s'y attache et qu'on en fait la dernière fin de ses désirs, ce qu'on ne peut faire sans sacrilège, car il n'y a que Dieu qui doit être la dernière fin comme lui seul est le vrai principe." (p.484-5; G.E. II, p.250)

It was pointed out earlier that Pascal sees the root of such a failure to rightly direct oneself toward the true 'end', as the result of blindly yielding to the desire uppermost at the moment whose satisfaction does not lead to it, in the monopolizing influence exercised over man's will by concupiscence. It is for this reason that he concludes the fragment cited above, urging man's duty to love God rather than transitory creatures, with the following reflection:

"Or nous sommes pleins de concupiscence: donc nous sommes pleins de mal; donc nous devons nous haïr nous-mêmes, et tout ce qui nous excite à autre attache qu'à Dieu seul." (1)
(p.1204; B.479)

cont. from p.229 apercevoir à l'âme qu'une chose peut la conduire à ce qu'elle aime souverainement, il est inévitable qu'elle ne s'y porte avec joie." (p.594; G.E.IX, p.274)

(1) As a corollary of the view that things and acts are good or bad according

Similarly:

"La vraie et unique vertu est donc de se haïr (car on est haïssable par sa concupiscence), et de chercher un être véritablement aimable, pour l'aimer."

(p.1306; B.485)

"Qui ne hait en soi son amour-propre, et cet instinct qui le porte à se faire Dieu, est bien aveugle."

(p.1204;B.492)

"Il y en a qui voient bien qu'il n'y a pas d'autre ennemi de l'homme que la concupiscence, qui le détourne de Dieu, --- ni d'autre bien que Dieu, -- Ceux qui croient que le bien de l'homme est en la chair, et le mal en ce qui le détourne des plaisirs des sens, qu'il s'en soule et qu'il y meure."

(p.1268; B.692)

This advocacy of the hatefulness of the self, as the proper channel for moral effort and the source of true virtue, does not however represent any reversal of the fundamentally egocentric character of Pascal's ethics, for it is precisely in man's own ultimate interest, as furthering his pursuit of happiness, to thus redress the balance upset by the enslavement of his impulses to concupiscence. Human nature, as the result of its corruption by the Fall, has become the seat of this concupiscence, which sets up as objects of pursuit what are really obstacles to be overcome if man is to attain his sovereign good.

contd. from p.230. as they tend to promote man's progress toward his supreme 'end', God, Pascal believes the individual is required, if he is to perform morally good actions and so ultimately achieve his own happiness, to act from the motive of conforming to the divine will. To treat God as his final end and as the source of all good involves for the individual the necessity of submitting his will to the will of God. Thus in the Pensées Pascal urges: "Changeons la règle que nous avons prise jusqu'ici pour juger de ce qui est bon. Nous en avons pour règle notre volonté, prenons maintenant la volonté de Dieu: tout ce qu'il veut nous est bon et juste,--" (p.1294;B.668) And in the fifth letter addressed to Mlle. de Roannez, he writes: "Il est temps de commencer à juger de ce qui est bon ou mauvais par la volonté de Dieu, qui ne peut être ni injuste ni aveugle, et non pas par la nôtre propre, qui est toujours pleine de malice et d'erreur." (p.511;G.E.VI, p.159) cf. also p.508;G.E. VI, p.84) Moreover, in a fragment from the Pensées, introduced

cont. p.232

This is clear from the form in which concupiscence chiefly manifests itself - the stimulus of the flesh that induces man to seek pleasure for its own sake as the supreme goal, and a tendency on the part of the individual to treat himself as God, seeking the ultimate satisfaction of his desires in his own finite nature. To indulge either of these inclinations is, in Pascal's terms, to be led astray from the true path to one's final 'end', and so to leave unfulfilled the supreme desire for happiness which controls even such false choices as these. That even his seemingly ascetic recommendations should in fact be prompted by the conviction that only an infinite object can satisfy man with his unlimited desires, and that life should therefore be uniformly directed toward the fruition of this ultimate object of desire, strikingly attests the extent to which Pascal considers "morale" should be geared to promoting man's pursuit of happiness.

(vi) The 'end' as the criterion of judgement.

In much of his adverse criticism of the modes of life and thought adopted by his contemporaries Pascal clearly uses as criterion of judgement his own belief that all the individual's actions should be ultimately affiliated to the supreme goal of his desires, and that his whole life

cont. from p.231 under the rubric "Morale", where he develops the theory of the "membres pensants", and where the context makes it plain that the terms "âme universelle" and "âme entière" are used to denote God as the ultimate source of all derived existence, Pascal alleges that it is a pre-condition of happiness for individual "membres" that they have "bonne volonté pour consentir à celle de l'âme universelle", and that "leur béatitude, aussi bien que leur devoir, consistent à consentir à la conduite de l'âme entière à qui ils appartiennent,---" (p.1305; B.482)

should be ordered to the eternal felicity which the promise of his nature demands. The great danger, as it seems to Pascal, that confronts men in their present fallen condition is cryptically outlined in the following fragment:

"La vraie nature étant perdue, tout devient sa nature; comme le véritable bien étant perdu, tout devient son véritable bien." (p.1184; B.426)

This temptation for men to accept the actual state of their nature as the true one, and, having lost sight of that which alone constitutes their true good, to replace it with whatever finite object happens to come to hand, must, if yielded to, result in the abandonment of all 'moral' effort. Consequently in his judgements Pascal is concerned, not so much with the various activities in themselves, which absorb men's attention, as with the attitude of mind behind them, and the factors that contribute to make this what it is.

It is for this reason that he deplores the control exercised by the 'imagination' over the rest of man's faculties.

"Je rapporterais presque toutes les actions des hommes qui ne branlent presque que par ses secousses. Car la raison a été obligée de céder, et la plus sage prend pour ses principes ceux que l'imagination des hommes a témérairement introduits en chaque lieu. -- Il faut, parce qu'il lui a plu, travailler tout le jour pour des biens reconnus pour imaginaires; et quand le sommeil nous a délassés des fatigues de notre raison, il faut incontinent se lever en sursaut pour aller courir après les fumées et essuyer les impressions de cette maîtresse du monde. - Voilà un des principes d'erreur,---" (p.1117-8; B.82)

When Pascal labels the 'imagination' here "un des principes d'erreur", he refers, not to the fact that the deception it practises is intermittent,

so that it cannot be accepted as a reliable guide to either truth or falsehood (p.1116; B. *ibid*), but to the way in which it positively leads men astray by deluding them as to the value of the ends they pursue. Its subjugation of our reasoning powers, together with the monopoly it holds of our springs of action, results in a general incapacity to perceive the vanity of the existence we lead. And the futile particulars ("des biens imaginaires"), which engross the attention while we are under its sway, must crowd out all thought of our supernatural destiny, and so finally blur our sense of the true character of the final goal.

For the same reason Pascal considers the influence which 'habit' exerts in determining men to a particular line of conduct 'morally' pernicious.

"La prévention induisant en erreur. - C'est une chose déplorable de voir tous les hommes ne délibérer que des moyens, et point de la fin. Chacun songe comme il s'acquittera de sa condition; mais pour le choix de la condition, et de la patrie, le sort nous le donne. C'est une chose pitoyable, de voir tant de Turcs, d'hérétiques, d'infidèles, suivre le train de leurs pères, par cette seule raison qu'ils ont été prévenus chacun à chaque condition que c'est le meilleur." (p.1122; B.98)

Thus in the case of what Pascal regards as their most far-reaching decisions men allow themselves to be moved by the circumstances which they are used to, for it is traditional habit that guides them even in their belief as to the possibility and character of the supernatural goal wherein alone in his terms they can find true fulfilment. And the adjectives "déplorable" and "pitoyable", used to describe the state things have come to when men permit themselves to shut out of sight in this way the bearing of the 'end' on all their choices, indicate plainly enough that it is Pascal's preoccupation with man's otherworldly destiny which determines his judgement

here.

However, that which he holds to be above all else responsible for inducing men to turn their back on the things which it should be their first concern to call before their minds if they are to direct themselves toward their end, is the dread of what they will find if they do so. It is to avoid this, Pascal believes, that men give themselves over to those pastimes which he classifies as "divertissement" in the Pensées. His own reaction to this sort of attitude is amply illustrated in the following fragment:

"Misère. - La seule chose qui nous console de nos misères est le divertissement, et cependant c'est la plus grande de nos misères. Car c'est cela qui nous empêche principalement de songer à nous. -- Sans cela, nous serions dans l'ennui, et cet ennui nous pousserait à chercher un moyen plus solide d'en sortir. Mais le divertissement nous amuse, et nous fait arriver insensiblement à la mort."
(p.1147; B.171)

Pascal sees the real danger in allowing ourselves to dwell under the illusion that "divertissement" provides a genuinely effective means of alleviating our misery in the fact that, while rendering us temporarily happy, it also prevents us from being compelled by the very consciousness of this misery to take steps to arrive at a permanent solution. "Divertissement" lulls us into insensibility, so that all incentive is lost to take thought as to the sort of conduct which is compatible with the attainment of the goal postulated by the desires inherent in our very nature. Once again therefore it is Pascal's concern to urge men to regulate their conduct in accordance with their own ultimate good and final end which lies at the root of this searing critique of "divertissement".

(vii) The question of immortality subordinated to the "end"

Pascal's conception of "morale", as primarily concerned to emphasize the urgency for men to find out what course of action is best adjusted for them, in the sense of conducing to their own complete and conclusive happiness, comes out very plainly when he undertakes to censure those whom he pictures as priding themselves on having 'shaken off the yoke', and now displaying the utmost indifference to the truth or otherwise of the Christian doctrines relating to their own destiny. In his view their behaviour in this respect is not merely irrational and irresponsible,⁽¹⁾ but is totally lacking in regard for their own interests also.⁽²⁾ The argument which he repeatedly advances to convict this sort of conduct of extravagance runs as follows:

"--il est indubitable que le temps de cette vie n'est qu'un instant, que l'état de la mort est éternel, de quelque nature qu'il puisse être, et qu'ainsi toutes nos actions et nos pensées doivent prendre des routes si différentes selon l'état de cette éternité, qu'il est impossible de faire une démarche avec sens et jugement qu'en la réglant par la vue de ce point qui doit être notre dernier objet.

-- Que l'on juge donc là-dessus de ceux qui vivent sans songer à cette dernière fin de la vie,--" (p.1171; B.195)

(1) Pascal even goes so far as to condemn this nonchalant attitude as unnatural. Thus he maintains that: "De tous leurs égarements, c'est sans doute celui qui les convainc le plus de folie et d'aveuglement, et dans lequel il est le plus facile de les confondre par les premières vues du sens commun et par les sentiments de la nature." (p.1171; B.195) cf. also p.1176; B.194)

(2)cf. "--cette négligence n'est pas supportable. Il ne s'agit pas ici de l'intérêt léger de quelque personne étrangère, -- il s'agit de nous-même, et de notre tout." (p.1173; B.194) "Cette négligence en une affaire où il s'agit d'eux-mêmes, de leur éternité, de leur tout, m'irrite plus qu'elle ne m'attendrit; -- Je ne dis pas ceci par le zèle pieux d'une dévotion spirituelle. J'entends au contraire qu'on doit avoir ce sentiment par un principe d'intérêt humain et par un intérêt d'amour-propre: il ne faut pas pour cela que voir ce que voient les personnes les moins éclairées." (p.1174; B. *ibid.*)

The two adverbs, "ainsi" and "selon", in the context of this passage, attest the extent to which Pascal considers the whole management and direction of human life depends upon the question whether or not there is a future state of human existence offering good or evil for the individual.⁽¹⁾ These alternatives represent two fundamentally different views of the nature of things, which, so far as he consistently attends to them (and Pascal is insistent that it is impossible to act reasonably without doing so⁽²⁾), must affect the whole of a man's conduct, and make it quite different in the one case from what it would be in the other. And Pascal's practice of suspending obligation from what men's natural desires show to be their ultimate 'end', leads to the concurrence in this instance of the 'moral' imperative, which directs the taking of means to this 'end', and rightly conceived self-interest. Having emphasized the supreme significance of the question he concludes:

"Ainsi notre premier intérêt et notre premier devoir est de nous éclaircir sur ce sujet, d'où dépend toute notre conduite." (p.1173; B. ibid)

Now although the term "dernière fin" is used in the above context in reference to the temporal end of human existence, rather than to its purposive goal, yet the fact that the attainment of the latter is put only

(1) Another passage very similar to the foregoing makes this even more explicit. "L'immortalité de l'âme est une chose qui nous importe si fort. -- Toutes nos actions et nos pensées doivent prendre des routes si différentes selon qu'il y aura des biens éternels à espérer ou non, qu'il est impossible de faire une démarche avec sens--" (p.1173; B.194)

(2) Thus the paragraph that follows on directly after "dernier objet" runs: "Il n'y a rien de plus visible que cela et qu'ainsi, selon les principes de la raison, la conduite des hommes est tout à fait déraisonnable, s'ils ne prennent une autre voie." (p.1171; B.195)

in a future state explains why the question of immortality is made to loom so large in affecting the whole cast of a man's conduct and the whole course of his life. For, if the present life is all that the individual has to look forward to, then his nature, as Pascal depicts it in the Pensées, is doomed to miss its mark, and the goal postulated by his infinite desire after happiness is but an illusion. Such is the force of one of the alternative arguments used by Pascal to prove the overriding importance of the question:

"Il est sans doute qu'il n'y a point de bien sans la connaissance de Dieu, qu'à mesure qu'on en approche on est heureux, et que le dernier bonheur est de le connaître avec certitude, qu'à mesure qu'on s'en éloigne on est malheureux, et que le dernier malheur serait la certitude du contraire."⁽¹⁾ (p.1174 (a); B.194, n.)

It is plain therefore that it is because it bears so unquestionably on the possibility of men attaining the ultimate good wherein their desire for happiness will find completion that the problem of immortality is one which Pascal considers should be debated by every human individual.

And it is for this reason also that he is so emphatic that "morale" is not and cannot be independent of opinions on this question:

"Il est indubitable que, que l'âme soit mortelle ou immortelle, cela doit mettre une différence entière dans la morale. Et cependant les philosophes ont conduit leur morale indépendamment de cela:--"⁽²⁾
(p.1181; B.219)

As the preceding discussion shows, Pascal does not mean by this merely that

(1) The first sentence of an earlier variant from the long fragment entirely devoted to the problem of immortality.

(2) Pascal in fact maintains that the failure to take this question into account suffices to disqualify anyone from the title of 'philosopher':
"Fausseté des philosophes qui ne discutaient pas l'immortalité de l'âme."
(p.1181; B.220)

an individual convinced of his own immortality will attach an immeasurably greater importance to the distinction between right and wrong, than one who simply calculates the effects of right and wrong actions on the supposition that this present world is the whole of life. The "difference entière", to which he refers, goes deeper and relates to the question, What is right action? For on his view, since the rightness of any act depends on its relation to man's 'end', the business of "morale" is to discern the acts necessary to the attainment of that final 'end', and to order them while forbidding their contraries. Thus the question of immortality bears upon "morale" in so far as it is decisive in regard to the possibility of the individual attaining his 'end'. In order to validly object to Pascal here that it does not make any practical difference to ethics whether there is, or is not, a future life, that right and wrong are quite independent of this hypothesis either way, it would be necessary to refute his method of deriving the 'moral' imperative from the final 'end'

The egoistic twist which Pascal gives to the scholastic teleological morals is most readily apparent in regard to this question of immortality. Not that the idea of a future life is any less integral to the Thomist ethical system: that final fruition of the divine aspect, which Aquinas considers to be alone capable of satisfying the demand of human nature for ultimate blessedness, and which he sets up as the 'end' to which the will should be directed and all action ordered, is impossible to any man in this life. Aquinas was too convinced a follower of Aristotle

on questions of knowledge ever to believe that human nature has in itself any power of apprehending immaterial things in a direct fashion. The mind receives all the material on which it works through the gates of the bodily senses, so that even by abstraction knowledge can never be freed entirely from sense images. Hence the possibility of anticipating the unimpeded "visio Dei" while we are yet in the body is definitely excluded. Yet, since these limitations with respect to beatific vision are inherent in the conditions of earthly life, they point to a future state when God will confer on man powers that lie above and outside his own nature.⁽¹⁾ And since the final 'end', relation to which determines the moral quality of all acts, is synonymous with man's supreme good wherein alone he can find full and conclusive blessedness, Aquinas is able to dispense with any system of external rewards and punishments. Human actions carry their own sanctions built in as it were, for on this view right acts must of necessity lead to ultimate blessedness whereas their contraries must tend by effect toward the eternal privation of the good.⁽²⁾

However, the question of a future life is not proposed by Aquinas with the almost lurid emphasis of Pascal on the element of self-interest involved, nor does he attempt to bring out its relevance for ethics, as he conceives of them, by dwelling on the ^udaemonism implicit in his theory of

(1) cf. the extracts quoted by Wicksteed, op. cit, Exeursus ii.

(2) P. Sertillanges describes the way in which the 'ultimate' sanctions project into the present in the following terms: "En ce monde -- nous ne sommes pas moins reliés à l'éternel par chacun de nos états. Tel de ceux-ci vaut pour notre abontissement; tel autre pour notre perte; -- Notre sort se joue à chaque détermination que nous prenons en face de l'absolu qui nous juge. Nous-mêmes, en disant oui ou non au bien, qui est la condition du bonheur, nous prononçons notre jugement." op.cit., p.579.

the good. Unlike Pascal he does not set out to bring the individual to his senses, as it were, by confronting him with a choice between the alternatives of eternal happiness on the one hand and eternal misery on the other. (1)

(1) Nicole adopts much the same approach as Pascal to the whole question of the bearing of a future life upon the individual's conduct: "...ce qu'il y a de plus étonnant et qui fait connoître mieux que toutes choses l'excès de l'aveuglement des hommes c'est la légèreté prodigieuse avec laquelle ils embrassent les plus importantes maximes de leur conduite, ...Il s'agit de leur tout, puisqu'il s'agit pour eux d'une éternité de bonheur ou de malheur. Chaque pas qui les avance vers la mort, les approche de l'une ou de l'autre de ces deux éternités. Ne semble-t-il donc pas que leur principal soin et leur principale application devrait être de s'instruire des règles véritables qu'ils doivent suivre dans la conduite de toute leur vie, et de tâcher de les discerner de ce nombre innombrable de fausses règles qui sont suivies par ceux qui s'éloignent de la vérité." Discours sur la nécessité de ne se pas conduire au hasard et par les règles de fantaisie, Essais, II, p.10. (cf. ibid., p.2-3) "La vie présente par laquelle l'homme doit passer, ne lui est donnée que pour faire choix de l'un ou de l'autre de ces deux états (Paradis et Enfer); et ce choix doit être l'unique exercice de sa vie. Car il ne se fait pas par une seule action. Elles y contribuent toutes, et servent toutes à l'avancer vers l'un ou vers l'autre." De la mort, Essais, IV, p.180.

SECTION THREE

Social and political values.

Chapter one: Social and political values.

1. Natural law

- (i) Positive attitude to natural law
- (a) Natural law as the basis of all law.

In the opening paragraph of the fourteenth Provinciale Pascal reproaches his Jesuit opponents on the following highly significant counts:

"...vous êtes éloignés des sentiments de l'Eglise, et même de la nature. ... vous avez tellement oublié la loi de Dieu, et tellement éteint les lumières naturelles, que vous avez besoin qu'on vous remette dans les principes les plus simples de la religion et du sens commun; car qu'y a-t-il de plus naturel que ce sentiment: 'Qu'un particulier n'a pas droit sur la vie d'un autre?' "
(p.819; G.E.VI, p.1301)

Similarly in a fragment from the Pensées he notes:

"C'est une plaisante chose à considérer, de ce qu'il y a des gens dans le monde qui, ayant renoncé à toutes les lois de Dieu et de la nature, s'en sont fait eux-mêmes auxquelles ils obéissent exactement, ... Il semble que leur licence doit être sans aucunes bornes ni barrières, voyant qu'ils en ont franchi tant de si justes et de si saintes." (p.1161; B.393)

In these two passages Pascal does not merely recognize the authority of natural law, thus assigning it considerable positive value, but even goes so far as to assimilate it to the law of divine origin. Moreover, if the pair of epithets at the end of the second extract are appropriately coupled with the substantives occurring earlier, to which they refer back via "bornes" and "barrières", the natural law can claim at least to be acknowledged as just.

However, perhaps even more significant in this respect than Pascal's express assertions, are the implications of the position he adopts in the fourteenth Provinciale. The passage from Saint Chrysostom, the source of the maxim that no private individual has any right over another's life, continues as quoted with the reflection that, since this is a common law natural to all humanity, God did not consider it necessary, when enunciating the commandment not to kill, to add as a reason that homicide is evil. And this, according to Chrysostom, because:

" ' la loi suppose qu'on a déjà appris cette vérité de la nature.' "

Pascal then goes on to affirm that this commandment has been binding on men at all times; the Gospel confirmed the precept set down in the 'law', and the Decalogue itself merely renewed the command which man had received from God in the person of Noah, from whom all men are descended. In this 'historical' approach he follows closely the traditional scholastic theory, according to which natural law forms a fundamental part of the law which God made known to Israel through Moses, and then reaffirmed in Christ. On this view, as elaborated by Thomas Aquinas, natural law is the law which, in the Biblical scheme, God implanted in the mind of Adam, and therefore of man as man. But because the capacity for discerning this law was weakened by the Fall, God again revealed its precepts to men first through Noah, and then, more fully, through Moses.

The endorsement of the corollary of this traditional conception of natural law, that man even in his fallen state can recognize it as the norm of reason, is definitely implied in the claim that, in regard to the dictate

forbidding the taking of human life:

" ' Nous en sommes tellement instruits de nous-mêmes, ... ' "
(p.819; G.E.VI, p.131)

A little further on in the letter Pascal outlines the procedure whereby God, whose sole prerogative it is to deprive any human individual of his life, has deputed the temporal powers to be the instruments of his supreme justice where capital offences are concerned. Having pointed out that in order to avoid committing sin in the exercise of this delegated power it is necessary in the case of capital offences to act both by the authority and according to the justice of God, he adds:

"Voilà, les principes du repos et de la sûreté publique qui ont été reçus dans tous les temps et dans tous les lieux, et sur lesquels tous législateurs du monde, saints et profanes, ont établi leurs lois, sans que jamais les païens mêmes aient apporté d'exception à cette règle, ..." (p.821; G.E.VI, p.135)

In claiming universality for these 'principles', which are alleged to constitute the groundwork of all existing legal codes, Pascal is in fact reaffirming the classical conception of natural law as a universal standard of conduct morally binding on all men, and discernible by the light of reason.

In view of the relation in which natural law stands to the Decalogue, the divine positive law whose function is to disclose the purpose and content of the former, two extracts from the Pensées take on a particular significance in this respect. While undertaking what purports to be an examination of the claims of the Jewish people to be chosen of God, Pascal comments as follows on the precepts laid down in the Pentateuch:

"Je considère cette loi qu'ils se vantent de tenir de Dieu, et je la trouve admirable. C'est la première loi de toutes, ...je trouve étrange que la première loi du monde se rencontre aussi la plus parfaite, en sorte que les plus grands législateurs en ont emprunté les leurs, comme il paraît par la loi des Douze Tables d'Athènes, qui fut ensuite prise par les Romains, ..." (p.1195;B.619)

"... il est aisé de juger de la perfection de cette loi par la simple lecture, où l'on voit qu'on a pourvu à toutes choses avec tant de sagesse, tant d'équité, tant de jugement, que les plus anciens législateurs grecs et romains, en ayant eu quelque lumière, en ont emprunté leurs principales lois; ..." (p.1196; B.620)

The historical accuracy of this account is, to say the least, questionable. However, the important point is that, as a result of the borrowings made by the jurists from the Decalogue, of which natural law forms a basic part, the positive law of Greece and Rome must in Pascal's terms be regarded as founded on and subordinate to the principles of natural law. Here again therefore he adopts the traditional view, of natural law made operative by being translated into positive law, which simply applies the fundamental principles in detail according to concrete social and historical circumstances.

Considering this largely traditional approach, and particularly since his ethics are decidedly teleological in character, it is rather curious that Pascal does not follow the Thomist line further to maintain that natural law is binding on all men because it corresponds to the true nature of man, in the sense that it delineates in some measure the pattern of activity whereby his true 'end' will be attained. Thomas Aquinas defines as the 'eternal law' the divine wisdom directing and guiding the whole

universe of created things to their proper act and due 'end'.⁽¹⁾ 'Natural law' he regards as the 'participation' of the 'eternal law' in a rational creature.⁽²⁾ It is the rational creature's own knowledge of his purpose as manifested in his nature and in the exigencies of his nature, and of the way in which that 'end' of his nature is to be attained by the means at its disposal. Thus Aquinas believes that man's reason, in response to his own fundamental tendencies and needs, promulgates the natural law, the body of precepts setting out the good to be pursued and the evil to be eschewed, which human nature imposes on all mankind. Positive law should ideally be derived from this natural law, and any laws enacted which run counter to its dictates not only forfeit the title of 'law', but cannot claim to be regarded as binding in conscience.⁽³⁾

Now although Pascal follows Aquinas in holding that man's 'end', to which the desires inherent in his nature act as the pointers, should determine his rule of action, he nowhere attempts to develop this into a system of natural law, upon the principles of which all positive law should be grounded. Such a divergence on his part from the traditional conception appears the more striking in view of the approach adopted in this respect by his friend, and fellow Port-Royalist, the jurisconsult Domat. Like Pascal Domat maintains that it is man's 'end' which should rightly determine his conduct; indeed in his opinion conduct can be defined as "les démarches de l'homme vers sa fin". And because laws are no more than the 'rules' of human conduct, it follows that:

(1) S.T., Ia II ae, q.93, art.1.

(2) S.T., Ia II ae, q.91, art.2.cf.A.-D. Sertillanges: La philosophie morale de Saint Thomas d'Aquin, p.139 f.f.

(3) S.T., Ia II ae, q.96, art.4.

".... la destination de l'homme à sa fin sera la première règle de la voie et des démarches qui l'y conduisent, et par conséquent sa première loi et le fondement de toutes les autres." (i,3)

A summary analysis of human nature, of its needs and aspirations, suffices to reveal that God alone is capable of constituting man's 'end' and his 'summum bonum', synonymous terms for Domat as for Pascal. Whence it results that the primary law, which directs man to the pursuit of his 'end' and sovereign good, also forms "l'esprit de la religion".⁽¹⁾ But Domat is insistent that the universal character of these principles of the laws governing both individual conduct and the civil order is such that even those uninstructed in the religion where they are to be learned should:

"... au moins les reconnaître en eux-mêmes, puisqu'ils sont gravés dans le fond de notre nature. ...on jugera du caractère de la certitude de ces principes par la double impression que doivent faire sur notre esprit des vérités que Dieu nous enseigne par la religion, et qu'il nous fait sentir par notre raison: ... les premiers principes des lois, et le détail des règles essentielles à ces principes, ont un caractère de vérité dont personne n'est incapable, et qui touche également l'esprit et le coeur." (i,2)

Revealed precepts and natural law therefore proceed from the same source, so that Domat would agree with Thomas Aquinas in seeing a certain conformity between the teleology of man's nature and the divine commandments. And this conception of the relation between natural law and the divine commandments obviously precludes Domat from endorsing Grotius's classic affirmation

(1) i,6. (All references to Domat's writings, unless otherwise stated, are to the Traité des lois, contained in the first volume of his Oeuvres complètes, Paris 1835) "C'est cette première loi qui est le fondement et le premier principe de toutes les autres: car cette loi qui commande à l'homme la recherche et l'amour du souverain-bien, étant commune à tous les hommes, elle en renferme une seconde qui les oblige à s'unir et s'aimer entre eux;..." (i,7) cf. below p.

that the principles of natural law would retain their validity even "if we were to grant, what we cannot grant without wickedness, that there is no God, or that he bestows no regard on human affairs." (1)

It is from the basic principle, common to all men and discernible by the light of natural reason, that man should regulate his acts in accordance with his 'end' and chief good, that Domat claims, not merely that all law should be, but as an empirical fact that all laws have been derived. Thus his treatise is taken up with demonstrating how this applies in the case of the whole body of the civil law of his own country. The passages from Pascal's writings however, where he has been shown to accord definite value to natural law, implying furthermore that it achieves recognition and actualization through positive law, contain no hint that the natural law there in question is simply an expansion of the principle that men's actions should be ordered to the attainment of their 'end'.

(1) De iure belli ac pacis, Prolegomena xi, Translation by W. Whewell, Cambridge, 1853.

(b) Natural law of equality of status and ownership

In the Trois discours sur la condition des grands Pascal endorses the great Stoic principle, which passed into the Christian tradition through the Fathers, of the equality and natural liberty of all men.⁽¹⁾ In the course of the first "discours", while instructing his aristocratic pupil in the true nature of his rank and of the privileges which attach to it, he states quite unequivocally that:

"Votre âme et votre corps sont d'eux-mêmes indifférents à l'état de batelier ou à celui de duc; et il n'y a nul lien naturel qui les attache à une condition plutôt qu'à une autre. ... vous n'avez rien naturellement au-dessus du commun des hommes ... une parfaite égalité avec tous les hommes; ... c'est votre état naturel."⁽²⁾ (p.617; G.E. IX, p.367)

Thus differences of worldly dignity and wealth are not to be mistaken for real differences in nature, for in nature all men are equal persons, and know no form of lordship. Pascal underlines this judgement in the second "discours" when he distinguishes sharply between two different sorts of "grandeurs". "Grandeurs d'établissement" are of purely human institution, and depend entirely on the will of men, who have seen fit, with reason however, to honour certain estates and to accord corresponding respects:

"Les dignités et la noblesse sont de ce genre. En un pays on honore les nobles, en l'autre les roturiers; ... Pourquoi cela? Parce qu'il a plu aux hommes.

(1) cf. O.Gierke: Political Theories of the Middle Age (Cambridge, 1900), p.38, and notes 16 and 137.

(2) Nicole alleges in a rather similar vein that: "Etre de naissance et de qualité selon les hommes, c'est être né de personnes considérables dans l'ordre du monde. Mais cette naissance ne donne par elle-même aucun avantage ni d'esprit, ni de corps; ... Il n'y a donc aucune raison solide qui rende les personnes de qualité plus estimables par là, que ceux qui ne le sont pas." Essais, II, p. 80 cf. also Traité de l'éducation d'un prince, ibid, II, p. 259.

La chose était indifférente avant l'établissement:.." (1)
(p.618; G.E.IX, p.369)

"Grandeurs naturelles" on the other hand occur irrespective of rank, and are also independent of the "fantaisie des hommes", because they comprise real and effectual physical and mental attributes.

Although Pascal does not conceive of a system of basic human rights, grounded in the truth about human nature, issuing from and corresponding to this principle of natural equality, he nonetheless does not limit it to status alone. It applies to property as well, which is just as much a fiction from the 'nature' standpoint as dominion. Under the law of nature not only liberty and equality prevailed among men, but community of goods also. Pascal assures the young nobleman:

"Vous n'avez aucun droit de vous-même et par votre nature aux richesses dont vous vous trouvez maître, ... Vous tenez, dites-vous, vos richesses de vos ancêtres;... Vous imaginez-vous aussi que ce soit par quelque loi naturelle que ces biens ont passé de vos ancêtres à vous? Cela n'est pas véritable. Cet ordre n'est fondé que sur la seule volonté des législateurs qui ont pu avoir de bonnes raisons, mais dont aucune n'est prise d'un droit naturel que vous ayez sur ces choses. S'il leur avait plu d'ordonner que ces biens, après avoir été possédés par les pères durant leur vie, retourneraient à la république après leur mort, vous n'auriez aucun sujet de vous en plaindre. Ainsi tout le titre par lequel vous possédez votre bien n'est pas un titre de nature, mais d'un établissement humain." (2) (p.616; G.E.IX, p.366)

(1) In the Pensées the element of 'force' is also ascribed some part in this process: "Comme les duchés et royautés et magistratures sont réelles et nécessaires à cause de ce que la force règle tout, il y en a partout et toujours. Mais parce que ce n'est que fantaisie qui fait qu'un tel ou tel le soit, cela n'est pas constant, cela est sujet à varier, etc." (p.1162; B.306)

(2) cf. also from the Pensées: "Faiblesse. - Toutes les occupations des hommes sont à avoir du bien; et ils ne sauraient avoir de titre pour montrer qu'ils le possèdent par justice, car ils n'ont que la fantaisie des hommes,.." (p.1137; B.436)

M. Jacques Denis in his commentary on this passage takes Pascal to task over the denial it implies of the existence of any natural law of entail: "Il y a ici un sophisme ou une idée mal démêlée. Sans doute que le droit naturel ne dit pas que tel ou tel individu ... ait droit sur telle ou telle chose: mais cela empêche-t-il que le droit naturel ne dise que les biens acquis par les pères doivent passer à leurs enfants?" (1) It appears to have escaped M. Denis's notice that it is precisely this last point which Pascal is concerned to refute, when he maintains that rights of ownership are in every case the creature of positive law, by showing that, had the legislature so determined, property would revert to the state on the death of the holder instead of, as actually happens in this particular instance, passing to his heirs. Pascal clearly believes that something else, common ownership, is natural, as against legal division which is conventional.

Mlle. Demahis similarly goes astray when she alleges that: "pour Pascal la propriété existe avant la loi: la loi ne fait que consolider un état préexistant," and claims that in this way Pascal gets round the 'danger' inherent in a theory of property like that of Montesquieu or Bentham, that: "si la loi a fait la propriété elle peut de même la défaire quand bon lui semble; ..." (2) Yet the passage cited above shows unmistakably that it is against this sense of property as of absolute dominion, which has dominated modern Europe through the Roman Civil Law, that Pascal sets himself in these Discours. Not merely does he expressly affirm that ownership is the creature of law, thus implying the power of revising it, but he even

(1) J.F. Denis: Vues politiques et sociales de Pascal, Mémoires de l'Académie nationale des sciences, arts, et belles-lettres de Caen, 1893, p.211, n.1.

(2) E. Demahis: La pensée politique de Pascal (Saint-Amand, 1931), p.261-2

envisages exactly the state of things which Mlle. Demahis looks upon as the 'dangerous' aspect of other theories.

Neither of these commentators, and in particular M. Denis, seems to have recognized that Pascal here harks back to the general opinion of the Fathers, and following them of the canonists, that the very existence of lordship and ownership constitutes a breach of the law of nature,⁽¹⁾ so that the conception of a natural law regulating succession to property would be to him a contradiction in terms. He does however go on to say that despite the breach they entail in the natural order of things, God has sanctioned the laws which determine the right of succession to property:

"Je ne veux pas dire que vos biens ne vous appartiennent pas légitimement, et qu'il soit permis à un autre de vous les ravoir; car Dieu, qui en est le maître, a permis aux sociétés de faire des lois pour les partager; et quand ces lois sont une fois établies, il est injuste de les violer."⁽²⁾
(p.616-7; G.E.IX, p.366-7)

(1) cf. A.J. Carlyle: Medieval Political Theory in the West, (Edinburgh, 1903), vol.II,ii,6. Pascal could well have found the notion in embryo at least in Saint Augustine's The City of God, especially bk. XIX, ch.15.

(2) Pascal's views on the questions of lordship and property thus bear a striking resemblance to those of Wycliffe, who also stressed the difference between 'natural' dominion, according to which all men have everything in common - the corollary in his opinion of the Scriptural conception that all should be lords and all servants one of another - and the much inferior 'civil' dominion, the consequence of the Fall, which, like Pascal's "grandeurs d'établissement", should not pretend to any essential character, and which will, like them, be liable to modification according to different national traditions. Yet Wycliffe also held that this 'civil' dominion has divine sanction, so that the violent assertion of natural rights with respect to property was as far from his mind as it was from Pascal's. cf. R.L. Poole: Illustrations of the History of Medieval Thought and Learning (London, 1920), p.258-261.

(ii) Negative attitude to natural law.

In contrast to these contexts, where a definitely positive attitude to natural law is implied, must be set the passages from the Pensées where Pascal is concerned, not so much to deny the value of natural law, as simply to point out that it plays no part in moulding the civil law operative in various states. In the long fragment devoted to displaying the wholly relative character of 'justice' on the human plane he alleges that:

"Ils confessent que la justice n'est pas dans ces coutumes, mais qu'elle réside dans les lois naturelles, communes en tout pays. Certainement ils le soutiendraient opiniâtement, si la témérité du hasard qui a semé les lois humaines en avait rencontré au moins une qui fût universelle; mais la plaisanterie est telle, que le caprice des hommes s'est si bien diversifié, qu'il n'y en a point. Il y a sans doute des lois naturelles; mais cette belle raison corrompue a tout corrompu:" (p.1150;B.294)

Thus on the empirical level the concept of law does not extend beyond the mere practice of mankind; and in this sense Pascal would deny the existence of any objective order of justice independent of and anterior to all positive law, of which the principles of natural law are a determination and a putting into concrete terms.

A further fragment sets forth the significant judgement that:

"Les seules règles universelles sont les lois du pays aux choses ordinaires, et la pluralité aux autres." (p.1152;B.299)

The effect of this claim, that 'universal laws' are no more than the enactments of a competent legislative authority or a majority opinion, regardless of the material content, is to deprive the idea of law of its universal and immutable character and to turn it into something purely formal.

The reason advanced for adopting such a sceptical view is simply that natural law is by definition universal, and that since an empirical survey can bring to light no law which is actually recognized as binding by all men, therefore, as a plain matter of fact, there are no natural laws in force. Pascal takes up his stand behind this unanswerable objection, that it is impossible to cite any law which would fulfil the test 'quod semper quod ubique quod ab omnibus'.

Domat on the contrary believes that even in his present sinful condition natural law can still be referred to the play of the natural light of man's reason, which has remained unimpaired after the Fall as his infallible guide to the natural rules of equity.⁽¹⁾ He maintains that certain common duties are universally apprehended in varying degrees as binding, even if, in the present state of man's nature under the domination of "amour-propre", they are not always observed. Indeed he even goes so far as to assert that reason is nothing other than the awareness and application of these laws, without which no society could be maintained.⁽²⁾

(1) ".... cette lumière restée à l'homme après sa chute, qui lui fait connaître les règles naturelles de l'équité..." (ix 14)

(2) The natural awareness of the principles of equity, which remains to man after the Fall, is the subject of the following passage: "C'est cette lumière de la raison qui, faisant sentir à tous les hommes les règles communes de la justice et de l'équité, leur tient lieu d'une loi qui est restée dans tous les esprits, au milieu des ténèbres que l'amour-propre y a répandues; ainsi, tous les hommes ont dans l'esprit les impressions de la vérité et de l'autorité de ces lois naturelles, 'qu'il ne faut faire tort à personne; qu'il faut rendre à chacun ce qui lui appartient; qu'il faut être sincère dans les engagements, fidèle à exécuter ses promesses', et des autres règles semblables de la justice et de l'équité; car la connaissance de ces règles est inséparable de la raison, ou plutôt la raison n'est elle-même que la vue et l'usage de toutes ces règles.

Et quoique cette lumière de la raison, qui donne la vue de ces vérités à ceux qui en ignorent les premiers principes, ne règne pas en chacun de telle sorte qu'il en fasse la règle de sa conduite, elle règne en tous de

Pascal's aphorism: "Il y a sans doute des lois naturelles; mais cette belle raison corrompue a tout corrompu", indicates how far he differs from Domat in his conception of the function and value of reason in this respect. M. Funck-Brentano, commenting on Domat's usage of the term "raison", notes: "La raison n'est donc pas pour Domat une entité abstraite qui impose ses vérités à la pensée humaine, mais elle est simplement la vue et l'usage des lois naturelles; et sous cette forme elle n'a rien pu corrompre, comme le veut Pascal, mais, étant incomplète par elle-même, dépendante de son développement, elle ne peut interpréter et appliquer les lois naturelles que dans la mesure où elle les connaît." (1) As an interpretation of Domat's idea of reason this is rather tendentious, but it does serve to bring out the fundamental contrast. Domat's "raison" cannot exercise a corrupting influence on natural law just because it is neither more nor less than the expression of that law. Doubtless it could itself have become corrupted, but he is emphatic that its soundness has survived the Fall unimpaired. Pascal's statement on the other hand shows that he regards the apprehension of natural law as taking place prior to the mental activity of "raison", and as therefore presumably belonging to the class of intuitive first principles registered by the "coeur" or "instinct". In this case it would be quite possible for a corrupt "raison", in the sense of the discursive faculty, to

(continued from p.255) telle manière, que les plus injustes aiment assez la justice pour condamner l'injustice des autres et pour la haïr, ... ce qui fait sentir que Dieu a gravé dans tous les esprits cette espèce de connaissance et d'amour de la justice, sans quoi la société ne pouvait durer; et c'est par cette connaissance des lois naturelles, que les nations mêmes qui ont ignoré la religion ont fait subsister leur société." (ix, 5)

(1) Th. Funck-Brentano: Le droit naturel au XVIIe siècle, Revue d'histoire diplomatique, 1887, p.498-9.

contaminate natural law. And that Pascal does indeed believe "raison" has been permanently vitiated in all men as the result of the Fall is evident from the justification he approves, in the short Comparaison des chrétiens, for lowering the baptismal age of children:

"L'Eglise prévient l'usage de la raison, pour prévenir les vices où la raison corrompue entraînerait les enfants;.." (1) (p.557; G.E.X, p.557)

Now when Domat affirms that: "... la raison ... ne nous est donnée que pour sentir la justice et la vérité..." (xi, 20) "... cette lumière de la raison qui, faisant sentir à tous les hommes les règles communes de la justice..." (ix, 5) "...des vérités que Dieu...nous fait sentir par notre raison.." (i,2), it is plain that he believes the activity of 'reason' extends to that domain from which it is Pascal's predominant concern to exclude it. Despite the inconsistencies that mark his terminology where questions of knowledge and perception are concerned, such a correlation of "raison" and "sentiment" would in Pascal's terms amount to the grossest of confusions. He differentiates clearly between the faculties responsible for "sentiment", which in his vocabulary denotes direct awareness or vision, not merely of an idea as in the case of the Cartesian intuitive reason, but of the actual object of perception, and for "raison", which is strictly limited in meaning to the discursive reasoning-power, the source of all mediate knowledge. (2) Domat on the other hand recognizes no such distinction, but comprehends under the single heading "raison" both the perception of

(1) cf. the fragment from the Pensées, particularly significant in this regard "La corruption de la raison paraît par tant de différentes et extravagantes moeurs." (p.1202; B.440)

(2) cf. above, p.88ff.

natural laws and the sort of deductive reasoning necessary to derive a code of civil law from them as principles.

Since Pascal concedes that natural laws do exist, although nowhere are they to be found in operation as the result of the activity of "raison", and especially in view of the maxims he quotes in support of his assertion to this effect: " 'Nihil amplius nostrum est; quod nostrum dicimus artis est. Ex senatus consultis et plebiscitis crimina exercentur. Ut olim vitiiis, sic nunc legibus laboramus' ", it is legitimate to conclude that he believes they have been overlaid and obscured by positive law, the product of "raison".

The hypothesis that Pascal in his survey confuses natural and positive laws - a possibility envisaged by Domat,⁽¹⁾ whose theory allows for variation in the latter according to time and place⁽²⁾ - does not hold water, for several of the laws which he cites as indifferently observed or

(1) cf. xi, 23.

(2) Domat distinguishes as follows between 'immutable' (natural) and 'arbitrary' (positive) laws: "Les lois immuables s'appellent ainsi, parce qu'elles sont naturelles et tellement justes toujours et partout, qu'aucune autorité ne peut ni les changer, ni les abolir; et les lois arbitraires sont celles qu'une autorité légitime peut établir, changer et abolir, selon le besoin. Ces lois immuables ou naturelles sont toutes celles qui sont des suites nécessaires des deux premières, et qui sont tellement essentielles aux engagemens qui forment l'ordre de la société, qu'on ne saurait les changer sans ruiner les fondemens de cet ordre; et les lois arbitraires sont celles qui peuvent être différemment établies, changées, et même abolies, sans violer l'esprit des premières lois, et sans blesser les principes de l'ordre de la société." (xi, 1) And it is while comparing the different quality of justice which these two sorts of law embody that Domat shows why positive law will vary according to time and place: "La justice universelle de toutes les lois consiste dans leur rapport à l'ordre de la société, dont elles sont les règles; ..." But whereas natural laws are 'essentially' just because they are 'essential' to the two primal laws and to the "engagemens" which flow from these, the positive "... étant indifférentes à ces fondemens de l'ordre de la société, de sorte qu'il n'y en a aucune qui ne puisse être changée ou abolie sans les renverser, la justice de ces lois consiste dans l'utilité particulière qui se trouve à les établir, selon que les temps et les lieux peuvent y obliger." (xi, 20)

disregarded (1) fall within Domat's natural law category. Nor can M. Funck-Brentano's claim be upheld that Domat has answered Pascal's basic objection, that so-called natural laws are not universal, by allowing that despite their immutable character nonetheless some natural laws do admit of exceptions. For although Domat does not actually consider the examples adduced by Pascal, his provision for exceptions is based upon the fact that:

"Les lois n'ont de justice et d'autorité que par leur rapport à l'ordre de la société et à l'esprit des premières lois; de sorte que, s'il arrive qu'il soit de cet ordre et de cet esprit d'en restreindre quelques-unes, ou par des exceptions ou par des dispenses, elles reçoivent ces tempéramens..." (xi, 20)

The cases of non-observance referred to by Pascal however are not justified by any such incompatibility with "l'ordre de la société", but are merely capricious.

Law does not have for Pascal, as it does for Domat, that aura of dignity peculiar to the embodiment of the deepest principles of justice, and to the highest expression of human reason, nor does it represent for him, as for Bossuet, something divine and mysterious, good in itself beyond the power of those who make it - on the contrary he sees in it simply the embodiment of irrational custom. (2) The ultimate basis of all existing laws in his view is only custom, and their authority, he contends, derives solely from the fact that they have become entrenched:

(1) "Le larcin, l'inceste, le meurtre des enfants et des pères, tout a eu sa place entre les actions vertueuses." (p.1150; B.294)

(2) This of course, without Pascal's derogatory implications, was the normal Mediaeval view, which regarded laws as simply the records of the customs of various communities. As A. J. Carlyle has noted: "... the law was during the Middle Ages primarily the custom of the community." Political Liberty (Oxford, 1941), p.13-14, cf. p.28.

"La coutume fait toute l'équité, par cette seule raison qu'elle est reçue; c'est le fondement mystique de son autorité." (1)^s (p.1150; B.294)

Domat's assertion that:

"...l'autorité des coutumes et des usages est fondée sur cette raison qu'on doit présumer que ce qui a été longtemps observé est utile et juste..." (xii,5),

represents from Pascal's point of view a *petitio principii*; for it is precisely the grounds for accepting this supposition which, after submitting them to merciless scrutiny, he dismisses as mere fancy.

(1) By contrast Domat holds that the authority which the two types of law command corresponds to the variation in their inherent justice: "Les lois naturelles étant la justice même, elles ont une autorité naturelle sur notre raison; car elle ne nous est donnée que pour sentir la justice et la vérité, et nous y soumettre". However, since men sometimes lack "une raison assez pure pour reconnaître cette justice, ou le coeur assez droit pour y obéir", these natural laws are enforced by the authority of the temporal powers. On the other hand the authority of positive law derives solely from the power of those who possess the right to make law. And Domat concludes: "Cette différence entre la justice et l'autorité des lois naturelles, et celle des lois arbitraires a cet effet, qu'au lieu que les lois arbitraires ne pouvant être naturellement connues aux hommes, elles sont comme des faits qu'on peut ignorer, les lois naturelles étant essentiellement justes, et l'objet naturel de la raison, on ne peut dire qu'on les ignore, non plus qu'on ne peut dire qu'on manque de la lumière de la raison qui nous les enseigne." (xi, 20)

2. The general good.

(i) The pursuit of the general good should form the basis of society.

One of the arguments which Pascal employs in the Pensées in order to demonstrate the fundamental injustice and depravity of human nature, although cast in a somewhat paradoxical form, sheds valuable light on what he regards as the rightful basis of society. After claiming that it is unjust to bias our wills to desire the love of others, he points out that this is an inborn tendency in men and concludes:

"...nous naissons donc injustes, car tout tend à soi. Cela est contre tout ordre; il faut tendre au général; et la pente vers soi est le commencement de tout désordre, en guerre, en police, en économie, dans le corps particulier de l'homme. La volonté est donc dépravée. Si les membres des communautés naturelles et civiles tendent au bien du corps, les communautés elles-mêmes doivent tendre à un autre corps plus général, dont elles sont membres. L'on doit donc tendre au général. Nous naissons donc injustes et dépravés." (p.1304; B.477)

The argument advanced here to prove the depravity of the human will, on the ground that it leads men to disregard "ordre", according to which they should seek the general good, is unconvincing. Pascal records it as an observed and recognized fact that the members of civil and natural communities "tendent au bien du corps", and infers from this fact the universal duty to look to the general good. In view of this procedure it is difficult to see how the conclusion, which assumes that we have an inborn preference for the self, "Nous naissons donc injustes et dépravés", is reached. Likewise, if, as he maintains, men are born unjust and depraved, with an ineluctable "tendance à soi", then ipso facto it will be impossible to discover evidence that when living together in communities they work

for the common good.

Despite these non sequiturs however, the passage makes it quite clear that Pascal believes the duty to seek the general good, which should be recognized as binding by all men, properly forms the groundwork of society. Considering the importance which it thus assumes it is rather curious that he should be content to rest this obligation, at least in the case of secular society,⁽¹⁾ on such a purely empirical basis. In this respect his approach stands in sharp contrast to that of Domat, who derives this fundamental social obligation from the primary principle of natural law enjoining on man the duty to seek after and love his sovereign good.⁽²⁾

(1) cf. below, p.327ff for the Church in this regard.

(2) Domat argues that this primary law, "...qui commande à l'homme la recherche et l'amour du souverain-bien, étant commune à tous les hommes, elle en renferme une seconde qui les oblige à s'unir et s'aimer entre eux; parce qu'étant destinés pour être unis dans la possession d'un bien unique, qui doit faire leur commune félicité,ils ne peuvent être dignes de cette unité dans la possession de leur fin commune s'ils ne commencent leur union en se liant d'un amour mutuel dans la voie qui les y conduit." (i, 7) Implicit in the first law therefore is the all-important fact (for Domat) that God has destined man to an essentially social existence. "Quoique l'homme soit fait pour connaître et pour aimer le souverain-bien, Dieu ne l'a pas mis d'abord dans la possession de cette fin, mais il l'a mis auparavant dans cette vie, comme dans une voie pour y parvenir..." (ii, 1) And Domat claims that, just as it is possible to detect in human nature that man is destined to possess this 'supreme good', "...on y verra aussi sa destination à la société et les divers liens qui l'y engagent de toutes parts;..." (i, 8) Domat conceives of society itself as entirely built up on the principle of "engagemens" - the relationships formed between individuals as the result of natural family ties, of the development of intellectual life which involves communication with others, and of the organised work which man must share in with his fellows if his economic and bodily needs are to be adequately provisioned for, and nature's bounties put to profitable use. (ii, 2) And in Le droit public he alleges that it is on the analogy of a body composed of members who fulfil diverse functions that society is properly envisaged: "Tout le monde sait que la société des hommes forme un corps dont chacun est membre; et cette vérité que l'Écriture nous apprend et que la lumière de la raison nous rend évidente, est le fondement de tous les devoirs qui regardent la conduite de chacun envers tous les autres et envers le corps. Car ces sortes de devoirs ne sont autre chose que les fonctions propres aux engagemens où chacun se trouve par le rang qu'il tient dans ce corps." (i, préface) But the

A further fragment from the Pensées relating to the doctrine of the "membres pensants", according to which the social organism is conceived of on the analogy of the human body, shows that as far as the individual is concerned "ordre" consists simply in the recognition and fulfilment by him of his duty to work for the common good:

"Si les pieds et les mains avaient une volonté particulière, jamais ils ne seraient dans leur ordre qu'en soumettant cette volonté particulière à la volonté première qui gouverne le corps entier. Hors de là, ils sont dans le désordre..."
(p.1304; B.475)

In the previous fragment Pascal appears to use the term to denote what results from such conformity on the part of individuals. "Ordre" in this context therefore represents that condition of social harmony which comes about when the various components of the body politic act together in pursuit of the common good, each performing his proper function in the appropriate sphere. (1)

Elsewhere in the Pensées it is alleged to be the mark of man's "grandeur" that, despite his enthrallment to concupiscence, he has succeeded in achieving a certain "ordre" in his social relations:

(cont. from p.262) primary duty which is imposed in this way on all individuals is "à procurer le bien commun, et à maintenir l'ordre dans l'Etat." (ibid).

(1) Domat also uses the term "ordre" with much the same connotation throughout the Traité des lois. cf. above, p.258 n.2. and below, p.265 n.2. The following definition occurs at the outset of title nine of Le droit public, headed "Des divers ordres de personnes qui composent un état": "Ce sont ces diverses sortes de conditions et professions dont l'assemblage compose l'ordre général de la société des hommes dans un état; et c'est par l'usage de leurs fonctions qu'il doit subsister, de même que dans le corps, l'union des membres en forme la symétrie, et que l'usage de leurs fonctions y donne la vie." And in the preface to the first book of the same work he notes that: "... comme l'ordre public ne peut subsister que par le concours des fonctions de tous les membres qui composent le corps de la société, la dépravation des fonctions des membres ou leur seule cessation y fait comme une maladie qui en trouble et dérègle l'ordre."

"Grandeur. - Les raisons des effets marquent la grandeur de l'homme, d'avoir tiré de la concupiscence un si bel ordre." (p.1160; B.403)

"Grandeur de l'homme dans sa concupiscence même, d'en avoir su tirer un règlement admirable, et d'en avoir fait un tableau de charité."(1) (ibid; B.402)

(ii) Society is actually grounded on "amour-propre".

Although Pascal does concede that men have succeeded in so regulating concupiscence that it is possible for them to live together in some sort of harmony and accord, he is insistent that the "ordre" which has thus been produced does not result from the pursuit of the general good. On the contrary such "ordre" merely cloaks the underlying "amour-propre", the motive which actuates all man's social conduct. It is Pascal's adherence to the Augustinian conception of the effects of original sin that is largely responsible for giving such a deeply pessimistic colouring to his outlook in

(1) Nicole likewise holds that social harmony has been achieved by regulating men's discordant selfish impulses: "Qui n'admirerait un homme qui aurait trouvé l'art d'appivoiser les lions, les ours, les tigres et les autres bêtes farouches, et de les faire servir aux usages de la vie? Or c'est ce que fait l'ordre des Etats; car les hommes pleins de cupidité, sont pires que des tigres, des lions et des ours. Chacun d'eux voudrait dévorer les autres: cependant par le moyen des lois et des polices, on apprivoise tellement ces bêtes féroces, que l'on en tire tous les services humaines que l'on pourroit tirer de la plus pure charité." De la grandeur, ch.VI, Essais, II, p.160. And he alleges that in the event of the dissolution of the "ordre politique": "...tous les hommes seroient ennemis les uns des autres, et il y auroit une guerre générale entre eux, qui ne se décideroit que par la force." ibid., p.158-9.

this regard. The corollary which he draws from this doctrine, that human nature has been permanently vitiated by the Fall to such an extent that man is now powerless to achieve any good of his own volition and by his own efforts, has obvious social and political ramifications. Indeed he seems to hold that it is in the sphere of social relations that the effects of man's vicious tendencies are most easily discerned. Thus it is this view of man, as dominated by the concupiscence which has become his second nature,⁽¹⁾ with the corresponding anti-social bias it gives to all his motives, that lies behind the strange statement in the Pensées that all men hate each other 'naturally':

"Tous les hommes se haïssent naturellement l'un l'autre. On s'est servi comme on a pu de la concupiscence pour la faire servir au bien public; mais ce n'est que feindre, et une fausse image de la charité; car au fond ce n'est que haine." (p.1126; B.451)

"On a fondé et tiré de la concupiscence des règles admirables de police, de morale et de justice; mais dans le fond, ce vilain fond de l'homme, ce figmentum malum, n'est que couvert; il n'est pas ôté." (p.1126; B.453)

A further fragment shows how it is that "amour-propre" prompts man to such a 'hatred' of his fellows, and sets out the reason why his anti-social desires are so much stronger and commoner than social ones in this state of enthrallment to concupiscence:

"Le moi est haïssable: ...si je le hais parce qu'il est injuste, qu'il se fait centre du tout, je le haïrai toujours.

En un mot le moi a deux qualités: il est injuste en soi, en ce qu'il se fait centre du tout; il est incommode aux autres, en ce qu'il les veut asservir: car chaque moi est l'ennemi et voudrait être le tyran de tous les autres."⁽²⁾
(p.1126-7; B.455)

(1) cf. above, p.215f.

(2) cf. also from the Pensées: "La nature de l'amour-propre et de ce moi humain est de n'aimer que soi et de ne considérer que soi." (p.1123; B.100)

What particularly distinguishes Pascal's views on this subject from those of his fellow Port-Royalists Domat and Nicole is the intransigent attitude reflected in the foregoing extracts. Despite his readiness to agree with them in recognizing that men have succeeded in so modifying their concupiscence and adapting it to social ends that it now to some extent

(cont. from p.265) Domat's account of the effects of "amour-propre" on society has many similarities with that of Pascal. He maintains that: "Tout ce que l'on voit dans la société de contraire à l'ordre, est une suite naturelle de la désobéissance de l'homme à la première loi qui commande l'amour de Dieu;..." (ix, 1) Discord arises in consequence of man's attempt to find in the "biens sensibles", to which he has transferred his affections, the two qualities peculiarly characteristic of the "souverain-bien" - i.e. that it allows of possession by all, and that it is capable of constituting the complete happiness of each: "... c'est ensuite de cet état où l'homme s'est mis, que ceux qui mettent leur bonheur à posséder des biens de cette nature, venant à se rencontrer dans les recherches des mêmes objets, se divisent entre eux, et violent toutes sortes de liaisons et d'engagemens ..." (ix, 3) Thus Domat can claim with respect to this Hobbesian state of universal and continual striving after finite objects, with the resultant conflict between aspirants, that: "C'est donc le dérèglement de l'amour qui a dérégulé la société, et, au lieu de cet amour mutuel dont le caractère était d'unir les hommes dans la recherche de leur bien commun, on voit régner un amour tout opposé dont le caractère lui a justement donne le nom d'amour-propre, parce que celui en qui cet amour domine ne recherche que des biens qu'il se rend propres, et qu'il n'aime dans les autres que ce qu'il en peut rapporter à soi." (ix, 2). In Le droit public he asserts that if social conduct is examined from the standpoint of the "corps-membres" relationship, which involves each individual in the duty of working for the common good and for the maintenance of civil order, it will be apparent that, far from regarding themselves in this light "... la plupart ne se regardent qu'eux-mêmes, sans aucun rapport au corps dont ils sont les membres, et règlent toute leur conduite sans aucune vue de l'ordre et du bien commun de ce corps. Mais chacun se fait son tout de soi-même, et son amour-propre se rapportant à soi toute sa conduite,..." (I, préface) Nicole also echoes Pascal in his view of what "amour-propre" entails in fallen man: "...il n'aime que soi; il rapporte tout à soi. Il se désire toutes sortes de biens, d'honneurs, de plaisirs, et il n'en désire qu'à soi-même, ou par rapport à soi-même. Il se fait le centre de tout: il voudrait dominer sur tout, ...Ces dispositions tyranniques étant empreintes dans le fond du coeur de tous les hommes, les rendent violents, injustes, cruels,....Voilà le monstre que nous renfermons dans notre sein. ...Mais si nous l'aimons dans nous-mêmes, il s'en faut bien que nous le trahissions de même, quand nous l'apercevons dans les autres. Il nous paraît alors au contraire sous sa forme naturelle, et nous le haïssons même d'autant plus que nous nous aimons, parce que l'amour-propre des autres hommes s'oppose à tous les désirs du nôtre." De la charité et de l'amour-propre, Essais, III, p.123-5.

mirrors charity,⁽¹⁾ he refuses to look beyond the underlying selfishness and injustice to what for them is the real worth of the condition of civil order which results from this process.⁽²⁾ Thus the alleged conversion of "amour-propre" into a means for preserving social harmony, which Domat maintains is the chief one utilized by God for this purpose,⁽³⁾ is the target for his fiercest scorn in the fragment where he affirms that all

(1) Thus Nicole claims that: "...pour réformer entièrement le monde, c'est-à-dire pour en bannir tous les vices et tous les désordres grossiers, et pour rendre les hommes heureux dès cette vie même, il ne faudroit, au défaut de la charité, que leur donner à tous un amour-propre éclairé, qui sût discerner ses vrais intérêts, et y tendre par les voies que la droite raison lui découvrirait. Quelque corrompue que cette société fût au dedans et aux yeux de Dieu, il n'y auroit rien au dehors de mieux réglé, de plus civil, de plus juste, de plus pacifique, de plus honnête, de plus généreux; et, ce qui seroit le plus admirable, c'est que, n'étant animée et remuée que par l'amour-propre, on ne verroit partout que la forme et les caractères de la charité." De la charité et de l'amour-propre, Essais, III, p.164-5.

(2) In this respect, as Ernst Cassirer has pointed out, Pascal's outlook bears a singular resemblance to that of Rousseau. "Regarding the forces which, in the present state of society, tend to bring individuals together, Rousseau entertains the same opinion as Pascal. He stresses repeatedly that there is no original moral impulse, no desire for community in its true sense ...nor any natural sympathy uniting one man to another. All social ties are based on mere illusion. Egotism and vanity, the impulse to dominate and to impress others; such are the real bonds that hold society together." The Philosophy of the Enlightenment, p.155.

(3) "...on voit dans sa conduite sur la société, que d'une aussi méchante cause que notre amour-propre, et d'un poison si contraire à l'amour mutuel qui devait être le fondement de la société, Dieu en a fait un des remèdes qui la font subsister; .." Domat then proceeds to demonstrate that God has simply transformed the "amour-propre", which menaced the very foundation of society, into an integrative force fostering the growth of the vital "engagemens", for "...la chute de l'homme ne l'ayant pas dégagé de ses besoins et les ayant au contraire multipliés, elle a aussi augmenté la nécessité des travaux et des commerces, et en même temps la nécessité des engagemens et des liaisons; ...Cet état des hommes porte ceux qui ne se conduisent que par l'amour-propre, à s'assujettir aux travaux, aux commerces et aux liaisons que leurs besoins rendent nécessaires; et pour se les rendre utiles, et y ménager, et leur honneur, et leur intérêt, ils y gardent la bonne foi, la fidélité, la sincérité, de sorte que l'amour-propre s'accommode à tout pour s'accommoder de tout; et il sait si bien assortir ses différentes démarches à toutes ses vues, qu'il se plie à tous les devoirs, jusqu'à

cont. on p.268

men hate each other 'naturally'. Not that Domat labours under any illusions as to the possible eradication of "amour-propre" by this means - he too acknowledges that it is merely 'hidden', that it "contrefait toutes les vertus", and "s'enveloppe sous les apparences des vertus".⁽¹⁾ However, it is a measure of the difference both of aim and outlook of the two writers that whereas the latter should be content to point out not only that "amour-propre" is in practice a valuable instrument in the preservation of the fabric of organized society, but furthermore that it actually promotes the development of this along the lines originally laid down by God, Pascal on the other hand seems intent on tearing aside, in Machiavellian fashion, what is for him merely a mask from the underlying selfishness which it veils. He belongs to that tradition of "painters of human nature in black", adept in the art of tracing socially desirable actions to basically vicious tendencies, for whom, as Professor Lovejoy has recently shown, "the doctrine of man's total depravity was a great stimulator of the quest for ...hidden motives behind even outwardly good acts."⁽²⁾ Hence Pascal believes that men disguise egotism under the mask of a high moral and social ideal, and claims that even sympathy and humility may be the cloaks of

(cont from p.267) contrefaire toutes les vertus; et chacun voit dans les autres, et s'il s'étudiait, verrait en soi-même les manières si fines que l'amour-propre sait mettre en usage pour se cacher, et s'envelopper sous les apparences des vertus mêmes qui lui sont les plus opposées." (ix,3) Nicole similarly maintains that: "...les hommes étant vides de charité par le dérèglement du péché, demeurent néanmoins pleins de besoins, et sont dépendants les uns des autres dans une infinité de choses. La cupidité a donc pris la place de la charité pour remplir ces besoins, et elle le fait d'une manière que l'on n'admire pas assez, et où la charité commune ne peut atteindre. De la grandeur, ch.VI, Essais, II, p.159

(1) Nicole likewise asserts that although the anti-social tendencies of "amour-propre" - the "monstre que nous renfermons dans notre sein" - may be controlled, and even directed to beneficial ends, yet: "Il vit et règne absolument en nous à moins que Dieu n'ait détruit son empire en versant un autre amour dans notre coeur." De la charité et de l'amour-propre, Essais, III

(2) Reflections on Human Nature, p.25. cf. ch.I, passim.

p.124.

self-indulgence, pride and ambition:

"Plaindre les malheureux n'est pas contre la concupiscence. Au contraire, on est bien aise d'avoir à rendre ce témoignage d'amitié, et à s'attirer la réputation de tendresse, sans rien donner." (p.1126; B.452)

"Les discours d'humilité sont matière d'orgueil aux gens glorieux,..." (p.1135; B.377)

This dominant concern on Pascal's part to underline the glaring contrast, as it appears to him, between the nominal altruism of man's social conduct and the actual motives inspiring it, together with his insistence that no shaping of these motives will suffice to produce any disinterested, and therefore ultimately worthwhile, act, serves to mark the fundamental point of divergence between his ideas and those of Domat, and reflects the differences in the seriousness with which they take the Fall. While the latter regards men as fallen from the state of primitive innocence where they lived in mutual affection and peace, he also believes they retain some sense of moral principles and obligations. The natural law they had obeyed in their state of innocence, which forms the groundwork of the social organism, ⁽¹⁾ is still in some measure known to them, ⁽²⁾ and Domat is emphatic that its intrinsic justice continues to impress itself quite naturally on human reason. Indeed, were this not the case, no form of organized society

(1) "C'est par l'esprit de ces deux premières lois que Dieu, destinant les hommes à l'union dans la possession de leur fin commune, a commencé de lier entre eux une première union dans l'usage des moyens qui les y conduisent; il a fait dépendre cette dernière union, qui doit faire leur béatitude, du bon usage de cette première qui doit former leur société." (i, 8)

(2) Domat, unlike most champions of the natural law theory in the 17th century, clung to the Mediaeval conception in this respect. (cf. Cassirer, op. cit., p.241, and Gierke, op.cit., p.76) He maintains that: "...quoique les hommes aient violé ces lois capitales, et que la société soit dans un état étrangement différent de celui qui devait être élevé sur ces fondements et cimenté par cette union, il est toujours vrai que ces lois divines et essentielles à la nature de l'homme subsistent immuables, et qu'elles n'ont pas cessé d'obliger les hommes à les observer;..." (i, 8).

could be maintained. To Pascal on the contrary, the effects of the deterioration of human nature caused by the Fall, with its hereditary consequences in the shape of a transmitted bias toward sin, have been so drastic that in his present state:

"..l'homme sans la foi ne peut connaître .. la justice."
(p.1184; B.425)

Clearly such a conviction of the worthlessness of human effort in this regard, apart from grace, conduces to the pessimistic view of all social activity as mere sham.

And the way in which "amour-propre", manifesting itself in the impulse to dominate, replaces the duty to seek the general good as the basis of society, is illustrated in Pascal's account of the origin and growth of the hierarchical form of society with which he himself was best acquainted. In its evolution the sociability and benevolence toward his fellows, which were natural to man before the Fall, play no part. On the contrary, in common with the rest of the original traits of human nature, they have been warped beyond recognition, and man is envisaged as finding himself in a state relative to others of his kind strongly reminiscent of that which Hobbes argued to be his natural one - there is the same 'perpetual and restless desire of power after power', which the latter posited as 'a general inclination of all mankind', and which inevitably ^{results} ~~ensues~~ in 'that condition which is called war':

"Les cordes qui attachent le respect des uns envers les autres, en général, sont cordes de nécessité; car il faut qu'il y ait différents degrés, ⁽¹⁾ tous les

(1) cf. also from the Pensées: "Il est nécessaire qu'il y ait de l'inégalité parmi les hommes, cela est vrai;..." (p.1149; B.380)

hommes voulant dominer, et tous ne le pouvant pas, mais quelques-uns le pouvant.

Figurons-nous donc que nous les voyons commençant à se former. Il est sans doute qu'ils se battront jusqu'à ce que la plus forte partie opprime la plus faible, et qu'enfin il y ait un parti dominant.⁽¹⁾ Mais quand cela est une fois déterminé, alors les maîtres, qui ne veulent pas que la guerre continue, ordonnent que la force qui est entre leurs mains succédera comme il leur plaît; les uns la remettent à l'élection des peuples, les autres à la succession de naissance, etc." (2) (p.1162; B.304)

One striking difference discernible between Pascal's and Hobbes's views on the formation of the structure of any body politic is that what may here, for the purposes of comparison, be considered Pascal's equivalent of the 'Leviathan' is established in every instance by simple right of conquest. The possibility of some sort of contract between man and man, such as that envisaged by Hobbes as the more normal alternative to achieve this end, just does not seem to have ever suggested itself to his mind - indeed it may well be that he regarded even the very slight measure of disinterestedness required to undertake such negotiations as exceeding the present capacity of man's moral nature. Nicole on the other hand, although in agreement with respect to the forces making for the establishment of a

(1) In a further fragment Pascal enlarges the theatre of this continual striving after power from inter-faction to inter-national dimensions. Relating the unique character of the Jews' survival of the vicissitudes of time as a single, united people, he notes: "...Ils subsistent toujours, et malgré les entreprises de tant de puissants rois qui ont cent fois essayé de les faire périr, comme leurs historiens le témoignent, et comme il est aisé de le juger par l'ordre naturel des choses,..." (p.1196;B.620) The last phrase here definitely implies that according to the normal course of events any nation must expect to be threatened by imperialistic ventures from without which will know no limits.

(2) The fragment continues as follows: "Et c'est là où l'imagination commence à jouer son rôle. Jusque-là la pure force le fait: ici c'est la force qui se tient par l'imagination en un certain parti, en France des gentils hommes, en Suisse des roturiers, etc. Or ces cordes, qui attachent donc le respect à tel en particulier, sont des cordes d'imagination." (ibid.)

social hierarchy, emphasizes that the solution is above all the product of the demands of reason.⁽¹⁾ In Pascal's view however there is no alternative to the inescapable struggle for power, which must continue until finally the fact that one party really is stronger than the others, and has got and will be able to maintain the upper hand, has been proved by direct experiment. Having once attained to this position of ascendancy the party in question is enabled to enforce the rights of succession to the sovereignty won by force of arms as it sees fit, and to bring coercive sanctions to bear in order to ensure their immediate observance.

Dr. Werner Stark appears to have missed the whole point of this fragment when he glosses it in the following terms: "...tradition or custom, or habit, or convention, call it what you like, is the groundwork and the informing and inspiring principle of society."⁽²⁾ This interpretation overlooks the central fact that, as Pascal describes it, the mainspring of society, in the sense of what first sets in motion the process which culminates in the establishment of a particular order of society, is plainly the desire common to all men to prevail each over all the rest.

(1) "Chaque homme voudroit être le maître et le tyran de tous les autres: et comme il est impossible que chacun réussisse dans ce dessein, il faut par nécessité, ou que la raison y apporte quelque ordre, ou que la force le fasse, et que les plus puissants devenant les maîtres, les faibles demeurent assujettis. La raison ne reconnaît pas seulement que cette assujettissement des hommes à d'autres hommes est inévitable, mais aussi qu'il leur est très-avantageux et très-nécessaire. Elle sait que la lumière de l'homme est trop faible depuis le péché, pour pouvoir le conduire même dans les choses qui ne regardent que la vie civile, et que sa volonté est trop corrompue pour le faire demeurer en paix dans une condition réglée. Elle voit donc qu'il est nécessaire qu'il y ait quelque loi grossière qui le lie à ses devoirs, qui est celle de l'empire et de la domination. ...non seulement elle consent à l'établissement de la grandeur, mais elle regarde cet ordre comme le chef-d'oeuvre de l'esprit humain;...." De la grandeur, ch.II, Essais, II, p.140-1

(2) Pascal's Meditations on Society, Hibbert Journal, vol.47, 1948-9, p. 28-9.

Only when this has attained to its inevitable outcome does custom begin to fulfil any 'socializing' role. Pascal does believe that the 'cake of custom' holds society together, that it is a precious conservative agent, but it is clear that he regards it as coming into operation only at the second stage.

Any doubts as to Pascal's opinion of the legitimacy of this desire to prevail over others, which constitutes the motive force behind the whole process, are dispelled by a passage from the letter written at the time of his father's death where he sets out to account for the now corrupt nature of "amour-propre". For Adam in his state of innocence "amour-propre" was natural and just, since it then pointed beyond the self to God, and was furthermore counterbalanced by an infinite love of God. As the result of his sin however, Adam, while retaining intact the capacity for this infinite love, deprived himself of its rightful object, and the consequent telescoping of the finite love and the infinite capacity produced a single infinite self-love. Pascal goes on:

"Voilà la source de cet amour, et la cause de sa défectuosité et de son excès. Il en est de même du désir de dominer, de la paresse, et des autres. L'application en est aisée."
(p.496; G.E. II, p. 551)

Thus Pascal, like Saint Augustine,⁽¹⁾ regards the will to power, the impulse to dominate, which is the chief contributory cause to the growth of the social order, as founded on the perversion of the rightful motive. Hence it is evident that the necessity for the existence of a graduated social structure, assumed as a basic principle at the outset of the previous fragment, is a purely pragmatic sort of necessity with no foundation in

(1) cf. The City of God, I, I; III, X; IV, III.

natural law. Pascal, in accordance with strict Augustinian teaching, holds that man in the state of creation enjoyed a legitimate ascendancy over the 'lower animals', but not over his fellow human-beings—dominion as applied to man instead of to animals is a consequence of sin, and made its first appearance at the Fall.⁽¹⁾ And in the Trois discours he states quite explicitly that man's natural condition is one of 'perfect equality with all his fellows',⁽²⁾ which implies that instituting dominion over them involves violating nature.⁽³⁾

In all this Pascal harks back to the old ecclesiastical notion that civil institutions are the consequence of the Fall,⁽⁴⁾ so that his

(1) cf. from the Pensées: "La dignité de l'homme consistait, dans son innocence, à user et dominer sur les créatures, .." (p.1202; B.486) "... l'homme, dans l'état de la création, ou dans celui de la grâce, est élevé au-dessus de toute la nature, rendu comme semblable à Dieu,..." (p.1208; B.434) "J'ai créé l'homme saint, innocent, parfait;.. Il s'est soustrait de ma domination; et, ... révoltant les créatures, qui lui étaient soumises, je les lui ai rendues ennemies:..." (p.1224; B.430) And cf. The City of God, XIX, XV: "Thus has nature's order prescribed, and man by God was thus created. 'Let them rule', saith He, over the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the air, and over every thing that creepeth upon the earth.' He made him reasonable, and lord only over the unreasonable, not over man but over beasts. Whereupon the first holy men were rather shepherds than kings, God showing herein both what the order of creation desired, and what the merit of sin exacted."

(2) cf. below, p.279.

(3) Nicole affirms in a similar vein that: "... si les hommes étoient demeurés dans l'innocence, il n'y auroit point eu de Grands parmi eux, puisqu'ils seroient nés égaux, et qu'ils seroient demeurés dans cette égalité de la nature. ... Si la grandeur n'est donc pas toujours un désordre en elle-même, elle est au moins toujours un effet du désordre de la nature et une suite nécessaire du péché; car comme l'état d'innocence ne pouvoit admettre l'inégalité, l'état du péché ne peut souffrir d'égalité." De la grandeur, ch. II, Essais, II, p.139-40.

(4) It is necessary to distinguish here between the political implications of Pascal's view and of that held by earlier writers like Gregory VII. For Gregory the state is the outcome of human nature impaired by the Fall, and he treats civil government as so deeply polluted by its sinful origin as to be by itself helpless and criminal; but, unlike Pascal, he uses this as an argument for its need of the assistance and authorization of the Church. cf. Gierke, Political Theories, p.12. For the contrary view of Thomas Aquinas, according to whom man is by nature a social animal, so that even if there had

justification for urging acquiescence in the irrationalities, which an hierarchical society and a monarchical form of government entail, is not limited merely to the desirability of preserving the status quo inviolate, in order that peace may be secured.⁽¹⁾ More than mere expediency is in question here since he believes that, as far as the Christian is concerned, an obligation to submit to such an illogical state of things has been imposed on him in return for the violation of the natural order at the Fall. Civil society is God's judgment - as a punishment - and must be borne:

"Les vrais chrétiens obéissent aux folies néanmoins; non pas qu'il respectent les folies, mais l'ordre de Dieu, qui, pour la punition des hommes, les a asservis à ces folies: 'Omnis creatura subiecta est vanitati. Liberabitur'."⁽²⁾
(p.1167; B.338)

God therefore in Pascal's view wills the state, but he wills it as Augustine had affirmed "propter remedium peccatorum".⁽³⁾ The purpose assigned in the divine plan to man's life in society is that he should serve a term of

(cont. from p.275) been no Fall the inequality which results from social organisation would have developed by itself, cf. R.L. Poole, op.cit., p.214.

(1) cf. below, p.308f.

(2) A further fragment from the Pensées also bears upon this question: "Raison des effets.- Gradation: le peuple honore les personnes de grande naissance; les demi-habiles les méprisent, disant que la naissance n'est pas un avantage de la personne, mais du hasard; les habiles les honorent, non par la pensée du peuple, mais par la pensée de derrière; mais les chrétiens parfaits les honorent par une autre lumière supérieure. Ainsi se vont les opinions succédant du pour au contre, selon qu'on a de lumière." (p.1167; B.337) The "lumière supérieure", in the light of which Christians respect the nobility, is the knowledge that an obligation to this end has been imposed on them as part of the divinely ordained punishment for original sin.

(3) cf. The City of God, XIX, XV.

probation,⁽¹⁾ in the course of which, if he would enjoy a relative peace, he must resign himself to such unnatural conventions as the hereditary succession to important administrative posts, or the according of 'external' respects to those who belong to higher ranks in the social hierarchy than he.⁽²⁾

(1) This conception of probation as willed by God is also stressed in the following passages: "O Dieu, qui ne laissez subsister le monde et toutes les choses du monde que pour exercer vos élus,..." (Prière pour le bon usage des maladies, p.606; G.E.IX, p.324) "Les chrétiens doivent reconnaître Dieu en tout. Les afflictions temporelles couvrent les biens éternels où elles conduisent." (à Mlle. de Roannez, p.510; G.E.VI, p.90) "...toutes les créatures ne sont pas la première cause des accidents que nous appelons maux, mais....la providence de Dieu étant l'unique et véritable cause, l'arbitre et souveraine, ..." (à M. et Mme. Périer, p.491; G.E.II, p.539)

(2) Arnauld's outlook in regard to the origin and purpose of society closely resembles that of Pascal. Like the latter he regards the secular social order, which for him consists essentially in the exercise of power by some men over others with resultant inequalities of fortune and status, not as natural but as the only practical alternative to the anarchy that would be produced by the effects of original sin on human nature. Thus he writes to M. Deslions concerning "...la distinction des conditions parmi les hommes, qui ne se sont introduites que depuis le péché; mais qui, dans l'état où le péché les a réduites, sont devenues comme nécessaires; ..." (29.12.1668, Oeuvres, I, p.646) The Christian however, aware that men are fundamentally equal both by nature and through Christ's redemption, while he outwardly conforms to convention, and recognizes social distinctions out of respect for the divine providence that sanctions them as a probation, yet does not permit himself to take them seriously. In a letter to the Marquise de Rancy, "sur les devoirs d'une Dame par rapport à ses domestiques," Arnauld emphasizes that: "Un des premiers est de regarder ceux qui vous servent comme vous étant égaux par nature et par la grâce du Baptême, qui les a rendus aussi bien que vous enfans de Dieu, et membres de Jésus-Christ." (3.3.1667, Lettres, VIII, p.313)

3. Justice

- (i) Positive attitude to justice
- (a) The limits to sovereign power and the conception of lordship as office.

Although Pascal endorses a view of sovereignty which sharply separates the person (or set of persons) in a state in whom power is vested from all the rest, and superimposes him on the rest, implying that there is no effective remedy against the ruler's authority except in that authority,⁽¹⁾ in some of his writings at least he emphasizes that such power should not be exercised in an arbitrary fashion.

Thus in the fourteenth Provinciale he points out that the power of the sovereign, in certain respects at least, is tempered by the duty to administer it in accordance with the purpose of God, from whom it is derived:

"..comme c'est Dieu qui leur a donné ce droit, il les oblige à l'exercer ainsi qu'il le ferait lui-même, c'est-à-dire avec justice, ... Et cette restriction rabaisse si peu leur puissance qu'elle la relève au contraire beaucoup davantage;..."
(p.820; G.E.VI, p.133)

Again in the same letter he upholds the principle that the sovereign cannot be judge in his own case, but must submit himself to receive justice from his officers, who in this respect are the deputies of God:

"...les rois chrétiens ne se font pas justice à eux-mêmes dans les crimes même de lèse-majesté au premier chef, et ils remettent les criminels entre les mains des juges, pour les faire punir selon les lois et dans la forme de la justice, .. les juges tiennent la place de Dieu, dont ils sont les ministres, ..." (p.828-9; G.E.VI, p.148)

(1) cf. below, p.297 ff.

Both these extracts take for granted the existence of an objective order of justice, of a higher law than any represented by the powers of this world, to which the sovereign power in the state must subserve if it is to be legitimate and to possess genuine authority. Moreover, the implication of the second passage is that the ruler is not above even the positive laws, but is bound in conscience to obey them and to govern according to their prescriptions.

Pascal's statement in the fourteenth Provinciale of the Church's attitude to the powers that be, which enjoins unconditional obedience to magistrates and superiors,⁽¹⁾ since it specifically covers unjust actions on their part, suggests that he believes the ruler or governing body in a state has a trust to fulfil which may be abused. Mme. Périer's account of his views on non-resistance also indicates this when it depicts him as envisaging the possibility of princes not acquitting themselves properly of their duty.⁽²⁾ And that he does regard lordship in any form never as a mere right, but primarily as a duty, is evident from the Trois discours sur la condition des grands where, in the course of the instructions to his young aristocrat, he dwells at length on the duties which his future rank will impose upon him. Although at liberty, should he so desire, to keep 'the people' in the dark as to the wholly artificial nature of "noblesse", he must take care never to abuse his position or allow himself to forget that his 'natural state' is "une parfaite égalité avec tous les hommes."⁽³⁾ Pascal goes on to point out how unlikely it is that:

(1) quoted below, p.301.

(2) cf. below, p.305 f.

(3) p.617; G.E.IX, p.367.

"...ceux qui se regarderaient intérieurement comme égaux à tous les hommes, et qui seraient bien persuadés qu'ils n'ont rien en eux qui mérite ces petits avantages que Dieu leur a donnés au-dessus des autres, les traitassent avec insolence. Il faut s'oublier soi-même pour cela, et croire qu'on a quelque excellence au-dessus d'eux; en quoi consiste cette illusion que je tâche de vous découvrir." (p.617-8; G.E.IX, p.368)

Having thus expressly repudiated the idea that some men in virtue of their intrinsic superiority can justifiably claim and exercise authority over others, Pascal in the third Discours undertakes to show what lordship does consist in:

"Qu'est-ce, à votre avis, d'être grand seigneur? C'est être maître de plusieurs objets de la concupiscence des hommes, et ainsi pouvoir satisfaire aux besoins et aux désirs de plusieurs." (p.619-20; G.E.IX, p.371)

The ties that bind his followers to the future duke are rooted in concupiscence, since their object in attaching themselves to a person of his rank is to obtain satisfaction for their material wants. Hence he is "proprement un roi de concupiscence", and equal in his own dominion to the most powerful monarchs because, like him, they too derive their authority from the fact that it lies in their power to dispose of the objects of men's desires. Finally Pascal urges:

"Mais en connaissant votre condition naturelle, usez des moyens qu'elle vous donne, et ne prétendez pas régner par une autre voie que celle qui vous fait roi. Ce n'est point votre force et votre puissance naturelle qui vous assujettit toutes ces personnes. Ne prétendez donc point les dominer par la force, ni les traiter avec dureté. Contentez leurs justes désirs; soulagez leurs nécessités; mettez votre plaisir à être bienfaisant; avancez-les autant que vous le pourrez, et vous agirez en vrai roi de concupiscence." (1)

(p.620; G.E.IX, p.372)

(1) cf. also from the Pensées: "Connaissez-vous donc et sachez que vous n'êtes qu'un roi de concupiscence, et prenez les voies de la concupiscence." (p.1154; B.314)

Since the power to be exercised by the young nobleman will be analogous in all respects to that of the greatest potentates, differing only in the extent of its sway, the conception of lordship as office rather than privilege, which emerges in this extract, implies that rulers are instituted for the sake of the people, not the people for the sake of the ruler. And the attitude which Pascal recommends his pupil to adopt in his dealings with dependents is directly contrary to the policy of his contemporary Richelieu, whose Testament politique bears witness to the fact that he considered the repression and the burdening of the people a desirable, if not essential, end in his political programme. (1)

(b) The opposition to tyranny

The admonition to the young aristocrat in the Trois discours, to make certain that he wields his authority in the manner appropriate to its source, with the implication that to do otherwise will be to abuse his position, foreshadows the more developed theory of the Pensées, according to which every transgression of the bounds of a particular social order degrades legitimate lordship to injustice and tyranny.

(1) "Tous les politiques sont d'accord que si les peuples étaient trop à leur aise, il serait impossible de les contenir dans les règles de leur devoir. ...La raison ne permet pas de les exempter de toute charge, parce que, en perdant en tel cas la marque de leur sujétion, ils perdraient aussi la mémoire de leur condition, et que s'ils étaient libres de tributs, ils penseraient l'être de l'obéissance. Il faut les comparer aux mulets, qui, étant accoutumés à la charge, se gâtent par un long repos plus que par le travail." Testament politique, ch. III, sect.1. Quoted by Paul Janet in Histoire de la science politique dans ses rapports avec la morale, (Paris, 1913), vol. II, p. 265-6.

This applies even in regard to the various forms of deference which should be paid to different members of the social hierarchy. In the second Discours Pascal maintains that the different sort of respect due to "grandeurs d'établissement" and "grandeurs naturelles" respectively is analogous to the particular character of each. Thus, since the "grandeurs d'établissement" are not the mark of any "qualité réelle" in the individual one is required to accord them merely formal respect,⁽¹⁾ whereas "grandeurs naturelles" call for genuine esteem. And Pascal alleges that:

"...l'injustice consiste à attacher les respects naturels aux grandeurs d'établissement, ou à exiger les respects d'établissement pour les grandeurs naturelles." (p.619; G.E.IX, p.370)

In a concrete instance a duke, not content that people should simply take their caps off to him, but desirous further of being esteemed, if unable to produce evidence that he possesses the qualities entitling him to this would be unjust to ask for it, and:

"...assurément il n'y réussirait pas, fût-il le plus grand prince du monde." (ibid; G.E.IX, p.371)

However, not only does injustice result from the failure to observe these rules, but a breach of them amounts to tyranny as it is defined in the Pensées:

(1) cf. also Pensées, p.1164-5; B.317, where Pascal details what such formal respect entails. Nicole disagrees with Pascal as to the nature of the respect due to "grandeurs d'établissement": "Par où les Grands sont dignes de respect? Ce n'est, ni par leurs richesses, ni par leurs plaisirs, ni par leur pompe. C'est par la part qu'ils ont à la royauté de Dieu que l'on doit honorer en leur personne, selon la mesure qu'ils la possèdent; c'est par l'ordre par lequel Dieu les a placés, et qu'il a disposé par sa providence. Ainsi cette soumission ayant pour objet une chose qui est vraiment digne de respect, elle ne doit pas seulement être extérieure et de pure cérémonie, mais elle doit aussi être intérieure, c'est-à-dire, qu'elle doit enfermer la reconnaissance d'une supériorité et d'une grandeur réelle dans ceux qu'on honore:..."

"La tyrannie consiste au désir de domination, universel et hors de son ordre. Diverses chambres, de forts, de beaux, de bons esprits, de pieux, dont chacun règne chez soi, non ailleurs; et quelquefois ils se rencontrent, et le fort et le beau se battent, sottement, à qui sera le maître l'un de l'autre: car leur maîtrise est de divers genre. Ils ne s'entendent pas, et leur faute est de vouloir régner partout. Rien ne le peut, non pas même la force; elle ne fait rien au royaume des savants; elle n'est maîtresse que des actions extérieures.

Tyrannie. - Ainsi ces discours sont faux et tyranniques. 'Je suis beau, donc on doit me craindre. Je suis fort, donc on doit m'aimer.'...

La tyrannie est de vouloir avoir par une voie ce qu'on ne peut avoir que par une autre. On rend différents devoirs aux différents mérites: ...

On doit rendre ces devoirs-là, on est injuste de les refuser, et injuste d'en demander d'autres. Et c'est de même être faux et tyrannique de dire: 'Il n'est pas fort, donc je ne l'estimerai pas; il n'est pas habile, donc je ne le craindrai pas'. " (p.1153; B.332)

Pascal is therefore concerned to point out that the only way in which it is possible to harmonize the discords of society, and to avert the constant danger of tyranny is by relating the activities of the diverse components of the body politic to their proper 'orders' or 'genres'. Each social order must have its own peculiar domain assigned to it, which it shall not itself overstep, and upon which others shall not encroach. In this way each will be enabled to pursue its appropriate function without thwarting or perverting the others. Thus Pascal attaches considerable value to a negative sort of liberty, in the sense of freedom to recognize the proper authority in every activity or social sphere, and to take one's proper place in the hierarchy.

(cont. from p.282) De la grandeur, ch.III, Essais, II, p.148. cf. also ibid., ch.IV, p.151-3, where Pascal's views on this subject are actually criticized. Nicole however is not altogether consistent in this regard. cf. Essais, II, p.80-1; and VI, p.192, where he tends rather to adopt Pascal's standpoint.

The strength of every authority lies in its own nature: the strength of sheer physical authority is physical, the strength of intellectual authority is intellectual. And not only can no one kind override another without ultimately injuring both, but Pascal claims that no amount of coercion suffices to actually bring about such illegitimate domination.⁽¹⁾ His advice to the young nobleman in the Trois discours makes it quite clear that he also considers the qualities men should use when they have attained to positions of authority ought to be the qualities by means of which they rise to such positions.⁽²⁾

Although he nowhere discusses the question of the interrelation of these different spheres of authority, his writings do furnish adequate evidence that he does not believe it can be solved simply by allowing one single authority to become supreme and to control all the rest. Herein lies the significance of the distinction between king and tyrant, and the emphasis on the need to make known what is the function proper to each sphere:

"Roi et tyran, - J'aurai aussi mes idées de derrière la tête. ... Le plaisir des grands est de pouvoir faire des heureux. Le propre de la richesse est d'être donnée libéralement. Le propre de chaque chose doit être cherché. Le propre de la puissance est de protéger."⁽³⁾ (p.1153;B.310)

(1) This is again emphasized at the conclusion of the 12th Provinciale, where Pascal affirms that: "C'est une étrange et longue guerre que celle où la violence essaie d'opprimer la vérité. Tous les efforts de la violence ne peuvent affaiblir la vérité, et ne servent qu'à la relever davantage. Toutes les lumières de la vérité ne peuvent rien pour arrêter la violence, ... Quand la force combat la force, la plus puissante détruit la moindre; quand l'on oppose les discours aux discours, ceux qui sont véritables et convaincants confondent et dissipent ceux qui n'ont que la vanité et le mensonge: mais la violence et la vérité ne peuvent rien l'une sur l'autre." (p.805;G.E.V,p.386-7)

(2) cf. the passage quoted above, p.280.

(3) In the light of the previous fragment the title of this extract, whether such is in fact Pascal's intention or not, recalls the standard mediaeval conception, which endured at least until the 16th century, of the king as one who rules according to law, and the tyrant as one who ignores or violates the laws. cf. R.L. Poole, op.cit., p.210 f.; and A.J. Carlyle, op.cit., p.18.

This need to ensure that the individual orders in society occupy their appropriate place in the overall scheme and discharge their part without interfering with the functions of others, and the disorder and incongruity that result when they do not, are again referred to in a rather different context in another brief but expressive fragment:

"Un artisan qui parle des richesses, un procureur qui parle de la guerre, de la royauté etc; mais le riche parle bien des richesses, et le roi parle froidement d'un grand don qu'il vient de faire, et Dieu parle bien de Dieu." (p.1316-7; B.799)

The importance which Pascal ascribes to this notion is attested by the commentary of the author of the preface to the 1670 Port-Royal edition of the Pensées, when he cites this passage as an example of Pascal's elliptical style, and adds that its meaning would be difficult to grasp "si on ne lui avait souvent ouï dire de bouche la même pensée..."⁽¹⁾

However, despite such insistence that by any transgression of the bounds of its appropriate order a legitimate authority degenerates into tyranny, thus implying that its right is conditioned by the observation of those bounds, Pascal nowhere indicates that he considers such conduct justifies resistance or any alteration of the existing framework of government. Nor does he ever explicitly affirm with respect to the ruler of the state that every command which exceeds the limits of his authority is null and void, and obliges no one to obedience. His marked aversion for tyranny in all spheres never inclines him to mitigate, in favour of the mediaeval doctrine, that the duty of obedience is in every case conditioned by the

(1) p.1469. Although the context in which Pascal is alleged to have customarily made this observation is one predominantly concerned with questions of style, that does not diminish its significance for the present discussion.

rightfulness of the command, ⁽¹⁾ the drastic and unqualified conclusion which he reaches on the subject of unconditional obedience to the powers that be after his appeal to Scriptural authority. ⁽²⁾

(ii) Negative attitude to justice

Despite the positive attitude to the concept of justice implied in the mode of social organization which Pascal favours in his reaction against tyranny, as well as in the criterion which he tacitly employs in defining the limits to sovereignty and the duties of lordship, his judgement on that natural knowledge of justice which Domat regards as implicit in man's reason even after the Fall and as forming the mainstay of any social structure, is predominantly sceptical.

Thus in a long fragment from the Pensées he sets out to show that the idea of justice is filled with a variable content according to the practice of societies of men in different places at different times:

"Certainement, s'il la (la justice) connaissait, il n'aurait pas établi cette maxime, la plus générale de toutes celles qui sont parmi les hommes, que chacun suive les moeurs de son pays; l'éclat de la véritable équité aurait assujetti

(1) cf. Gierke, op.cit., p.34-6. ~~Unlike~~ Thomas Aquinas, and mediaeval political thinkers generally, ~~Pascal does not~~ believe that a tyrant can legitimately be deposed on the ground that he is guilty of abusing his position and power, unless the measures required to do so are such that they will do more harm than would be done by tolerating tyranny. cf. A.*D. Sertillanges, op.cit., p.399-400. *Pascal rejects this view.*

(2) cf. below, p.301.

tous les peuples, ...On la verrait plantée par tous les états du monde et dans tous les temps, au lieu qu'on ne voit rien de juste ou d'injuste qui ne change de qualité en changeant de climat.De cette confusion arrive que l'un dit que l'essence de la justice est l'autorité du législateur; l'autre, la commodité du souverain; l'autre, la coutume présente, et c'est le plus sûr: rien, suivant la seule raison, n'est juste de soi; tout branle avec le temps." (1) (p.1149-50; B.294)

A further fragment from the Pensées purports to be an account of Pascal's own gradual disillusionment in regard to the possibility of discovering true justice on the human plane:

"J'ai passé longtemps de ma vie en croyant qu'il y avait une justice; et en cela je ne me trompais pas: car il y en a, selon que Dieu nous l'a voulu révéler. Mais je ne le prenais pas ainsi, et c'est en quoi je me trompais; car je croyais que notre justice était essentiellement juste, et que j'avais de quoi la connaître et en juger. Mais je me suis trouvé tant de fois en faute de jugement droit, qu'enfin je suis entré en défiance de moi et puis des autres. J'ai vu tous les pays et hommes changeants; et ainsi, après bien de changements de jugement touchant la véritable justice, j'ai connu que notre nature n'était qu'un continuel changement, et je n'ai plus changé depuis;.." (2) (p.1155; B.375)

Pascal's thought as explicated in the foregoing passages may be taken as exhibiting a confusion between the concept of justice, and the various attempts to embody this in codes of positive law as they have been

(1) The influence of his familiarity with the thought of Montaigne, and especially with the ideas developed in the Apologie de Raimond Sebond, on the sceptical approach which Pascal adopts here is very marked, and, as M. Brunschvicg has noted, many of Pascal's expression reproduce almost verbatim phrases from Montaigne.

(2) Arnauld cites this fragment in a letter to Pascal's brother-in-law Perier, as one of the few in the Pensées collection "qu'il sera absolument bon de changer", and gives as his reason for thinking so that: "vous reconnaîtrez si vous y prenez garde, que Monsieur Paschal n'y parle pas de la justice vertu, qui fait dire qu'un homme est juste, mais de la justice, "quae ius est", qui fait dire qu'une chose est juste; comme il est juste d'honorer son père et sa mère, de ne point tuer, ...Or en prenant le mot de justice en ce sens, il est faux et très-dangereux de dire qu'il n'y ait rien parmi les hommes d'essentiellement juste." Lettres, (Nancy, 1727) t.IX, p.186-7

evolved in different societies. Such confusion is merely apparent however, for the criticism is not limited simply to applied forms of justice - these Pascal holds to be defective because the concept on which they are modelled is defective. His approach is empirical: he catalogues divergencies, and concludes from his findings that the idea of what is just varies from race to race, and even from individual to individual; that humanly speaking therefore there is no absolute justice, nothing in itself just which can be accepted as a universal standard; and that since the notion 'justice' properly includes that of absoluteness, no such thing as true justice is to be found on the human plane.

But where Pascal does leave himself wide open to the charge of inconsistency is in regard to the revealed divine justice to which he appeals as criterion, and which he claims has no common measure with human justice. Elsewhere in the Pensées he urges the need to recognize the will of God not only as the principal sanction in morals, but also as the guide toward ascertaining what is right and just and what is not.⁽¹⁾ And the conception of the radical difference between man's justice and God's justice is illustrated by means of the following analogy:

"L'unité jointe à l'infini ne l'augmente de rien, ... Le fini s'anéantit en présence de l'infini, et devient un pur néant. Ainsi notre esprit devant Dieu, ainsi notre justice devant la justice divine. Il n'y a pas si grande disproportion entre notre justice et celle de Dieu, qu'entre l'unité et l'infini." (p.1212;B.233)

(1) "Changeons la règle que nous avons prise jusqu'ici pour juger de ce qui est bon. Nous en avons pour règle notre volonté, prenons maintenant la volonté de Dieu: tout ce qu'il veut nous est bon et juste, tout ce qu'il ne veut pas, mauvais et injuste. ...la volonté de Dieu, qui est seule toute la bonté et toute la justice, .." (p.1294; B.668) cf. also above, p.230 n.1.

Although the disparity between the two sorts of justice is alleged to be less than that between a unit and the infinite this is small consolation, for Pascal positively derides human justice when he adduces the mystery of the transmission of guilt incurred by Adam's sin to show how man's inability to conceive God's justice disqualifies him from judging what is or is not consistent with it:

"...il est sans doute qu'il n'y a rien qui choque plus notre raison que de dire que le péché du premier homme ait rendu coupables ceux qui, étant si éloignés de cette source, semblent incapables d'y participer. Cet écoulement ne nous paraît pas seulement impossible, il nous semble même très injuste; car qu'y a-t-il de plus contraire aux règles de notre misérable justice que de damner éternellement un enfant incapable de volonté, pour un péché où il paraît avoir si peu de part, qu'il est commis six mille ans avant qu'il fût en être?" (p.1207; B.434)

When Pascal attempts to justify God's action in this way, in imputing the guilt which has accrued from Adam's sin and is transmitted by 'seminal identity' to all men, by affirming that in the things of God reason is beyond its depth, one of his own cautionary jottings seems to have slipped his memory:

"Si on choque les principes de la raison, notre religion sera absurde et ridicule." (p.1089; B.273)

Since he himself admits that nothing is more 'shocking' to human reason than the doctrine he defends, it must in his own terms be deemed 'absurd' and 'ridiculous'. In this case our justice, far from being 'miserable' as Pascal describes it, turns out to be the correct criterion to which to refer the doctrine in question. Moreover, when he maintains that our human conception of justice is no measure of what 'justice' is as applied to God, which means that the justice ascribed to God is not merely the justice we know in a greatly intensified degree, but is another quality altogether, he is

guilty of intentionally using the same word to signify things he plainly regards as entirely different.⁽¹⁾

Pascal's attitude to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and grace, as he represents it in the Premier écrit sur la grâce, is particularly interesting in this regard. The summary which he proposes includes the tenets of absolute predestination, the divine causation of Adam's sin, the restriction of Christ's redemptive grace to those originally marked out for salvation and the irrevocable deprivation of the remainder.⁽²⁾ It is immaterial for the present purpose whether or not this is an accurate account of the Calvinist position, since it is Pascal's comments upon it which are significant. The exposé concludes as follows:

"Voilà l'opinion épouvantable de ces hérétiques, injurieuse à Dieu et insupportable aux hommes. Voilà les blasphèmes par lesquels ils établissent en Dieu une volonté absolue et sans aucune prévision de mérite ou de péché pour damner ou pour sauver ses créatures. ...cette opinion abominable ... elle blesse le sens commun...elle est si horrible, et frappe d'abord l'esprit avec tant de force par la vue de la cruauté de Dieu envers ses créatures, qu'elle est insupportable."
(p.951-2; G.E.XI, p.133-4)

Now it is quite evident that Pascal condemns this doctrine because it contains elements which affront his moral consciousness, his own sense of justice, and what he conceives by analogy to be the nature of divine justice.

(1) There is no indication in Pascal's writings however that he extends this belief in the impossibility of knowing the justice which marks the divine nature to that of the purely negative character of all words applied to God. In the Prière pour le bon usage des maladies for example, he addresses God in the following terms: "Seigneur, dont l'esprit est si bon et si doux en toutes choses ... faites-moi la grâce de n'agir pas en païen dans l'état où votre justice m'a réduit:..." (p.605;G.E.IX,p.323) Yet on what grounds, especially in such a context, can Pascal predicate the normal human attributes goodness and gentleness of the divinity when he holds so emphatically that the justice which characterizes his dealings with men is utterly unlike all human conceptions of it?

(2) p.951; G.E.XI, p.133.

Yet despite this he rigidly disallows any claim to similar and equally justified objections in the case of the doctrine of completely arbitrary and capricious selection of the 'elect' from the 'massa damnata' which he himself defends, ⁽¹⁾ and which is every bit as 'injurious to God' and 'insupportable to men' as the Calvinist one.

Elsewhere he makes a tacit condemnation of precisely the sort of anthropomorphism which he himself is guilty of in this denunciation of the Calvinist doctrine:

"Les hommes, n'ayant pas accoutumé de former le mérite, mais seulement le récompenser où ils la trouvent formé, jugent de Dieu par eux-mêmes." (p.1212; B.490)

Thus when men project on to God their notion of justice, which consists essentially in a system of penalties and rewards meted out to the appropriate acts, they entirely fail to recognize that it is God himself who inspires or motivates any good action worthy of reward that man may perform. This means that divine justice has a 'creative' dimension totally lacking in human justice, which sets it outside the range of human experience in the positive sense.

Nevertheless it is the idea of recompense which is uppermost in Pascal's mind when he speaks of God's 'justice' toward the reprobate, contrasting it with the mercy he shows to his elect, for in this context the word clearly carries the meaning of punishment:

"Il faut que la justice de Dieu soit énorme comme sa miséricorde. Or, la justice envers les réprouvés est moins énorme et doit moins choquer que la miséricorde envers les élus." (p.1212; B.233)

(1) cf. also the following fragment which sets forth what amounts to a complete denial of the validity of the moral consciousness as a test of the veracity of doctrine: "Mon Dieu! que ce sont de sots discours! Dieu aurait-il fait le monde pour le damner? demanderait-il tant, de gens si faibles? etc. Pyrrhonisme est le remède à ce mal, et rabattra cette vanité." (p.1189; B.390)

And the most frequent usage of the term in the Ecrits sur la grâce is in this same sense of distributive or retributive justice:

"Dans l'état d'innocence, Dieu ne pouvait avec justice damner aucun des hommes, ... Dans l'état de corruption, Dieu pouvait avec justice damner la masse entière; .." (p.952; G.E.XI, p.135)

"Pour sauver ses élus, Dieu a envoyé Jésus-Christ pour satisfaire à sa justice, et pour mériter de sa miséricorde la grâce de Rédemption,..." (p.966; G.E.XI, p.149)

It would be difficult to provide a more apt illustration of the system of sanctions, which for Pascal represents human justice in application, than the procedure envisaged in this last extract. A sin has been committed; someone must atone, and, by submitting to the punishment, induce the judge to forego the sentence in respect of those who have won his favour; and the fact that it is Christ who does so, and that it is God who is responsible for his substitution, in no way alters the conclusion that on this principle the cornerstone of divine justice is the absolute necessity of requital.

Furthermore, on those occasions in the Provinciales where Pascal mentions divine justice it is almost invariably to point out that it is not essentially different from human; that those crimes which infringe positive laws, and are hence offensive to man's sense of justice, of which the laws are the concrete embodiment, are immeasurably more abhorrent in the eyes of God; that divine justice is undoubtedly superior to and much more perfect than human, but that there exists no fundamental contradiction between them. Indeed, some of the most telling criticism of what he considers to be the immoral consequences of Jesuit casuistry rests upon precisely this assumption. Thus in regard to the practice of permitting an act in theory, even though it may be contrary to the commandments of God, while prohibiting its actual performance out of respect for the civil authorities, Pascal objects:

"Je ne vous reproche pas de craindre les juges, mais de ne craindre que les juges. C'est cela que je blâme; parce que c'est faire Dieu moins ennemi des crimes que les hommes. ...quand vous prétendez que ce qui est trop criminel pour être souffert par les hommes, soit innocent et juste aux yeux de Dieu qui est la justice même, que faites-vous autre chose, sinon montrer à tout le monde que, ...vous êtes hardis contre Dieu, et timide envers les hommes?" (p.815; G.E.VI, p.37-8)

Pascal is in effect arguing here that what affronts man's sense of justice must affect God in the same way but in a greatly intensified degree, since, as justice itself, he is the ultimate source of man's sense of justice - a form of argument that comes very close to constituting an inference drawn from the nature of man to the nature of God. Yet in view of his categorical assertions that there is no common measure between human justice and divine justice, and that the latter may differ as far from the former as God himself differs from man, Pascal, if he were strictly consistent, would have to concede as a possibility that what men refuse to permit as too criminal is innocent and just in the sight of God. Since man does not know what justice is as it exists in God, it is clearly just as impossible for him to say what it is not as to say what it is. Pascal's agnosticism in this respect, whether he likes it or no, is a two-edged weapon that cuts both ways.

In the fourteenth letter he maintains, in accordance with Pauline teaching, ⁽¹⁾ that God has bestowed on temporal princes the right to administer the power of life and death over their subjects, but that:

"...comme c'est Dieu qui leur a donné ce droit, il les oblige à l'exercer ainsi qu'il le ferait lui-même, c'est-à-dire avec justice,..." (p.820; G.E.VI, p.133)

(1)cf. Romans, 13, 1-6.

Since God is 'justice and wisdom itself', in the course of exercising this right:

"...pour être exempts d'homicide, il faut agir tout ensemble et par l'autorité de Dieu, et selon la justice de Dieu;.." (p.821; G.E.VI, p.134)

But if men, whatever may be their office, are to act in accordance with the canons of divine justice, this necessarily presupposes that they have the capacity to do so, and therefore that there is no *prima facie* reason why they should be unable to comprehend its workings.

And at the end of this letter, in connection with the Jesuits' authorizing of the custom of duelling, Pascal writes:

"Mais on doit louer Dieu de ce qu'il a éclairé l'esprit du roi par des lumières plus pures que celle de votre théologie. Ses édits si sévères sur ce sujetIl a arrêté par la crainte de la rigueur de sa justice ceux qui n'étaient pas arrêtés par la crainte de la justice de Dieu;.." (p.831; G.E.VI, p.155)

Here again the context makes it plain that the divine justice differs from the regal justice only as greater in degree, with the characteristic element of both, as he describes them, consisting in the threat of punishment to the transgressor.

Thus it is clear from Pascal's linguistic usage in this respect that when he distinguishes between what he claims are two different sorts of justice he is simply using the term 'justice' in an arbitrarily equivocal way, so that it undergoes no regular and uniform change in meaning when he transfers it from one sphere to the other. Although he denies the possibility of any common measure between the two, on those occasions when divine justice is actually in question he speaks of it in terms which indicate quite

unmistakably that it operates in exactly the same fashion as human justice - (1)
 i.e. on the principle that merit should be rewarded and shortcomings punished.
 This, together with the fact that in the passages considered from the Provinciales the divine justice is administered and dispensed by human agents, points to the conclusion that Pascal never really bothered to think out the relations holding between them. Moreover, the sceptical attitude adopted in some of the fragments from the Pensées toward human justice, may well be the result, in part at least, of Pascal's deliberate aim to safeguard certain Catholic dogmas from criticism or rejection, on the grounds that they are repugnant to human conceptions of what is just, by convincing his reader that human and divine justice are so utterly disparate that the former cannot legitimately be proposed as the criterion by which to judge of the equity of the latter.

Yet it is plain that the value-judgement contained in the fragment from the Pensées where he compares the difference between human and divine justice with that between the finite and infinite, and asserts that human justice is as nothing when measured against the divine, which is equivalent to divesting it of any positive value whatever, does not by itself explain the total scepticism in regard to man's ability ever to ground his laws on principles of true justice. In this instance Pascal is 'empirically' convinced rather that man's efforts to this end, as they are realized in the various codes of positive law adopted in different countries, are sufficient evidence that he is completely unaware of what constitutes such principles, and that

(1) In fact one of the criticisms levelled at the Calvinist doctrine of predestination is that it represents God as failing to take account in his election of 'merit' and 'sin' - in other words, as acting otherwise than according to the principle that merit should be rewarded and shortcomings punished. cf. passage quoted above, p.290.

human conceptions of 'justice' are entirely relative. It is for this reason that he rejects as unfounded the notion, which lies at the root of every part of Domat's theories, of a justice natural to man, antecedent to, and by right formative of, all law.

4. Political tranquillity.

(i) Fear of civil strife produces a reaction in favour of absolutism.

Despite the fact that his scepticism makes nonsense of any distinction on the human plane between justice and injustice, and indeed empties these concepts of all meaning, Pascal, with an eye to the need to provide some justification for inculcating the duty of obeying the powers that be and abiding by the laws of the community, sets about trying to work a new application of the terms just and unjust. He points out that justice, unlike force, is a relative thing open to dispute, and that it is clearly impossible for force, a 'palpable' quality, to be brought into the service of justice, a 'spiritual' quality, in order to fulfil the purposes of justice which anyway by reason of its 'spirituality' is perfectly malleable. If conflict between the two is to be avoided there is no option but to resolve all right into might, and bestow the sanction of justice on the policies of the strongest party. In this way power becomes in Pascal's scheme not merely a necessary aspect of organized society, but for all practical purposes the sole significant element in it.

"Justice, force. - Il est juste que ce qui est juste soit suivi, il est nécessaire que ce qui est le plus fort soit suivi. La justice sans la force est impuissante; la force sans la justice est tyrannique. ...Il faut donc mettre ensemble la justice et la force, et, pour cela, faire que ce qui est juste soit fort, ou que ce qui est fort soit juste.

La justice est sujette à dispute, la force est très reconnaissable et sans dispute. Ainsi on n'a pu donner la force à la justice, parce que la force a contredit la justice et a dit qu'elle était injuste, et a dit que c'était elle qui était juste. Et ainsi, ne pouvant faire que ce qui est juste fût fort, on a fait que ce qui est fort fût juste."
(p.1160-1; B.298)

"Si l'on avait pu, l'on aurait mis la force entre les mains de la justice: mais comme la force ne se laisse pas manier comme on veut, parce que c'est une qualité palpable, au lieu que la justice est une qualité spirituelle dont on dispense comme on veut, on l'a mise entre les mains de la force; et ainsi on appelle juste ce qu'il est force d'observer."⁽¹⁾ (p.1337-8;B.878)

Such a view of justice made subservient to force is at once a corollary of, and a commentary upon, Pascal's theory of the origin and institution of political power.⁽²⁾ By subordinating justice in this way to the established power he is enabled to set up conformity with the requirements of that power as the criterion to which political actions should be referred. And whatever objections may be raised to this analysis of the relations of power and justice and the solution which he proposes, it must be allowed that he does take account of the facts and conditions of the polity of his time. Indeed, the point at which he can be most effectively criticized in this regard is the failure to adopt a sufficiently detached standpoint in relation to the contemporary political scene - the treatment of the foregoing problem is too closely based on current forms of government which Pascal simply accepts as axiomatic.⁽³⁾

This acquiescence in the identification of justice with power, together with the fact that Pascal nowhere discusses the possibility of the

(1) cf. also from the Pensées: "Veri iuris. - Nous n'en avons plus: si nous en avons, nous ne prendrions pas pour règle de justice de suivre les moeurs de son pays. C'est là que ne pouvant trouver le juste on a trouvé le fort, etc." (p.1151; B.297)

(2) cf. above, p.271 f.

(3) Pascal therefore is no exception to the rule that French political thinkers of his age allowed their conceptions to be all too readily determined by the contemporary form of government. As Henri Sée has noted: "En un mot, pendant le règne de Louis XIII, la doctrine absolutiste se perfectionne, et il n'est, pour ainsi dire, pas de voix discordante. Tous les écrivains, dont nous avons analysé les idées, s'inspirent directement des pratiques gouvernementales et des institutions qui fonctionnent sous leurs yeux. Chez aucun n'apparaît l'idée que la société puisse être organisée autrement qu'elle ne

two forces of law and the sovereign authority in a state coming into collision, points to the conclusion that he regards positive law as nothing but the command of the law-giver. His writings contain no explicit statement upon the question as to whether the ruler has absolute and sovereign power to make or unmake laws as he pleases, or whether it is rather the case that his authority is subject to the law.⁽¹⁾ But that he would have endorsed the view, expounded later in the century by Bossuet in his Politique tirée de l'Écriture Sainte,⁽²⁾ that no power can coerce the sovereign, who is in that sense independent of all human authority, is attested by the following fragment from the Pensées:

"Les seules règles universelles sont les lois du pays aux choses ordinaires, et la pluralité aux autres. D'où vient cela? de la force qui est. Et de là vient que les rois, qui ont la force d'ailleurs, ne suivent pas la pluralité de leurs ministres." (p.1152; B.299)

This certainly implies the supremacy of the sovereign over the positive law, and in fact mirrors the attitude of Louis XIV himself, for whom, as Henri Sée remarks, "le principe essentiel, c'est la toute-puissance du monarque, qui n'a de comptes à rendre à personne."⁽³⁾

An illuminating contrast to Pascal's views in this respect is provided by those of his contemporary Claude Joly, in his Recueil de Maximes

(cont. from p.298) l'est, que les institutions politiques ou sociales puissent être modifiées d'une façon quelconque." Les idées politiques en France au XVIIe siècle, (Paris, 1923), p.83.

(1) cf. above, p.378f. for the evidence which points to his having believed that sovereignty should be combined with the rule of law; a view which implies that although the sovereign has a duty to enforce the law he does not create it in the first instance.

(2) e.g. iv, 1, prop.2.

(3) op.cit., p.132.

véritables et importantes pour l'institution du Roy.⁽¹⁾ The fundamental principle by which Joly takes his stand is that the authority of the sovereign is not absolute, but is limited by its function to uphold justice and therefore the law, for, according to Joly, what does not conform to approved and received laws cannot be just.⁽²⁾ Such a position implies that the three concepts authority, justice and law are perfectly distinct, and that the two former are dependent for validity on conformity to the latter. Pascal on the contrary telescopes the three, and, by equating law and justice with power, makes the notion of a sovereign limited by the laws, or using his authority unjustly by not acting in accordance with them, quite meaningless. Whereas Joly maintains that authority is derived from the community and entrusted to the sovereign to administer the laws to which he is subject, so that he is not above the law and cannot amend it at his pleasure, on Pascal's view the sovereign, in virtue of his superior power, literally is the law.

The readiness which Pascal thus displays to espouse the cause of political absolutism is explained by the fundamental assumption, which colours the whole of his political outlook, of the imperative need for the continuous existence of the established government in a state of stable equilibrium. And it is with a view to further ensuring the maintenance of stable government that he resorts to the contrivance of basing political

(1) H. Sée describes this work, which first appeared in 1652, as "...une oeuvre remarquable dans laquelle toutes les aspirations libérales de cette époque troublée ont trouvé leur expression la plus nette." op.cit., p.110.

(2) cf. Sée, *ibid*, p.110-111.

authority on divine right, and proclaiming the consequent duty of non-resistance. The fourteenth Provinciale contains a typically Lutheran statement of the conditions attaching to this religious duty of non-resistance to secular authority. Pascal challenges the Jesuits to produce any canon of the Church granting permission to kill magistrates or judges, however unjust or tyrannical they may be, and alleges that:

"L'esprit de l'Eglise est entièrement éloigné de ces maximes séditionnaires qui ouvrent la porte aux soulèvements auxquels les peuples sont si naturellement portés. Elle a toujours enseigné à ces enfants qu'on ne doit point rendre le mal pour le mal; qu'il faut céder à la colère; ne point résister à la violence; rendre à chacun ce qu'on lui doit, honneur, tribut, soumission: obéir aux magistrats et aux supérieurs, même injustes; parce qu'on doit toujours respecter en eux la puissance de Dieu qui les a établis sur nous." (p.828; G.E.VI, p.148)

The reference in this context to the natural bent of the populace to indulge in insurrections, which would threaten political disintegration and the destruction of social order, indicates plainly enough what recommends the doctrine of non-resistance to Pascal. The principles of the duty of obedience to the powers that be, and of the wickedness of rebellion, even if provoked by the irresponsible actions of those powers, are obviously based on the standard Biblical texts I Peter 2, 13-25, and Romans 13, 1 - 6, and Pascal in fact quotes from the latter in a similar context earlier in the letter.⁽¹⁾ His version of the doctrine lacks however the redeeming corollary of the Lutheran creed - the conception of the "godly prince" - for one searches in vain in his writings for any hint of that high esteem of the office of the Christian ruler whence stems Luther's support of passive obedience, and which thus provides the most striking contrast

(1) (p.820; G.E.VI, p.133)

between the otherwise similar views of the two thinkers in this regard. (1)

Earlier in the same letter Pascal also claims that coercive authority is vested in the sovereign, whether in the shape of a man, or of a body of men, by divine right:

"...il a plu à la Providence (de Dieu) de conserver les sociétés des hommes, et de punir les méchants qui les troublent, ...ayant établi des lois pour faire mourir les criminels, (Dieu) a rendu les rois ou les républiques dépositaires de ce pouvoir; ..." (p.820; G.E.VI,p.132-3)

A. L. Smith has noted that "Divine right was one way of expressing obedience, orderliness, continuity", (2) and Mme. Périer's account of Pascal's attitude toward the established political authority shows quite clearly that as far

(1) Pascal shows himself to be very much of his age merely by adopting this doctrine, since none had a more universal appeal to political thinkers in the 17th century. Henri Sée claims in this regard that: "La conception de l'autorité souveraine nous apparaît donc comme la doctrine fondamentale au XVIIe siècle. Mêmes les rares écrivains, qui pensent que l'Etat a été créé pour le bien des individus, n'accordent à ceux-ci aucun moyen pratique, non seulement de contrôler effectivement les agissements de l'Etat, mais même de se défendre contre ses actes arbitraires." op.cit., p.181. Even the great exponents of the natural law theory of society tended to be advocates of the sovereignty of the ruler rather than of the people. Grotius himself "goes out of his way to condemn the theory of resistance, to show that by the 'lex regia' popular power is wholly transferred to the prince." J.N. Figgis: Political Thought from Gerson to Grotius, (Cambridge, 1916), p.242. Pufendorf too was on the side of authority. As Sir Ernest Barker has put it, "Nature could be used to consecrate the monarch as well as the people." Introduction to Gierke: Natural Law and the Theory of Society, (Cambridge, 1934), vol.I, p.xlviii. Nicole also maintains that in the light of his principle that "la grandeur est une participation de la puissance de Dieu sur les hommes", it is perfectly plain that: "...il n'est jamais permis à personne de se soulever contre son souverain, ni de s'engager dans une guerre civile. ...C'est en vain qu'on prétendrait les justifier par les désordres de l'Etat, auxquels ils font semblant de vouloir remédier. Car il n'y a point de désordre qui puisse donner droit à des sujets de tirer l'épée, puisqu'ils n'ont point de droit de l'épée, et qu'ils ne s'en peuvent servir que par l'ordre de Dieu." De la grandeur, ch.II, p.145.

(2) Political Philosophy in England in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, Cambridge Modern History, (Cambridge, 1909), vol.VI, p.804.

as he is concerned the merit of the theory lies in the possibility it holds out of achieving security of state, in his view the first of all political objects. She recounts that it was her brother's zealous devotion to the task of ensuring the due execution of the "ordre de Dieu" in all spheres which:

"...le rendait si ardent pour le service du roi, qu'il résistait à tout le monde dans le temps des troubles de Paris. Il appelait des prétextes toutes les raisons qu'on donnait pour autoriser la rébellion. Il disait qu'en Etat établi en République comme Venise, c'était un très grand mal de contribuer à y mettre un Roi et à opprimer la liberté des peuples à qui Dieu l'a donnée; mais que, dans un Etat où la puissance royale est établie, on ne pouvait violer le respect qu'on lui devait sans une espèce de sacrilège, parce que la puissance que Dieu y a attachée étant non seulement une image, mais une participation de la puissance de Dieu, on ne pouvait s'y opposer sans s'opposer manifestement à l'ordre de Dieu;⁽¹⁾ et de plus que la guerre civile, qui en est une suite, étant le plus grand mal que l'on puisse commettre contre la charité du prochain,

(1) Domat likewise sees God's over-arching providence not only manifested in the life of his Church, but as working itself out in the social and political sphere as well. Indeed Domat believes that such activity on the part of God constitutes one of the stabilizing forces at work in society, and he expands this conception into a wholehearted espousal of the divine right theory: "C'est par sa providence universelle sur le genre humain qu'il [Dieu] partage la terre aux hommes, et qu'il distingue les nations par cette diversité d'empires, de royaumes, de républiques et d'autres états; qu'il en règle et l'étendue et la durée par les événemens qui leur donnent leur naissance, leur progrès, leur fin; et que, parmi tous ces changemens, il forme et soutient la société civile dans chaque état, par les distinctions qu'il fait des personnes pour remplir tous les emplois et toutes les places, et par les autres manières dont il règle tout." (ix, 6) And after pointing out that God entrusts the sovereign power to different agents in different states - to the king in a monarchy, to the elected magistrates in a republic, and so forth - Domat adds by way of explanation: "...c'est toujours la conduite toute-puissante de Dieu qui dispose de cette suite et de cet enchaînement d'événemens qui précèdent l'élévation de ceux qu'il appelle au gouvernement. Ainsi c'est toujours lui qui les y place; c'est de lui seul qu'ils tiennent tout ce qu'ils ont de puissance et d'autorité; et c'est le ministère de sa justice qui leur est commis; et comme c'est Dieu même qu'ils représentent dans le rang qui les élève au-dessus des autres, il veut qu'ils soient considérés comme tenant sa place dans leurs fonctions..." (ix, 7) Thus, despite his insistence elsewhere that man is by nature a social being, Domat is as far as Pascal from embracing any doctrine of the ultimate sovereignty of the people, considered as coming together to create a fund

on ne pouvait assez exagérer la grandeur de cette faute; que les premiers chrétiens ne nous avaient pas appris la révolte, mais la patience, quand les princes ne s'acquittaient pas bien de leur devoir. Il disait ordinairement qu'il avait un aussi grand éloignement de ce péché que pour assassiner le monde ou voler sur les grands chemins;..." (1)

The obvious aim of this version of divine right is simply to preserve the status quo inviolate by proclaiming that the established form of government, regardless of its nature, has the sanction of divine ordinance. Since the freedom enjoyed by the people of the Venetian Republic is God-given, to attempt to curtail it, and impose a monarchy there, would be evil. But in a state where the form of government is already monarchical the establishment must be considered even more sacrosanct, since the power with which God has invested the sovereign in this case is no mere replica of the divine power, but is in fact a participation in this, so that to offer any opposition to it would be to fly in the face of the "ordre de Dieu". All established governments therefore, whatever be their form, represent divine authority, and it is clear from the fact that Pascal does not regard any particular form of government as divinely ordained for all men that he sees the question of sovereignty in itself as merely incidental to the

(cont. from p.303) of governing power, which is then transferred to some person or set of persons in authority. On the contrary he expressly asserts that the authority of the sovereign power in any state derives directly from God. He does however escape the inconsistency into which Pascal falls when, intent on doing his utmost to preserve the status quo inviolate, the latter (at least according to Mme. Périer) urges the duty of invariable obedience to the constituted authority on the grounds that any attempt to modify an established government would involve a dislocation of the course of divine providence. Domat on the other hand is not concerned to advocate any such absolute non-resistance, but is content to point out that the powers that be are, and always have been, ordained of God, who is ultimately responsible for their rise and decline, and is thus enabled to take cognizance of political change and social evolution in a way quite impossible for Pascal if he were strictly consistent.

(1) Vie, p.27-8; G.E.I, p.

(1) practical object of inculcating non-resistance. He maintains that the power wielded by the secular authority, even in the case of a presumably elective republic, springs direct from God - there is no hint in his writings of the widely-held current view that sovereign power resides ultimately in the hands of the people, and is transferred by them, as the result of an expressed or tacit contract, to the ruler who enjoys only usufruct of it. (2) However, the close link which he sets up between disregard for the "ordre de Dieu", the source of political authority, and civil disorder makes it plain that the real motive force behind the advocacy of such a policy of unconditional acquiescence in the status quo is his deep-seated conviction that the practical evils arising from the civil strife, which he holds to be the inevitable outcome of any attempt to supplant an established form of government, are not justified by the end result.

(1) It is true however that many of the most fervent advocates of the doctrine of divine right in the 17th century held that all established governments were entitled to similar rights, and that non-resistance is just as much a duty in one case as in another. cf. J.N. Figgis: The Divine Right of Kings, (Cambridge, 1914), p.237-8.

(2) Nicole's views in this respect provide an interesting point of contrast with those of Pascal. Having asserted on Scriptural basis that "la grandeur est une participation de la puissance de Dieu sur les hommes", Nicole goes on to claim that if this fact is borne in mind: "...il est facile de comprendre qu'encore que la royauté, et les autres formes de gouvernement, viennent originellement du choix et du consentement des peuples: néanmoins, l'autorité des rois ne vient point du peuple mais de Dieu seul. Car Dieu a bien donné au peuple le pouvoir de se choisir un gouvernement; mais, ...ce n'est point le seul consentement des peuples qui fait les rois; c'est la communication que Dieu leur fait de sa royauté et de sa puissance qui les établit Rois légitimes, et qui leur donne un droit véritable sur leurs sujets." De la grandeur, ch.II, Essais, II, p.143-4. Although Nicole can hardly be said to subscribe here to the view that sovereignty comes to the sovereign via the people, he does hold that a political society is created in the first instance by agreement among those who found it, and thus sets himself within the tradition of Hooker, Hobbes, Althusius and Grotius. And in consequence of his belief that once a form of government is established, those who are governors are so by divine right, he is led, after the fashion of Hobbes and Grotius,

In assessing the factors which determine this predominantly conservative note of Pascal's political thinking account must be taken of his own historical position - the preponderance in the political life of his century of the problem of security,⁽¹⁾ and the fact that a large part of his own life was lived during the period when either Richelieu or Mazarin was at the helm in France, with the result that at that stage at least the prevailing phase of monarchy could scarcely be said to have favoured the propounding of liberal political theories. And just as it is possible to regard the fact that Richelieu's childhood had been spent in the period of disorder during the religious wars as at least a contributing cause for his dominant conviction that "always the ultimate good for society - from peasant to prince - lay in maintaining order by authority",⁽²⁾ so in the case of Pascal it is clear from explicit references that similar influences were at work to a similar end as the result of his experience of the Fronde.⁽³⁾ The tension, insecurity and unrest, which followed the breaking down of the restraints of law in that period, must have thrown into higher relief the ordered, authoritarian government of the preceding one, and helped produce in Pascal a reaction in favour of absolutism. The gloomy view, based on personal experience, of all revolts against an established government merely leading

(cont. from p.305) to deny 'the people' any right to alter it: "...car l'autorité de faire des lois ne réside plus dans le peuple qui s'en est dépouillé, et qui a raison de s'en dépouiller, n'y ayant rien de plus avantageux pour son propre bien; mais réside dans le Roi à qui Dieu communique sa puissance pour le régir." *ibid.*, p.145.

(1) "No political thinker could escape the problem of security which dominated the whole epoch and constituted an important, though often hidden and unadmitted basis of their confrontation with political reality." S.Skalweit in New Cambridge Modern History, (Cambridge, 1961), vol.V.p.109.

(2) C.V. Wedgwood: Richelieu and the French Monarchy, (London,1949),p.168.

(3) E.Lavisse maintains that the same is true of Louis XIV also: "...la Fronde observée et comprise par l'enfant Roi explique, pour partie, les idées et les sentiments politiques de Louis XIV." Histoire de France (Paris 1905) t. VII,1,p.44.

to the horrors of intestine strife is in his case, as in Hobbes's, the real reason for vesting absolute power in the sovereign.⁽¹⁾ Moreover, when he argues in support of his policy of political quietism that it is always 'the people' who fare worst from the aftermath of a popular insurrection,⁽²⁾ it is difficult not to see obtruding his first-hand experience of the ferocity with which Séguier and Gassion put down the revolt of the 'Va-nu-pieds' in Normandie in 1639.⁽³⁾

The extent to which Pascal's observation of the social upheaval of the Fronde, which coincided with the so-called "mondain" period of his career,⁽⁴⁾ does dominate his political outlook can be measured by the fact that civil war symbolizes the most malignant evil, while its contrary peace represents the supreme good in his political scheme. This basic judgement underlies his endorsement of the might is right principle, as the following fragment from the Pensées clearly shows:

"Sans doute, l'égalité des biens est juste; mais, ne pouvant faire qu'il soit force d'obéir à la justice, on a fait qu'il soit juste d'obéir à la force; ne pouvant fortifier la justice, on a justifié la force, afin que la justice et la force fussent ensemble, et que la paix fût, qui est le souverain bien."⁽⁵⁾
(p.1152; B.299)

(1) cf. Leviathan, 18: "But a man may here object that the condition of subjects is very miserable, as being obnoxious to the lusts and other irregular passions of him or them that have so unlimited a power in their hands. And commonly they that live under a monarch think it the fault of monarchy; and they that live under the government of democracy, or other sovereign assembly, attribute all the inconvenience to that form of Commonwealth;...not considering that the estate of man can never be without some incommodity or other; and that the greatest that in any form of government can possibly happen to the people in general is scarce sensible, in respect of the miseries and horrible calamities that accompany a civil war, or that dissolute condition of masterless men without subjection to laws, and a coercive power to tie their hands from rapine and revenge:..."

(2) cf. below, p.314.

(3) On Pascal's sojourn in Normandie cf. V.Giraud: La vie héroïque de Blaise Pascal, (Paris, 1923), p.30-2

(4) cf. E. Demahis, op.cit., p.219-221.

(5) cf. also the quotation from Luke, XI, 21, significant in this context:
cont. p.308.

Equality of ownership, which in Pascal's own terms characterizes man's 'natural' estate,⁽¹⁾ is therefore regarded as of small import compared with peace and the avoidance of the evils of disorder, which would be the inevitable outcome of any attempt to bring such a state about. And his acquiescence in the custom of according "respects d'établissement" to persons of rank⁽²⁾ also stems from this prejudice:

"Que l'on a bien fait de distinguer les hommes par l'extérieur, plutôt que par les qualités intérieures! Qui passera de nous deux? ...Il a quatre laquais, et je n'en ai qu'un: cela est visible; ...c'est à moi à céder, et je suis un sot si je le conteste. Nous voilà en paix par ce moyen; ce qui est le plus grand des biens." (p.1164; B.319)

Similarly it is the maintenance of stable equilibrium in government which Pascal advances as the justification for accepting the theory of hereditary kingship. Such a seemingly illogical way of determining succession to the most important secular office in the community is fully warranted in the interests of political stability, since if it were awarded on a strictly merit basis, given the present constitution of human nature, perpetual wrangling and dispute would ensue:

"Opinions du peuple saines. - Le plus grand des maux est les guerres civiles. Elles sont sûres, si on veut récompenser les mérites, car tous diront qu'ils méritent. Le mal à craindre d'un sot, qui succède par droit de naissance, n'est ni si grand, ni si sûr." (p.1163; B.313)

"Les choses du monde les plus déraisonnables deviennent les plus raisonnables à cause du dérèglement des hommes. Qu'y a-t-il de moins raisonnable que de choisir, pour gouverner un Etat, le premier fils d'une reine? ...Mais parce qu'ils le sont et le seront toujours, elle devient raisonnable et

(cont. from p.307) " 'Quand le fort armé possède son bien, ce qu'il possède est en paix.' " (p.1152; B.300)

(1) cf. above, p.251f.

(2) cf. above, p. 282

juste; car qui choisira-t-on? Le plus vertueux et le plus habile? Nous voilà incontinent aux mains: ... Attachons donc cette qualité à quelque chose d'incontestable. C'est le fils aîné du roi; cela est net, il n'y a point de dispute. La raison ne peut mieux faire, car la guerre civile est le plus grand des maux." (ibid.; B.320)

Nicole reproduces parts of this last fragment word for word when he too argues that the great merit of the doctrine of hereditary right consists in its substitution of peaceful government for the otherwise certain conflict between competing aspirants after the coveted position. (1) And it is evident from Pascal's extension of the sanction of divine right to all forms of established authority that his object in this respect is not so much the indiscriminate support of monarchical government, as yet further provision for the security of the state, on which the ultimate justification of his version of divine right is therefore based. As Mme. Perier's account also testifies, he believes that in France the monarchy is the appropriate resource for achieving this object, and hence his concern to ensure that its interest becomes dominant. (2)

(1) "L'injustice naturelle et ineffaçable du coeur des hommes, rend ce choix, non seulement raisonnable, mais le chef-d'oeuvre de la raison. Car qui choisirons-nous? le plus vertueux, le plus sage, le plus vaillant? Mais nous voilà incontinent aux mains: chacun dira qu'il est ce plus vertueux, ce plus vaillant, ce plus sage. Attachons donc notre choix à quelque chose d'extérieur et d'incontestable. Il est le fils aîné du Roi; cela est net; il n'y a point à douter; la raison ne peut mieux faire; car la guerre civile est le plus grand de tous les maux." De la grandeur, Essais, II, p.154-5.

(2) The marked similarity between the position which Pascal thus adopts with respect to the monarchy and that of the "Politiques" during the religious wars of the previous century, when, in opposition to the Huguenots and the Ligue, they set out to promote regal authority against aggression from religious and aristocratic factions, tallies with Sainte-Beuve's sociological classification of the Port-Royalists generally: "...on peut dire qu'au XVIIe siècle la tentative de Saint-Cyran et des Arnauld fut ... une reprise ... d'organisation religieuse pour la classe moyenne élevée, la classe parlementaire, celle qui, sous la Ligue, était plus ou moins du parti des politiques. Port-Royal fut l'entreprise religieuse de la classe moyenne en France." Port-Royal, Discours préliminaire, Pléiade ed. t.I, p.99

Again, Pascal's reverence for established laws and customs derives from the fact that, having become hallowed by tradition, they give a certain stability to the body politic:

"Pourquoi suit-on les anciennes lois et anciennes opinions? est-ce qu'elles sont plus saines? non, mais elles sont uniques, et nous ôtent la racine de la diversité." (p.1152;B.301)

In his view therefore the value of such laws resides solely in their removal of one potent source of civil strife. And there can be little doubt that his opposition to the natural law theory, which postulates the existence of a law anterior to all positive law on which this should be based, would be enforced, if nothing more, by his seeing in it a threat to the status quo. The current notion, that natural law somehow overbears positive law, would appear to Pascal a ready-made justification for repudiating the ties of political allegiance, since on this view enactments of state which run contrary to natural law prescriptions are strictly null and void. If established institutions are to be measured by reference to some ideal natural frame of government their finality would be denied, and all hope of maintaining political equilibrium lost.

That Pascal should be so disgusted by the excesses of the Fronde, through which he lived, as to thus consider virtually all other political evils as mere dust in the balance when weighed against the one evil of civil strife and confusion, is a striking instance of the far-reaching effect of contemporary events, and the personal prejudices stemming from them, on his outlook. His judgements in this regard would be corroborated by his acquaintance with those of Montaigne, who viewed the much more distressful

civil disorders of his time with similar repugnance, and drew similar inferences from his personal experience as to the value of any form of insurrection. The essay entitled De la phisionomie in particular contains much in the way of reflection upon the current disorders which would be grist to Pascal's mill.⁽¹⁾

(ii) Opposition to political change dictates respect for established laws.

As the result of his scepticism with respect to the two generally recognized bases of all law - the idea of a common law natural to all humanity, having the same validity everywhere, and man's natural sense of a 'core of justice' beyond place and time - law becomes for Pascal simply an empirical fact.⁽²⁾ There can be no question of penetrating to the essence

(1) "J'escrivois cecy environ le temps qu'une forte charge de nos troubles se croupit plusieurs mois, de tout son pois, droict sur moy. .. Monstrueuse guerre: les autres agissent au dehors; cette-cy encore contre soy se ronge et se desfaict par son propre venin. Elle est de nature si maligne et ruineuse qu'elle se ruine quand et quand le reste, et se deschire et desmembre de rage. Nous la voyons plus souvent se dissoudre par elle mesme que par disette d'aucune chose nécessaire, ...Elle vient guarir la sedition et en est pleine, veut chastir la desobeyssance et en montre l'exemple, et, employée à la deffence des loix, faict sa part de rebellion à l'encontre des siennes propres. Où en sommes-nous? Nostre medecine porte infection, ...Mais est il quelque mal en une police qui vaille estre combatu par une drogue si mortelle? Non pas, disoit Faonius, l'usurpation de la possession tyrannique d'un estat. Platon de mesme ne consent pas qu'on face violence au repos de son pays pour le guerir, ...En un temps ordinaire et tranquille, on se prepare à des accidens moderez et communs; mais en cette confusion où nous sommes depuis trente ans, tout homme françois, soit en particulier, soit en general, se voit à chaque heure sur le point de l'entier renversement de sa fortune." Essais, III, ch.12, p.285-291 (Garnier ed.)

(2) For a lively criticism, from a Thomist point of view, of this empiricist

of a particular law because there is no such essence, and since any law comprises merely an established custom which possesses no intrinsic justice, it follows that laws themselves are not just but purely and simply laws. Having claimed with Montaigne⁽¹⁾ that custom is the basis of equity, Pascal continues:

"Qui la (l'équité) ramenera à son principe l'anéantit. Rien n'est si fautif que ces lois qui redressent les fautes; qui leur obéit parce qu'elles sont justes, obéit à la justice qu'il imagine, mais non pas à l'essence de la loi: elle est toute ramassée en soi; elle est loi, et rien davantage." (p.1150; B.294)

"Montaigne a tort: la coutume ne doit être suivie que parce qu'elle est coutume, et non parce qu'elle soit raisonnable ou juste, .." (p.1161; B.325)

And Pascal's ideal in this regard is that the laws in existence should be adhered to for no other reason than that they are laws:

"Il serait donc bon qu'on obéît aux lois et aux coutumes, parce qu'elles sont lois; qu'il sût qu'il n'y en a aucune vraie et juste à introduire, que nous n'y connaissons rien, et qu'ainsi il faut seulement suivre les reçues: par ce moyen on ne les quitterait jamais." (ibid).

He is however aware that this sort of argument is unlikely to carry much weight with the mass of mankind who respect laws in the belief that they are grounded on principles of reason and justice, and who could never be persuaded of the need to do so just because they are laws.⁽²⁾ Thus in order to safeguard against attempts on the part of the populace to overthrow such laws, if they should come to see what is the real basis on which

(cont from p.311) approach cf. J. Maritain: La politique de Pascal, La revue universelle, t.14, 1923, p.258.

(1) cf. Essais III, ch.13, p.320 (Garnier ed.)

(2) "Mais le peuple n'est pas susceptible de cette doctrine; et ainsi, comme il croit que la vérité se peut trouver, et qu'elle est dans les lois et coutumes, il les croit, et prend leur antiquité comme une preuve de leur vérité (et non de leur seule autorité sans vérité.) Ainsi il y obéit; mais il est sujet à se révolter dès qu'on lui montre qu'elles ne valent rien;..." (p.1161; B.325)

these rest, it is necessary to impress continually on them the inviolable obligation of obedience:

"Injustice. - Il est dangereux de dire au peuple que les lois ne sont pas justes, car il n'y obéit qu'à cause qu'il les croit justes. C'est pourquoi il lui faut dire en même temps qu'il y faut obéir parce qu'elles sont lois, comme il faut obéir aux supérieurs, non pas parce qu'ils sont justes, mais parce qu'ils sont supérieurs. Par là voilà toute sédition prévenue si on peut faire entendre cela, et ce que c'est proprement que la définition de la justice." (p.1161; B.326)

In view of his scepticism Pascal strictly speaking has no right to call on the concept of obligation in its normal sense in a political context. But if he does try to capitalize in this way on the notion of duty implicit in the verb "falloir" to achieve his own constant object, he also takes pains to make it clear that it has no reference past the laws themselves, and the established authority, to any idea of objective right or justice.

The reference to the doctrine of non-resistance to the powers that be is especially significant in this context, since the last sentence quoted shows that Pascal's aim in endeavouring to promote such a law-abiding habitude in the populace is the very same as that which lies behind his advocacy of non-resistance - the preservation of the stability of the state. J.N. Figgis, commenting upon the writings of the seventeenth century English political theorists Filmer and Nalson, notes that: "If acuter minds have come to the conclusion that a revolution is always inexpedient, the only method of making their opinion practically effective will be by inducing the vulgar to believe that it is always iniquitous. This was the great source of strength to the upholders of Passive Obedience, as the plain teaching of

the Gospel."⁽¹⁾ Pascal's emphatic recommendations in the preceding extract are plainly the result of his having reached such a conclusion, and it is his keen awareness of the need for a widespread prevalence of a law-abiding tendency, if the great object of maintaining political equilibrium is to be secured, which explains this insistence on his part.⁽²⁾

Furthermore, this basic conviction of the paramount importance of continuity in political institutions leads him to connive at a programme of wholesale deception, provided that the essential law-abiding habitude can be induced in the people:

"L'art de fronder, bouleverser les Etats, est d'ébranler les coutumes établies, en sondant jusque dans leur source, pour marquer leur défaut d'autorité et de justice. Il faut, dit-on, recourir aux lois fondamentales et primitives de l'Etat, qu'une coutume injuste a abolies. C'est un jeu sûr pour tout perdre; rien ne sera juste à cette balance. Cependant le peuple prête aisément l'oreille à ces discours. Ils seconent le joug dès qu'ils le reconnaissent; et les grands en profitent à sa ruine ...C'est pourquoi le plus sage des législateurs disait que, pour le bien des hommes, il faut souvent les piper; ...Il ne faut pas qu'il sente la vérité de l'usurpation:..."⁽³⁾ (p.1150-1; B.294)

(1) The Divine Right of Kings, p.165.

(2) This in some ways brings Pascal within the general trend of the political thought of his day which also taught, as a necessary corollary to the theory of non-resistance to the secular authority, the duty of obedience to law. "The law to which obedience is due may be Canon Law, 'Discipline', Positive Law, Custom. But obedience to what is conceived as law of some sort, truly and not metaphorically speaking, is the universal maxim ... With very few exceptions, all political thinkers in the 17th century regard as absolute the claims of law, as they define it, to unquestioning, unvarying obedience." Figgis, op.cit., p.227. cf. also H. Sée, op.cit., p.172.

(3) The fragment continues: "...elle a été introduite autrefois sans raison, elle est devenue raisonnable; il faut la faire regarder comme authentique, éternelle, et en cacher le commencement si on ne veut qu'elle ne prenne bientôt fin." (ibid.)

Thus the fact that the proposed plan of amelioration invariably results in a worse state of things than the one which it was designed to remedy is urged as justification for adopting this Machiavellian policy of deliberately keeping the people in the dark as to the rightness of their beliefs when this will serve the ends of state. Those who press for reform, it is claimed, in addition to acting upon the baseless assumption that they have found the core of justice which laws should embody, entirely fail to realize that the insurrections they stir up will produce a general reaction in favour of strong government, and so end in the imposition of an even harsher tyranny than that borne at present. But while inculcating this doctrine of complete political quietism, Pascal himself fails to appreciate that if the laws in question are bad or irksome no amount of propaganda of this sort to prevent their infringement can ever make them the reverse, or teach the people to regard them as good and beneficent to themselves; and that nothing in the long run will keep them from debating whether continued submission to such laws is not, after all, a greater evil than a period of anarchy with its chances of a change for the better.

His attitude in this respect toward those who, refusing to subscribe to his view that utility and not justice is the object of politics, persist in their conviction that attempts should be made to bring the existing state of things more into line with principles of justice and right, clearly owes much to his reading of Montaigne. The latter was similarly sceptical as to the worthwhile outcome of such attempts, and his judgements, backed by the testimony of personal experience,⁽¹⁾ must have had the effect of

(1) cf. "...ès affaires publiques, il n'est aucun si mauvais train, pourveu qu'il aye de l'aage et de la constance, qui ne vaille mieux que le changement et le remuement, ...de nos loix et usances, il y en a plusieurs barbares et

confirming Pascal's leaning to political quietism with the consequent opposition to any movement to achieve a measure of political reform, even though he shows himself to be as aware as Montaigne of the shortcomings and manifest injustice of many established practices.

The use of the term "justice", at the end of the fragment cited previously, in the sense of respect for the established order of things and adherence to existing laws has two parallels in the Trois discours. Pascal there alleges of the laws instituted to regulate succession to property that:

"..quand ces lois sont une fois établies, il est injuste de les violer." (p.617; G.E.IX, p.367)

And in reference to the different forms of respect awarded to various ranks in any particular country, he affirms:

"La chose était indifférente avant l'établissement: après l'établissement elle devient juste, parce qu'il est injuste de la troubler." (p.618; G.E.IX, p.369)

The purpose behind this usage is plain from the way in which it ties in with Pascal's subordination of justice to force. By dint of equating justice with force, which in effect means the constituted authority, he is enabled to provide law and the status quo with the sanction they require:

"La justice est ce qui est établi; et ainsi toutes nos lois établies seront nécessairement tenues pour justes sans être examinées, puisqu'elles sont établies." (p.1152; B.312)

(cont. from p.315) monstrueuses; toutesfois, pour la difficulté de nous mettre en meilleur estat, et le danger de ce crollement, si je pouvoy planter une cheville à nostre roue et l'arrester en ce point, je le ferois de bon coeur: .." Essais, II, ch.17, p.376 (Garnier ed.) "Il y a grand doute, s'il se peut trouver si evident profit au changement d'une loy receue, telle qu'elle soit, qu'il y a de mal à la remuer, ...Je suis desgousté de la nouvelleté, quelque visage qu'elle porte, et ay raison, car j'en ay veu des effets très-dommageables. ...Ceux qui donnent le branle à un estat sont volontiers les premiers absorbez en sa ruyne. Le fruit du trouble ne demeure guere à celuy qui l'a esmen; il bat et brouille l'eaue pour d'autres pescheurs. ...Le meilleur pretexte de nouvelleté est très-dangereux: ...Il y a grand à dire,

This doctrine reflects both Pascal's political 'realism' and his dominant concern to secure stable government through universal obedience to established laws, for, taken as a whole, it amounts to saying that where there is no force there can be no sanction, and where there is no sanction there can be no law, for laws can be laws only when they are enforced by superior power. It follows therefore that from their very nature laws must always be expressions of force, so that, as in the case of Hobbes, it is not the content of rules which makes them laws but their authoritative source and the sanction they command. Like Hobbes⁽¹⁾ Pascal thus repudiates the notion that the terms justice and injustice can have any meaning apart from the established authority. And in this way he undermines the justification of those who press for the reform of the status quo because of the injustice it fosters, since, in his terms, the possibility of justice conflicting with what is established cannot arise, when justice is simply what is established.

Yet if Pascal's account of the genesis and growth of law be accepted obviously no government can have any foundation except a de facto foundation, and such endeavours as the foregoing to furnish it with a de iure one must fall victim to his own remorseless logic. Not only does the arbitrary elevation of what is no more than a mere personal conviction to the status of a principle valid for all constitute an example of precisely the sort of thing at which his critique of human justice is directed, but a successful

(cont. from p.316) entre la cause de celui qui suyt les formes et les loix de son pays, et celui qui entreprend de les regenter et changer. Celuy là allegue pour son excuse la simplicité, l'obéissance et l'exemple; ..L'autre est en bien plus rude party, car qui se mesle de choisir et de changer, usurpe l'autorité de juger, et se doit faire fort de voir la faute de ce qu'il chasse, et le bien de ce qu'il introduit." Essais, I, ch.23, p.125-8

(1) Leviathan, 13.

rebellion must in the nature of the case have an identical foundation. Indeed, as the result of Pascal's espousal of the might is right theory its claim would be superior to any advanced by a beleaguered establishment. Hence the inconsistency which marks the statement occurring at the end of the fragment where he equates justice with force:

"De là vient le droit de l'épée, car l'épée donne un véritable droit: autrement on verrait la violence d'un côté et la justice de l'autre. ...De là vient l'injustice de la Fronde, qui élève sa prétendue justice contre la force." (p.1338; B.878)

Pascal does not see that, according to his own argument, if the Fronde proved strong enough to dispossess the established authority and set a different one in its place, then justice would be on its side. Although his purpose in resorting to such arguments is clearly to bolster up the established government, he apparently fails to realize the essentially precarious nature of any body politic based on the principle that might is right, which stems from the fact that the strong man armed is always liable to be overthrown by a stronger than he.

(iii) Peace, the supreme political value.

Despite his belief that security of state is the highest political end, and his rooted antipathy to political change as the great evil to be avoided under all conceivable contingencies, Pascal's political teaching cannot be finally summed up in the maxim "salus populi suprema lex", or in

a conception of the object of the state as "pax vitaeque securitas." He does, it is true, in common with Hobbes and Spinoza,⁽¹⁾ and with the same individualistic motive, reduce the criteria of political conduct ultimately to one, success in guaranteeing peace and security - a concurrence of opinion to some extent attributable to the tenor of the age in which all three writers lived. Yet for Pascal peace, the supreme political value, is not an end in itself, but finds its "raison d'être" in turn in the guarantee of continued security to the material possessions of the individual. Any threatened danger to these justifies abandoning it:

"Comme la paix dans les Etats n'a pour objet que de conserver les biens des peuples en assurance ... la paix n'étant juste et utile que pour la sûreté du bien, elle devient injuste et pernicieuse quand elle le laisse perdre et la guerre qui peut le défendre devient juste et nécessaire; .." (p.1338;B.949)

Here again there is a fresh application of the terms just and unjust, with the criterion consisting this time in the protection of property. Although convinced that such property has no foundation in nature, since it is contrary to the natural order of things,⁽²⁾ and that it originally came into being only as the result of the sort of usurpation he here condemns,⁽³⁾ Pascal evidently considers it one of the inevitable concomitants of life in society for, in the Expériences nouvelles touchant

(1) Spinoza's experiences in the Netherlands during the collapse of John de Witt's regime in 1672 led him to alter his original dictum, that "the true purpose of the State is liberty", in his last work to: "the function of the State is purely and simply to guarantee peace and security; it follows that the best State is that in which men live their lives in concord..." Quoted by S. Skalweit in New Cambridge Modern History, vol.V, p.108.

(2) cf. above, p.251^f.

(3) "Mien, tien. - Ce chien est à moi, disaient ces pauvres enfants; c'est là ma place au soleil. - Voilà le commencement et l'image de l'usurpation de toute la terre." (p.1151; B.295)

le vide, he refers to:

"..l'inclination générale qu'ont tous les hommes de se maintenir dans leurs justes possessions..." (p.364: G.E.

In the fragment from the Pensées he goes on to compare the conditions arising in Church and State under which the abandoning of peace for war is warranted, and asserts that while an obvious threat to personal possessions furnishes the only legitimate ground in the latter sphere, it is permissible, and indeed imperative, to violate ecclesiastical peace in the interests of truth. The obvious conclusion to which such a comparison points is that he ascribes to private property in the political sphere a value somehow analagous to that which he attributes to truth in the spiritual order. (1)

Like his attitude of individualism in regard to property, this comparison also serves to emphasize, with its implication that truth has no place in the realm of politics, the peculiarly secularist view Pascal takes of political organizations, and to show just how far his occasional appeals to the doctrine of divine right are dictated by considerations of utility.

Since he does not look to security as providing the means which makes it possible for the individual to pursue other higher aims, the state in his view has no moral end. On the contrary he regards it as a purely human institution orientated to the worldly end of securing peace and the private goods of the individual. Thus, in common with other political thinkers of his age, in whom the anarchy and suffering caused by past civil

(1) Some indication of the place occupied by truth in the spiritual order can be gleaned from two extracts from the Provinciales: "...la vérité subsiste éternellement ... parce qu'elle est éternelle et puissante comme Dieu même." (12th, p.805; G.E.V, p.387) "...la plus grande des vertus chrétiennes, qui est l'amour de la vérité." (19th, p.904; G.E.VII, p.173)

strife produced a reaction in favour of absolutism and a 'peace at any price' attitude, Pascal propounds what amounts to a completely utilitarian theory of government. In keeping with his conception of its characteristic end, he believes that political tranquillity is the very essence of any state, as well as the great object for which it exists, and consequently looks upon any form of political change as evil.

Chapter two: Church and state

(i) The superiority of the Church over secular society.

Although Pascal nowhere expressly defines the relations between Church and State as such, or the limits of their respective powers, the evidence on this question which can be pieced together from his writings indicates that he conceives of them as two distinct entities functioning on widely different planes, and of correspondingly varying significance and value. On the one hand is the civil state, a separate and exclusively secular institution, ordered to the purely utilitarian end of securing private property, and, so far as is consonant with that, of maintaining peace: on the other hand is the Church, which he seems to regard as constituting a sort of 'societas perfecta', the embodiment of the "ordre de charité", modelled on his doctrine of the "membres pensants". These two independent societies have perfectly distinct objects in view, each of which is to be attained by the use of means altogether unfit for the attainment of the other. (1)

The nature of the complete severance of Church and secular society is brought out in two highly figurative fragments from the Pensées, based on Saint Augustine's paraphrase of Psalm 137:

(1) The usual cleavage between Pascal's views and those of Domat emerges here. Domat regards Church and State as merely different aspects of the same society, for, though he is careful to separate the two spheres of power, civil and ecclesiastical, he nonetheless conceives of them as ideally co-operating within the same social and political whole to achieve the same end - a view which results logically from his conception of natural law, and of the origins and evolution of society. "On doit enfin regarder la religion comme le fondement le plus naturel de l'ordre de la société. Car c'est l'esprit de la religion qui est le principe du véritable ordre où elle devait être. ...il est vrai que, dans les lieux où l'on professe la véritable religion, la société est dans l'état le plus naturel et le plus propre pour être maintenue dans le bon ordre,

" 'Tout ce qui est au monde est concupiscence de la chair, ou concupiscence des yeux, ou orgueil de la vie: libido sentiendi, libido sciendi, libido dominandi.' Malheureuse la terre de malédiction que ces trois fleuves de feu embrasent plutôt qu'ils n'arrosent! Heureux ceux qui, étant sur ces fleuves, non pas plongés, non pas entraînés, mais immobilement affermis sur ces fleuves, non pas debout, mais assis dans une assiette basse et sûre, d'où ils ne se relèvent pas avant la lumière, mais, après s'y être reposés en paix, tendent la main à celui qui les doit élever, pour les faire tenir debout et fermes dans les porches de la sainte Hiérusalem, où l'orgueil ne pourra plus les combattre et les abattre; et qui cependant pleurent, non pas de voir écouler toutes les choses périssables que ces torrents entraînent, mais dans le souvenir de leur chère patrie, de la Hiérusalem céleste, dont ils se souviennent sans cesse dans la longueur de leur exil! " (p.1302; B.458)

"Les fleuves de Babylone coulent, et tombent et entraînent. O sainte Sion, où tout est stable et où rien ne tombe! Il faut s'asseoir sur les fleuves, non sous ou dedans, mais dessus; et non debout, mais assis: pour être humble, étant assis, et en sûreté, étant dessus. Mais nous serons debout dans les porches de Hiérusalem.

Qu'on voie si ce plaisir est stable ou coulant: s'il passe, c'est un fleuve de Babylone." (ibid; B.459)

That these two fragments are complementary, and that the "fleuves de Babylone" are identical with the "trois fleuves de feu", is sufficiently attested by the linguistic similarities in the description of the attitude which the 'pilgrim' must adopt toward them, and by the appearance in both of the striking image that when once the porches of the heavenly Jerusalem will have been reached he will be 'raised up' to the appropriate upright stance. The gist of the passages is clearly enough an account of the career of the Church, that part of the Kingdom of God in a state of earthly pilgrimage. The Church, a pilgrim society living by faith and looking to the hereafter, provides the sole secure refuge where it is possible to

(cont. from p.322) par le concours de la religion et de la police, et par l'union du ministère des puissances spirituelle et temporelle." Traité des lois, ix, 8.

escape being swept away by the ravages of sin and lust represented by the "fleuves". And the sitting posture, so insistently prescribed, plainly stands for the humility and contrition which membership of this body entails,⁽¹⁾ and by means of which the 'pilgrim' will be on the watch against the sin that continually lies at the door to surprize him. The reminiscence, that ever calls before his mind's eye the "chère patrie" to which he belongs, symbolizes the dim but unmistakable awareness of the higher and nobler element in his nature which points in turn to some other and better condition whose blessings he has been obliged to forego as the result of some grave misdemeanour - this much at least is implied in the notion of his serving a term of exile. Peace and stability are no enduring condition here on earth, but belong of right only to the beyond,⁽²⁾ And the "terre de malédiction", synonymous with this world here and now, the wasteland through which the Church journeys, is set in sharp contrast to its ultimate destination, "sainte Hiérusalem", "sainte Sion"; for "sainte", or some form of that word, is the term in Pascal's vocabulary used to denote the transcendent against which the goods of human life are measured,

(1) cf. also from the Pensées: " 'Comminuentes cor' (saint Paul), voilà le caractère chrétien." (p.1302; B.533)

(2) Despite the implication here, that peace and stability do not therefore attach, save in figure, to the Church in its state of earthly pilgrimage, elsewhere in the Pensées Pascal contrasts the eternal character of the Church as a society with the mutability of all earthly polities which change and pass away: "Perpétuité. - ..le Messie est venu enfin en la consommation des temps; et depuis, on a vu ... tant renverser d'Etats, tant de changements en toutes choses; et cette Eglise, .. a subsisté sans interruption. Et ce qui est admirable, incomparable et tout à fait divin, c'est que cette religion qui a toujours duré, a toujours été combattue. ...ce qui est étonnant est qu'elle s'est maintenue sans fléchir et plier sous la volonté des tyrans. Car il n'est pas étrange qu'un Etat subsiste, lorsque l'on fait quelquefois céder ses lois à la nécessité,..." (p.1327-8; B.613)
 "Les Etats périraient, si on ne faisait ployer souvent les lois à la

and in the light of which they are seen to be in themselves valueless.⁽¹⁾

Now the effect of setting such a transcendent goal for human aspirations is inevitably to make the mere civil state appear as of no worth, by comparison with the supreme interests which lie beyond its cognizance. Moreover, the interpretation of history developed in these fragments, which virtually reduces the meaning of providence to the protection and guidance of the Church, pictured as an immutable society in the midst of the wreck of human institutions, must empty belief in progress of any reference to the world of secular affairs. Pascal is emphatic in this context that it is only in the Church, the partial representative of the Kingdom of God, that any good is to be found in this life. It is the point at which the transcendent "ordre de charité" inserts itself into the world of here and now, and hence, within its divinely assisted life, provides man with his sole opportunity of attaining to the true good.

In Pascal's view the basic factor preventing any real similarity or even a measure of co-operation between the Church and the civil state is the universal predominance, since the Fall, of self-interest⁽²⁾ ("concupiscence"

(cont. from p.324) nécessité. Mais jamais la religion n'a souffert cela, et n'en a usé. ..Il n'est pas étrange qu'on se conserve en ployant, et ce n'est pas proprement se maintenir; et encore périssent-ils enfin entièrement: ... Mais cette religion se soit toujours maintenue, et inflexible, cela est divin." (p.1328; B.614) Thus over against the civil state, which is forced to modify its laws in accordance with the prevailing political wind, and even by so doing can enjoy only a limited period of survival of temporal vicissitudes, Pascal sets the eternal Church (it is clear from the context that the terms "Eglise" and "religion" are used synonymously here), which has continued the same throughout all time, without ever stooping to compromise even in the face of the hostile will of earthly tyrants. Although the accuracy of Pascal's view of history may be called in question, the same does not apply to the sincerity of his conviction that this historical fact, as he plainly regards it, affords proof of the supremacy and divine character of the Church.

(1) cf. below, p.392ff.

(2) cf. above, p.264ff.

and "amour-propre"), which only the power of the Holy Spirit, mediated by the Church, can counteract. Hence it is within the Church alone that he conceives a life of true corporate fellowship possible, and herein lies its superiority in purely social terms over any secular community.

Such a life of fellowship he envisages on the lines of the great Stoic conception, appropriated and applied to the Church by Saint Paul, of individual men as severally so many members of the one universal city of humanity.⁽¹⁾ In Saint Paul's restatement of the image the Stoic city was identified with Christ's body, and individual Christian believers were described figuratively as members of this body, thus participating in the very life of God.⁽²⁾ The following extracts illustrate Pascal's adoption of this organic view of the Church, as a body composing and composed of various members with Christ as its head:

"...le monde des enfants de Dieu, qui forme un corps dont Jésus-Christ est le chef et le roi; ... l'Eglise, qui est son empire, ..." (14th Provinciale, p.830; G.E.VI, p.152)

".. et ceux que Dieu, par la régénération, a retirés gratuitement du péché .. pour leur donner une place dans son Eglise qui est son véritable temple; ..doivent sans cesse aspirer à se rendre dignes de faire partie du Corps de Jésus-Christ." (3) (à Mme.Périer, p.485;G.E.II, p.485)

(1) cf. Epictetus, Discourses, II, 10: "Consider who you are. In the first place you are a man; ..Further, you are a citizen of the world, ..What then does the character of a citizen promise? To hold nothing as profitable to himself; to deliberate about nothing as if he were detached from the community, but to act as the hand or foot would do, if they had reason and understood the constitution of nature, for they would never put themselves in motion nor desire any thing otherwise than with reference to the whole." (Trans. G.Long) cf. *ibid.*, II, 5.

(2) Colossians, ii, 9; Corinthians, xii, 12, 26-7; Romans, xii, 5; Ephesians, iv, 15-16.

(3) The best account of the development of this conception of the Church is by E. Mersch, Le corps mystique du Christ, (2 vols. Brussels, 1936, 2nd ed.)

This allegorical conception, which proved so fruitful when applied to mankind at large as well as to every permanent human group by the great Mediaeval political thinkers,⁽¹⁾ is exclusively confined by Pascal to the structure of the Church. The latter in his opinion has a monopoly of the elements of perfect fellowship, for outside of it the "tendance à soi", the product of "amour-propre", and the "commencement de tout désordre", reigns unchecked.⁽²⁾ And Pascal is insistent that any community which lives by merely cloaking this "vilain fond de l'homme" in its members is but a hollow and seeming fellowship.⁽³⁾ Only within the society of the Church is it possible for man to act in accordance with "ordre", by conforming to the pattern of behaviour which in Pascal's view forms the groundwork of the social organism: "L'on doit tendre au général". (p.1304; B.477) And the means whereby the deadlock, caused by the opposition of the radically anti-social bias of man's "tendance à soi" to the socially - vital "tendance au général", is resolved in the organization of the Church is set out at length in a fragment from the Pensées:

"Etre membre, est n'avoir de vie, d'être et de mouvement que par l'esprit du corps et pour le corps."⁽⁴⁾

Le membre séparé, ne voyant plus le corps auquel il appartient, n'a plus qu'un être périssant et mourant. Cependant il croit être un tout, et, ne se voyant pas de corps dont il dépende, il croit ne dépendre que de soi, et veut se faire centre et corps lui-même. Mais n'ayant point en soi de principe de vie, il ne fait que s'égarer, ...Enfin, quand il vient à connaître, il est comme revenu chez soi, et ne s'aime plus que pour le corps....

(1) cf. Gierke, Political Theories of the Middle Age, p.22-30

(2) cf. above, p.261.

(3) cf. above, p.265f. and also Mme. Périer's Vie: "Ce qu'il avait coutume de dire sur le sujet d'amour-propre est 'que la piété chrétienne anéantit le moi humain, et la civilité humaine le cache et le supprime';..." (p.29; G.E.I, p.101)

(4) This line by itself testifies to Pascal's debt to Epictetus in this regard.

Il ne pourrait pas par sa nature aimer une autre chose sinon pour soi-même et pour se l'asservir, parce que chaque chose s'aime plus que tout. Mais en aimant le corps, il s'aime soi-même, parce qu'il n'a d'être qu'en lui, par lui et pour lui: 'Qui adhaeret Deo unus spiritus est'.

Le corps aime la main; et la main, si elle avait une volonté, devrait s'aimer de la même sorte que l'âme l'aime. Tout amour qui va au delà est injuste.

'Adhaerens Deo unus spiritus est'. On s'aime, parce qu'on est membre de Jésus-Christ. On aime Jésus-Christ, parce qu'il est le corps dont on est membre. Tout est un, l'un est en l'autre, comme les trois Personnes."
(p.1305-6; B.483)

The adoption of the Pauline analogy of the Church as the Mystical Body⁽¹⁾ enables Pascal to identify in this way God in Christ, as the source of all derived existence, with the "corps" to which the individual "membres" belong. Since the body and the individual members belonging to it have a common principle of being and basis of life, it is possible for the individual to love the whole while loving himself. Although so constituted that by a law of his present nature he is incapable of devoting himself to anything apart from himself, man is quite capable of loving the "corps" since in so doing he is in fact loving his very self. In this unique instance the "tendance au général" and the "tendance à soi" coincide.

(1) Although Pascal's version of the doctrine of the mystical body is clearly based primarily on that adumbrated by Saint Paul, his familiarity with the thought of Saint Augustine must also have had some part in shaping his conceptions in this respect. In The City of God the latter refers to "that advent of the Saviour by which he is coming through all the present time in his Church, that is to say in his members, ...for it is all his Body." (XX, V) Again in one of his letters he writes of the 'civitas Dei' that: "The only basis and bond of a true city is that of faith and strong concord when the object of love is the universal good - which is, in its highest and truest character, God himself - and men love one another, with full sincerity, in Him, and the ground of their love for one another is the love of him..." Quoted by E. Barker in his Introduction to The City of God (Everyman ed.), p.xxvii. For further references cf. Mersch, op.cit., vol.II, p.49-60.

By applying the category of organism in this way Pascal therefore ensures that in the Church the conception of a common weal supersedes that of self-interest, which lies at the root of all secular associations.⁽¹⁾ Moreover, since he insists that the Christian stands to the Church in the relation of an organ to the body, so that the individual member is dependent on the mystical body in the same way as a hand or foot is dependent on the human body,⁽²⁾ it follows that the Church in this sense is indispensable to the member, who depends upon it for full existence, which can only be had by participating in its life. And in thus assimilating the society of the Church to the human body, and its members to bodily organs, Pascal effectively combats what he regards as a false conception of the self as an isolated unit concerned with its own satisfaction. On the organic view the individual is no mere isolated self but part of a whole, nor is he intended to pursue the interest of the isolated self but to fill a place and purpose in the whole, whereby his own fullest satisfaction will be found.⁽³⁾

(1) cf. above, p.265f.

(2) cf. the further fragment from the Pensées: "Si le pied avait toujours ignoré qu'il appartînt au corps, et qu'il y eût un corps dont il dépendît, s'il n'avait eu que la connaissance et l'amour de soi, et qu'il vînt à connaître qu'il appartient à un corps dont il dépend, quel regret,...d'avoir été inutile au corps qui lui a influé la vie, qui l'eût anéanti s'il l'eût rejeté et séparé de soi, comme il se séparait de lui! ..." (p.1304-5; B.476)

(3) cf. from the Pensées: "Si les pieds et les mains avaient une volonté particulière, jamais ils ne seraient dans leur ordre qu'en soumettant cette volonté particulière à la volonté première qui gouverne le corps entier. Hors de là, ils sont dans le désordre et dans le malheur; mais, en ne voulant que le bien du corps, ils font leur propre bien." (p.1304;B.475) Thus to selfishly seek one's own satisfaction without regard for the "corps" to which one belongs, thereby refusing to subordinate oneself to God who wills that each individual should aim at the good of all, is to ultimately thwart one's own supreme desire for happiness. Pascal finds it impossible or undesirable to divest his ethics of their basically egocentric tendency even when engaged in recommending an organic way of life, for he here declares that in the last analysis to aim at the good of the whole is nothing else than to aim at one's own good.

The intimacy of the union which binds the "membres" to each other and to Christ, in whom the organism has its root of existence and principle of unity, is emphasized by the comparison which Pascal makes with the unity of the three persons in the Trinity.⁽¹⁾ And not only is the Church not conceived of apart from Christ, but in Pascal's opinion it is simply the prolonging of his life, for he continues present and immanent in it, as the vitalizing principle from which comes its growth and strength. Whence the numerous assertions that the sufferings of Christians are the filling-up, as it were, of the sufferings of Christ himself:

"...nous savons que ce qui est arrivé en Jésus-Christ doit arriver en tous ses membres." (à M. et Mme. Périer, p.492; G.E.II, p.542)

"C'est un des grands principes du christianisme, que tout ce qui est arrivé à Jésus-Christ doit se passer et dans l'âme et dans le corps de chaque Chrétien;.." (ibid., G.E. ibid)

"Entrez dans mon coeur et mon âme pour y porter mes souffrances, et pour continuer d'endurer en moi ce qui vous reste à souffrir de votre Passion, que vous achevez dans vos membres jusqu'à la consommation parfaite de votre Corps;..." (Prière pour le bon usage des maladies, p.614; G.E.IX p.339-40)

"Il faut ajouter mes plaies aux siennes, et me joindre à lui,..." (Mystère de Jésus, p.1315; B.553)

Since membership of this mystical body of Christ, which represents the Church, pre-supposes as a necessary step some form of union of man with God Pascal believes that it can only be finally achieved through grace:

"Si on vous unit à Dieu, c'est par la grâce, non par la nature." (p.1225; B.430)

"...l'homme, par la grâce est rendu comme semblable à Dieu et participant de sa divinité..." (p.1208; B.434)

(1) cf. also: "M. de Condren: Il n'y a point, dit-il, de comparaison de l'union des saints à celle de la Sainte Trinité. Jésus-Christ dit le contraire." (p.1306; B.943)

The value which Pascal accords to grace in this respect as a socializing power is evident from the fact that he attributes to its agency the eradication from man of those selfish tendencies which undermine all purely secular social endeavours:

"...Jésus-Christ qui, d'un homme plein ... de concupiscence, d'orgueil et d'ambition, a fait un homme exempt de tous ces maux par la force de sa grâce, .." (p.1311;B.550)

Pascal forcefully underlines the antithesis between Church and state as two opposing societies, based the one on supernatural grace the other on concupiscence, assigning to each its relative worth, at the conclusion of the Trois discours sur la condition des grands. Having shown his aristocratic pupil that he is destined by virtue of his title to become a "roi de concupiscence", and that in this sphere his authority will represent in miniature that of the greatest temporal monarchs, so that what applies to him individually can be said to apply to the whole realm of secular politics, Pascal rounds off his advice with the following exhortation:

"Il faut mépriser la concupiscence et son royaume, et aspirer à ce royaume de charité où tous les sujets ne respirent que la charité, et ne désirent que les biens de la charité." (p.620-1; G.E.IX, p.373)

Thus when it is alleged in the Pensées that "Dieu donne dans la morale la charité, qui produit des fruits contre la concupiscence,"⁽¹⁾ and then one of the long fragments taken up with the exposition of the "membres" theory is introduced under the rubric "Morale",⁽²⁾ this implies in Pascal's own terms that such "fruits" are to be found manifested in the specific

(1) p.1329; B.579

(2) p.1305; B.482.

type of conduct on which the Church sets its corporate mind and will. Moreover, the fact that these "fruits" are directed against concupiscence, the mainspring of all secular conduct, points to the existence of a sharp cleavage in this respect between the Church and any other community. The following extract^s attest Pascal's conviction that this is the case:

"Dieu fera une Eglise pure au dedans, qui confonde par sa sainteté intérieure et toute spirituelle l'impiété intérieure des sages superbes et des pharisiens; et l'Eglise fera une assemblée d'hommes, dont les moeurs extérieures soient si pures, qu'elles confondent les moeurs des païens." (p.1337; B.905)

"...les lois ecclésiastiques, qui doivent être incomparablement plus saintes que les lois civiles et païennes,⁽¹⁾ puisqu'il n'y a que l'Eglise qui connaisse et qui possède la véritable sainteté." (14th Provinciale, p.826; G.E.VI, p.145)

"...au lieu que les créatures qui composent le monde s'acquittent de leur obligation en se tenant dans une perfection bornée, parce que la perfection du monde est aussi bornée, les enfants de Dieu ne doivent point mettre de limites à leur pureté et à leur perfection, parce qu'ils font partie d'un corps tout divin et infiniment parfait;.." (2) (à Mme.Périer, p.485; G.E.II, p.252)

As Pascal sees it therefore both ^{the} external framework of the Church, and the inward life of its members, bear upon them, in virtue of their supernatural inspiration, the stamp of "sainteté", which sets them apart from, and immeasurably higher than, their pagan or secular counterparts. Nor does Pascal consider himself constrained by the attitude he adopts to the Jesuit moral theologians to posit these conditions of an 'ideal' Church - he simply resorts, when they are in question, to a definition of the Church as the

(1) On the triple gradation apparent in this and the preceding extract - "païennes, civiles, ecclésiastiques"; "païens, sages, Eglise" - cf. below, p.390f.

(2) cf. also from the Pensées: "Preuve.- ..(2) La sainteté, la hauteur et l'humilité d'une âme chrétienne." (p.1228; B.289)

'ecclesiastical body', from which all such "religieux relâchés et casuistes corrompus" are excluded. (1)

(ii) Authority in the Church: the 'Christian Republic'

The difference between authority in its origin, form and function in Church and in state is no less marked than that between their respective social structures and qualities of life. Thus in the Pensées Pascal notes that:

"Le pape est premier. Quel autre est connu de tous? Quel autre est reconnu de tous ayant le pouvoir d'insinuer dans tout le corps, parce qu'il tient la maîtresse branche, qui s'insinue partout? Qu'il était aisé de faire dégénérer cela en tyrannie! C'est pourquoi Jésus-Christ leur a posé ce précepte: 'Vos autem non sic'." (p.1335;B.972)

"Les rois disposent de leur empire; mais les papes ne peuvent disposer du leur." (ibid.; B.877)

Since he cites in the same fragment Luke's account of Christ setting the dominion of kings in contrast to the mutual love and service of the Kingdom of God ("The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them...But ye shall not be so"...XXII, 25-6), Pascal obviously does not intend his assertion that the pope is foremost as an acknowledgement that in a political context the pope is above the law, that his see holds primacy or that he has 'plenitudo potestatis'. If his own definition of the term 'tyranny' be applied to that word in the present context, it is clear that he would

(1) p.1332; B.889. cf. "...le Corps de la hiérarchie en quoi consiste proprement l'Eglise..." (Projet de mandement, p.941; G.E.VII, p.383)
 "...l'Eglise étant proprement dans le corps de la hiérarchie..." (p.1333;B.889)

consider the perversion of the papal 'cura' into 'dominium', even in the spiritual realm, to be the outcome of a "désir de domination universel et hors de son ordre",⁽¹⁾ a translation into spiritual terms of temporal sovereignty. He believes it is of the essence of the Church to be different from the civil state, and hence that care must be exercised to ensure that its distinctive character is preserved, particularly in those aspects where there is most danger of this being assimilated to the secular. In the case in point the disparity is made plain by the fact that the pope, unlike a secular monarch, cannot be lord but must be minister of all as Christ affirmed.

And although Pascal's views on the crucial question of the nature of papal supremacy in the Church exhibit some inconsistency, on the whole he inclines to the opinion that the papal power is only representative,⁽²⁾ and that the real authority in the Church is that which exists diffusively in the whole 'communitas fidelium':

"Eglise, pape. Unité, multitude. - En considérant l'Eglise comme unité, le pape, qui en est le chef, est comme tout. En la considérant comme multitude, le pape n'en est qu'une partie. Les Pères l'ont considérée, tantôt en une manière, tantôt en l'autre; et ainsi ont parlé diversement du pape..... Mais en établissant une de ces deux vérités, ils n'ont pas exclu l'autre. La multitude qui ne se réduit pas à l'unité est confusion; l'unité qui ne dépend pas de la multitude est tyrannie. Il n'ya presque plus que la France où il soit permis de dire que le Concile est au-dessus du pape."⁽³⁾
(p.1335; B.871)

(1) cf. above, p.283.

(2) This comes out very plainly in the following assertion: "Toutes les fois que les Jésuites surprendront le pape, on rendra toute la Chrétienté parjure."
(p.1073; B.882)

(3) Pascal here endorses the standpoint of the Conciliar Party, whose views were advanced so forcefully in the later Middle Ages by Marsilius of Padua, Ockham and Nicolas of Cusa, according to which supreme power in the Church is in the last resort the Church itself in the shape of a general council

" ' Duo aut tres in unum'. L'unité et la multitude:
 Erreur à exclure l'une des deux, comme font les papistes,
 qui excluent la multitude, ou les huguenots, qui excluent
 l'unité." (p.1335; B.874)

"Je loue de tout mon coeur le petit zèle que j'ai reconnu
 dans votre lettre pour l'union avec le Pape. Le corps n'est
 non plus vivant sans le chef, que le chef sans le corps.
 Quiconque se sépare de l'un ou de l'autre n'est plus du
 corps, et n'appartient plus à Jésus-Christ." (à Mlle. de
 Roannez, p.513; G.E.VI, p.216-7)

"...le pape...qui est le souverain chef de l'Église..."
 (17th Provinciale, p.894; G.E. VI, p.343)

"...de représenter au pape, avec toute la soumission que
 des enfants doivent à leur père, et les membres à leur
 chef, qu'on peut l'avoir surpris..." (18th Provinciale,
 p.894; G.E.VII, p.42)

Despite the fact that the last two extracts here show a tendency to gather all authority in the Church at the centre, as in the civil state, it is evident from Pascal's insistence on the equal importance of the two factors "unité" and "multitude" that the papacy in his view is but the instrument and incorporation of the visible unity of the Church. The pope is merely one member among others of the body politic of the Church, even if he is the terrestrial symbol of its corporate unity. And Pascal's opposition in this regard to the theories of the Ultramontanist party is clear when he uses their stock argument, from the necessity for connection with the

(cont. from p.334) formed of clergy and laity alike. (cf. Gierke, op.cit., p.49-61, and Poole, op.cit., p.234 and 244) The stipulation that the occupant of the papal office, itself regarded as essential only in order to preserve the unity of the Church, should be as far as possible fully representative, points to a much more 'liberal' attitude in ecclesiastical politics than was apparent in the theory of civil government outlined in the previous chapter. For such a view of the almost popular origin of authority in the ecclesiastical sphere has no counterpart in the secular sphere, nor is there any suggestion that, as in former councils act as restraints on papal authority, so in the latter similar regulative functions should be exercised by parliaments in a monarchy or by magistrates in a republic. On the contrary Pascal's theory of sovereignty leaves no room at all for the consent of the people at large in the foundation of political authority: he sees the relationship holding between a prince and his

rightful head if the body is not to languish, to show that, just as the Church cannot exist without the pope, so the pope cannot exist without the Church.⁽¹⁾

Since he regards the pope as before all else representative, as the exponent almost of the Church, this means that for Pascal the true depositary of sovereignty in the Church lies elsewhere. As the first of the preceding passages amply attests, he believes that it is in the whole society of the Church, in the organic expression of a Council, that true authority resides. By making the papal power subject in this way to the general voice of Catholic Christendom the danger of its taking on the form of civil dominion is removed. For it is not as a body held together by common obedience to one divinely-appointed spiritual authority, the pope, that Pascal envisages the Church, but much rather as a body whose unity, of which the love spread abroad in the hearts of its members by the Holy Spirit is the foundation and bond, is merely symbolized by the pope.

This basically corporate nature of the Church as it appears to Pascal is further illustrated by his references to it as the "république chrétienne":

(cont. from p.335) "parlement" as exactly parallel to that between God and his Church - just as the Church would cease to be the Church in the event of its proceeding to grant absolution without God, so a "parlement" acting in like fashion would cease to be a "parlement" and become a "corps revolté". (p.1336; B.870)

(1) In view of the essentially democratic system of the Church which he thus formulates, and of his recognition that it possesses its own inherent power of life, it is surprising that Pascal does not further develop the organic conception in this context along the lines of Althusius's profound and fruitful idea of an ascending series of independently functioning associations, particularly when he adumbrates elsewhere something very closely resembling this. cf. above, p.261. Yet for all the fact that the aim of his doctrine of the "membres pensants" is to relate, under the inspiration of divine grace, the corporate effort of an organic community to a common end, there is a total absence of any form of association intervening between the individual "membres" and the general "corps".

"Deux lois suffisent pour régler toute la République chrétienne, (1) mieux que toutes les lois politiques."
(p.1306; B.484)

"République. - La république chrétienne, et même judaïque, n'a eu que Dieu pour maître, ... Quand ils combattaient, ce n'était que pour Dieu; ils n'espéraient principalement que de Dieu;.." (p.1233; B.611)

The choice of the substantive "république" is particularly significant in this context for, although the expression is clearly figurative, it does serve to underline the importance which he attaches to the fundamental equality of all the members, pope included, of the corporate society of the Church.

(iii) Unity as a criterion of value.

The primacy which Pascal accords to unity, as indispensable for the Church if it is to form a social organism whose members act in view of a common aim and object, has its corollary in a view of schism as the supreme evil in this respect. Thus, despite the fact that the moral teaching of the Jesuit casuists must tend to besmirch the characteristic "sainteté" of the Christian rule of life, yet the respect which they show for the Church's unity entitles them, in Pascal's opinion, to the fraternal affection of their fellow "membres", and radically distinguishes them from the heretics, however saintly the latter may be to all outward appearances:

(1) The 'two laws' alluded to here are plainly the two commandments which Christ, according to Mathew (XXII, 35-40), cited as constituting the basis of "all the law and the prophets".

"...ils sont dans l'unité de l'Eglise, ils sont membres de notre Corps, et ainsi nous avons intérêt à les conserver, au lieu que les hérétiques sont des membres retranchés qui composent un Corps ennemi du nôtre; ce qui met une distance infinie entre eux, parce que le schisme est un si grand mal, que non seulement il est le plus grand des maux, mais qu'il ne peut y avoir aucun bien où il se trouve, ...

....le schisme des hérétiques qui se séparent de la communion de leurs frères, et usurpant ainsi le jugement de Dieu, tombent dans le plus détestable des crimes."
(Cinquième écrit des curés de Paris, p.936-7; G.E.VII, p.368-371)

Schism therefore, the breach of the bond of love and fellowship which should unite the members of the Mystical Body, represents the assertion of self-sufficient individualism, characteristic of man moved by concupiscence, as against the recognition and acceptance by all of complete interdependence, which constitutes the groundwork of the Church as a society. And so vital does Pascal deem this organic unity of the "corps", compacted by the mutual love and service of all the individual "membres", that he denies to the heretics any capacity for good:

"...il est certain, selon tous les Pères, qu'il n'y a aucun bien dans les hérétiques, quelque vertu qui y paraisse, puisqu'ils ont rompu l'unité. ... parmi les hérétiques, nul n'est exempt d'erreur, et tous sont certainement hors de la charité, puisqu'ils sont hors de l'unité." (ibid; G.E.VII, p.371-2)

By setting up unity in this way as the criterion Pascal is in effect saying that those without the Church are incapable of any real good, that their 'virtue' is sham, and this because they are "hors de la charité".⁽¹⁾ Thus to cut oneself off from the Church's stream of communal

(1) "charité" is elsewhere described as "l'âme et la vie des vertus chrétiennes". (5th Provinciale, p.706; G.E.IV, p.303) Saint Augustine in On Christian Doctrine, refers to "charity itself, which holds men together in a knot of unity,.." (Prologue, 6) Later in the same treatise, he writes of the Church that Christ "binds His body, which has many members performing diverse offices, in a bond of unity and charity which is, as it were, its health." (XVI, 15) cf. also Mersch, op.cit., vol.II, p.51 ff.

life is, in his view, not merely to inflict a wound on its unity, but is furthermore to deprive oneself of the sine qua non of right conduct. This relativist outlook is even more marked in the letters to Mlle. de Roannez:

"..hors de l'Eglise il n'y a que malédiction." (3rd, p.509; G.E.VI, p.85)

"Nous savons que toutes les vertus, le martyre, les austérités et toutes les bonnes oeuvres sont inutiles hors de l'Eglise, et de la communion du chef de l'Eglise, qui est le Pape." (6th, p.513; G.E.VI, p.217)

The visible Catholic Church therefore is not simply the exclusive pale of salvation, but is also the sole dispenser of what may be described as the condition of merit with respect to conduct.

A further consequence of thus restricting virtuous actions to the members of the Church, the only true society, is that any possibility of virtue must also be denied to the aeons between Adam and Jesus Christ, which should strictly speaking include even the Jews. Indeed, arguments from unity aside, since human nature apart from grace is so depraved it will be impossible for the heathen to possess genuine virtue, even though they may perform actions which in the Christian would be symptoms of that very quality:

"Les exemples des morts généreuses des Lacédémoniens et autres ne nous touchent guère. Car qu'est-ce que cela nous apporte? Mais l'exemple de la mort des martyres nous touche; car ce sont 'nos membres'. Nous avons un lien commun avec eux: leur résolution peut former la nôtre, non seulement par l'exemple, mais parce qu'elle a peut-être mérité la nôtre. Il n'est rien de cela aux exemples des païens; nous n'avons point de liaison à eux; comme on ne devient pas riche pour voir un étranger qui l'est, mais bien pour voir son père ou son mari qui le soient." (p.1306-7; B.481)

One may question the factual basis in everyday life of this final analogy, but the important point is the absolute cleavage which Pascal sees fixed between these two groups, which form as it were two completely watertight compartments. The relativist attitude which results from such a conception - what would call for admiration and emulation if done by Christians becoming a matter of total indifference when it occurs in the pagan camp - also appeared in his treatment of the heretics. And the sense of the exclusive unity of the Church, which stems from the common root of existence of all its members, is particularly marked in this passage - Pascal considers the solidarity of the 'communio sanctorum' to be such that the social bonds of the Christian stretch beyond the confines of this life to those who have gone before.

This notion of a sharp contrast between pagan and Christian, which underlies the whole of Pascal's thought and produces such a harsh attitude to the 'virtuous pagans', has its roots in the Jansenist tradition. Jansenius himself, in his chapters devoted to the ancient philosophers and the infidels, claims that, according to Saint Augustine, when pagans appear to perform some virtuous act they are in fact committing sins, and categorically affirms that: ".nullum ab hominibus qui carent fide posse fieri opus bonum, sed solum mendacia atque peccata".⁽¹⁾ Since he lacks faith the infidel's acts must proceed according to the dictates of his own will, without the inspiration of divine grace which alone can make them meritorious; and Jansenius therefore concludes that: "Omnia omnino opera

(1) Augustinus, t.II, l.iv, c.1. For Augustine's views in this respect cf. Gilson, L'esprit de la philosophie médiévale, p.335 f.

infidelium, nullo excepto, esse vera peccata, nec esse posse nisi peccata.."(1) This position is duly endorsed by Arnauld in his Seconde apologie pour Monsieur Jansénius:

"...la foi nous apprend deux choses. L'une, que la corruption d'Adam a passé en toute sa race: l'autre, que le seul et unique remède qui la peut guérir, est la foi en ce Nom divin, ...de sorte qu'on ne peut douter que cette corruption ne soit toute entière dans les Payens et les infidèles; puisque c'est en celle que consiste, ou en tout ou en partie, le péché originel, qui vit et qui règne nécessairement dans les infidèles, tant qu'ils demeurent infidèles. D'où il s'ensuit que ...quoiqu'ils fassent, quoiqu'ils entreprennent, quelque résolution même de bien vivre qu'ils puissent prendre, ils retombent toujours dans cette dépravation générale,..."(2)

(iv) Ideal values in the Church: justice and truth.

Since Pascal believes that the Church has a monopoly of the elements of true fellowship, as well as of the springs of true virtue, it is hardly surprising that he should look to it for those values which he asserts to be conspicuously absent from the civil state. In regard to justice, he shows in one fragment from the Pensées how on the secular level this must be aligned with force because, given the peculiar characteristics of the two, it is impossible to reverse the procedure, and "autrement on verrait la

(1) Augustinus, loc.cit., c.3.

(2) Oeuvres, XVII, p.325. Maurice Pellisson, in his article, La sécularisation de la morale au XVIIIe siècle, points out that this harsh attitude to virtuous and illustrious pagans was the rule rather than the exception in moralistic literature in France in the latter part of the 17th century, and cites from Bossuet, Fléchier, Bourdaloue, Massillon and others in support of this view. La révolution française, 1903, p.388-90.

violence d'un côté et la justice de l'autre". The fragment concludes however with the following statement:

"Il n'en est pas de même dans l'Eglise: car il y a une justice véritable, et nulle violence." (p.1338;B.878)

The civil state therefore can never hope to incorporate even a measure of true justice in its laws ⁽¹⁾ or social structure, but, in order to preserve some sort of concord, is obliged to arbitrarily ordain that what is by sheer brute force is just, in the sense that it must be respected. In the Church, on the other hand, the opposite holds good - it is the embodiment of true justice, and hence has no place for violence in its organization. ⁽²⁾

A similar contrast is implied when Pascal maintains that the Christian's happiness in the present life is not entirely an anticipatory one, and proceeds to show in what it consists:

"L'espérance que les Chrétiens ont de posséder un bien infini est mêlée de jouissance effective aussi bien que de crainte; car ce n'est pas comme ceux qui espéreraient un royaume dont ils n'auraient rien, étant sujets; mais ils espèrent la sainteté, l'exemption de l'injustice, et ils en ont quelque chose." (p.1301; B.540)

An interesting question posed by the phraseology of this fragment is how far Pascal intends the second component of the Christian hope to constitute a definition of the first, so that "justice" would be synonymous with

(1) Pascal is a good deal more radical in this regard than Saint Augustine even, for the latter holds that the true basis of civil law is not in mere human convention or expediency, but in the divine eternal law: "... there is no element of justice or righteousness in temporal laws except what has been derived by men from that eternal law." Of Free Will, I,15. "He who draws up temporal laws, if he is a good and wise man, takes eternal life into account, ...He determines for the time being what is to be commanded and forbidden according to the immutable rules of eternal life." Of True Religion, XXXI, 58.

(2) Pascal's consistency on this point is attested by the following cryptic note:"L'Inquisition et la Société, les deux fléaux de la vérité."(p.1073; B.920)

"sainteté".⁽¹⁾ The juxtaposition of the pair of substantives certainly admits of this interpretation, and at all events the syntax shows how closely linked in meaning the two are in his eyes. Such a hope of release from injustice bears with it obvious derogatory implications in regard to the actual conditions of the society to which the expectant belongs. And in Pascal's terms the actual enjoyment here and now, the foretaste as it were, of the true justice and beatitude which he believes awaits him in the hereafter, can only be had by the Christian through his participation in the life of the Church. It is there alone, by means of the grace of which it is the sole medium, that men are able in this life to live with one another in that relationship of true justice synonymous with "charité".⁽²⁾

The fundamental contrast between Church and civil state is further emphasized with respect to the different ends in view of which both strive to maintain peace:

"Comme la paix dans les Etats n'a pour objet que de conserver les biens des peuples en assurance, de même la paix dans l'Eglise n'a pour objet que de conserver en assurance la vérité, qui est son bien, et le trésor où est son coeur."
(p.1338; B.949)

The fragment continues with a comparison of the conditions in Church and state under which it is justifiable to abandon peace for war.⁽³⁾ Since it is legitimate for the state to resort to arms only in the face of an obvious threat to private property, whereas it would be criminal to attempt to keep

(1) cf. from the Pensées: "...sans la faim des choses spirituelles on s'en ennue. Faim de la justice: béatitude huitième." (p.1155; B.264)

(2) cf. also: "...le libérateur, le Saint des saints, amenera la justice éternelle, non la légale, mais l'éternelle." (p.1269; B.692) "...la continuation de la justice des fidèles n'est autre chose que la continuation de l'infusion de la grâce,..." (à Mme.Périer, p.488; G.E.II, p.380)

(3) cf. above, p.319.

peace in the Church if this were detrimental to the interests of truth, Pascal concludes that as far as the Church is concerned in this regard:

"La vérité est donc la première règle et la dernière fin des choses." (ibid.)

It is clear from this comparison that in his view, whereas the civil state is wholly utilitarian in bias, geared to the end of securing the private goods of the individual, the foremost concern of the Church on the other hand, the function which it exists to fulfil, is to guarantee the truth. And this preoccupation of the Church with truth is brought out again in a rather similar context in the Second écrit des curés de Paris. Pascal there sets himself to refute the Jesuit charge, levelled at his colleagues and himself, that they are guilty of disturbing the peace and tranquillity of the Church in hampering the Jesuits in the free propagation of their doctrines:

"...l'Écriture nous enseigne que Jésus-Christ est venu apporter au monde non seulement 'la paix', mais aussi 'l'épée et la division', parce que toutes ces choses sont nécessaires chacune en leur temps pour le bien de la vérité, qui est la dernière fin des fidèles, au lieu que la paix et la guerre n'en sont que les moyens, et ne sont légitimes qu'à proportion de l'avantage qui en revient à la vérité." (p.924; G.E.VII, p.319-20)

Nor does Pascal simply believe that the Church is by its nature orientated to the end of 'conserving the truth' - he even goes so far as to identify the fortunes of truth with those of the Church:

"L'histoire de l'Église doit être proprement appelée l'histoire de la vérité." (p.1328; B.858)

And here again the Church's superiority over any mere civil state, which on Pascal's theory has no place among its objectives for truth but is confined

to a purely material sphere of activity, stems from its divine institution. Thus in the Abrégé de la vie de Jésus-Christ, he interprets Christ's promise to the apostles, that he will be with them until the consummation of time through his grace, authority and spirit, as follows:

"En quoi il promet deux choses, l'une que jamais l'Eglise ne périra...; l'autre que jamais elle ne sera destituée de la connaissance de la vérité." (p.654-5; G.E.XI,p.90)

(v) The dualism implicit in Pascal's estimate of Church and secular society: its inconsistencies

Pascal's emphasis on the Church, with its paramount significance as the depositary and dispenser of the social means of grace, is in a sense the indispensable corollary of his view of original sin. Since his belief in the providential ordering of human affairs leads him to envisage the Fall as the beginning of all secular and profane history, it is necessary for him to set up another order, a society of grace, through which Christ's redemptive sacrifice can be made effective. Thus he holds that:

"La foi chrétienne ne va presque qu'à établir ces deux choses: la corruption de la nature, et la rédemption de Jésus-Christ;..."⁽¹⁾ (p.1176; B.194)

As a result the coming of Jesus Christ represents the turning-point of history in his opinion. For, precisely as men by their origin are in communion with Adam's sin and participate in his death, so those who enter into communion with Christ become partakers of his life and righteousness:

(1) Thus, if men "ne servent pas à montrer la vérité de la rédemption par la sainteté de leurs moeurs, ils servent au moins admirablement à montrer la corruption de la nature", by their indifference to their own destiny.(ibid).

"...Jésus-Christ par sa nouvelle vie a communiqué la vie à tous ceux qui sont nés en lui, comme Adam avait communiqué la mort à tous ceux qui étaient nés de lui."⁽¹⁾
 (Abrégé de la vie de Jésus-Christ, p.625-6; G.E.XI, p.7)

And this corporate life in Christ is, in Pascal's view, a power entering into history and unfolding there in social form, just as sin transmitted by descent from Adam had done. Whence the origin of the Church:

"Alors Jésus-Christ vient dire aux hommes ...qu'il vient pour détruire leurs passions, et pour leur donner sa grâce, afin de faire d'eux tous une Eglise sainte,..."⁽²⁾
 (p.1295; B.783)

From this time forth therefore history is ambivalent - the direction of secular history is absolutely determined, since man, without the grace which operates a change in his moral climate, has an ineluctable propensity toward evil by reason of original sin and the concupiscence which follows in its train. For Pascal the problem of secular progress simply does not arise. As he sees it secular history is essentially unprogressive: a tenet which he accepts quite unreservedly, and from which it is an easy step to deduce that no form of civil society can be better or worse than any other.⁽³⁾ The civil state has its own course separately from any contact with grace, which is mediated through the instrument of the corporate society of the Church. Secular history therefore is a record

(1) For Saint Augustine's similar view of all history as a great drama with its supreme crises in the Fall and the Redemption, which have set moving the course of two opposing societies, cf. Mersch, op.cit., vol.II p.66-9

(2) This ideally all-embracing character of the Church, as the society of the redeemed, is further emphasized in this fragment: "...qu'il vient ramener dans cette Eglise les païens et les Juifs;..." (ibid), and also in the Premier écrit sur la grâce, when Pascal alleges that even to those who reject the sacrament of baptism as administered by its priests, which confers membership of the Christian society, the Church does not close its doors, but "...en imitant son chef, elle tend les bras aux uns et aux autres pour les appeler tous et les embrasser ensuite ensemble pour former une heureuse union." (p.955; G.E.XI, p.140)

(3) This conclusion undoubtedly contributes to the attitude of unmitigated opposition to any form of political change noted above, p.311ff.

of corruption and falling-away rather than of progress, for it is only through the process of redemption, worked by the action of the Holy Spirit in the body of the Church, by means of which human nature is released from its transmitted bias toward sin and restored to spiritual freedom, that the marks of any true progress can be detected in man.

Moreover, the extent to which Pascal regards the Redemption as the one central event in history is evident from the fact that it is not as a superior 'gnosis', but above all as a scheme of redemption, that he commends Christianity:

"...la religion chrétienne consiste proprement au mystère du Rédempteur, qui unissant en lui les deux natures, humaine et divine, a retiré les hommes de la corruption du péché pour les réconcilier à Dieu en sa divine personne."⁽¹⁾
(p.1280; B.556)

And for Pascal the supreme value of the Church as an institution derives from the fact that, as the body of Christ, it is the vehicle of this redemption, uniting regenerate humanity as the 'members' of its organic society under the law of charity.

However, such an abrupt contrast of the opposing secular and sacred orders leads him to the rather paradoxical position where a large number of persons must be simultaneously members of both, amphibious beings leading a double life in two worlds and serving both God and Mammon. The passage in the fourteenth Provinciale, where he details the obligations of the "enfants de l'Eglise" in regard to the civil authorities,⁽²⁾ attests his recognition of the necessity, as far as the Christian is concerned, of such a two-fold membership. Since he affirms in this context and elsewhere

(1) cf. also p.1292; B.560 / p.1311; B.550, and the Entretien avec M. de Saci, p.571-2; G.E.IV, p.53-4.

(2) cf. above, p.301.

that the state is of divine institution, and that its officers have authority by divine appointment for the maintenance of civil order, it follows that in his terms the Christian at any rate is under two authorities, both divine⁽¹⁾ yet wholly distinct in sphere. For Pascal exhibits no tendency to endorse the conception of a 'Christian State', which assumes that Church and state comprise the same people in different capacities.⁽²⁾

One can only conclude that he believes it possible somehow for the members of the two societies to meet and mingle physically without establishing any form of spiritual contact, since he sees no prospect of the Christian inspiration permeating the secular consciousness and so implementing a process of gradual improvement there. The Church in his view is most definitely a 'kingdom not of this world', and must be jealously guarded lest it become tainted with the spirit of the world. Nor is there any question of its members fulfilling their Biblical role, and acting as the 'leaven of the lump' or as the 'salt of the earth'. They apparently exert no influence by their personal action on their social environment, and the superior qualities which are alleged to shine forth in their lives ("Nul n'est heureux comme un vrai chrétien, ni raisonnable, ni vertueux, ni aimable". p.1301; B.541) cannot be integrated or absorbed into the fabric of the society to which they belong, thus raising it a little nearer to "sainteté".

This radical disparity between the Church and all secular institutions receives its starkest treatment in the short work entitled

(1) The fact that the civil authority is ordained, or at least sanctioned, as a remedy for sin, and the violation of the natural order at the Fall, does not lessen its divine character.

(2) Thus the theory of divine right is not for Pascal, as for other political thinkers of his age, the expression of the idea that the civil state ought to be the commonwealth of Christians.

Comparaison des chrétiens des premiers temps avec ceux d'aujourd'hui. Pascal

there claims that in the early days of the Church it was recognized, from the fact that an aspirant member was called upon to turn his back on the world before he could be received into the fold of the Church, that there existed:

"...une distinction essentielle du monde avec l'Eglise. On les considérait comme deux contraires, comme deux ennemis irréconciliables, .. En sorte que de ces deux partis contraires on quittait l'un pour entrer dans l'autre; ...et ainsi on concevait une différence épouvantable entre l'un et l'autre,.." (p.556; G.E.X, p.412)

Since the context shows that this represents the state of things to which Pascal would hark back it is clear that for him the Church has no practical aim; and his sharp separation of the sphere of Christianity from that of secular society amounts indeed to professing a religion which he has no intention of translating directly into practice. In this he exhibits something of a "Reformation-tinged recoil"⁽¹⁾ from the great Mediaeval tradition, "according to which a complete separation between things secular and things spiritual was unthinkable".⁽²⁾ For the Mediaeval Church had asserted the whole compass of human interests to be the province of the religion, and had accordingly set itself to interpenetrate society, law and even politics with Christianity. Hence the contrast between Thomas Aquinas's conception, for example, of the end of any well-governed community as the virtuous life, which leads in turn to the fruition of God,⁽³⁾ and Pascal's notion of social and political conduct forming a separate and self-

(1) The expression is used by A.L.Smith, Church and State in the Middle Ages, (Oxford, 1913), p.137.

(2) T.M. Parker, Christianity and the State in the Light of History, (London, 1955), p.152.

(3) De Regimine Principum, I,14. cf. Poole, op.cit., p.211.

contained compartment of human affairs, the sphere of the powers of this world. Although he regards the activities of the members of the Church as ordered to a spiritual purpose, he has no conception of this spiritual purpose giving an 'end' to political and social effort: on the contrary he interprets the distinctiveness of the Church as an aloofness from secular affairs. Thus what has been said of Machiavelli, that he "detached the State from the Church, making it an organization of force for the attainment of merely earthly ends", ⁽¹⁾ applies with singular aptness to the overall effect of Pascal's pronouncements on Church and state,

This social dualism is even more radical than that of Pascal's professed master in this respect, Saint Augustine. In the fourteenth Provinciale he appeals to the latter's authority in support of his hard and fast distinction:

"..des enfants de l'Évangile ...des ennemis de l'Évangile. On ne peut être que d'un parti ou de l'autre, il n'y a point de milieu. ..Ces deux genres d'hommes partagent tous les hommes. Il y a deux peuples et deux mondes répandus sur toute la terre, selon saint Augustin: le monde des enfants de Dieu, qui forme un corps dont Jésus-Christ est le chef et le roi; et le monde ennemi de Dieu dont le diable est le chef et le roi. ..l'Église, qui est l'empire de Jésus-Christ ...le monde, qui est le royaume du diable.." (p.830; G.E.VI, p.152-3)

Now it is true that in The City of God Saint Augustine does regard the two "civitates" as representing diametrically opposite principles, the one founded on the love of God "usque ad contemptum sui", the other on the love of self "usque ad contemptum Dei"; ⁽²⁾ and that he does argue that true

(1) J.W. Allen, A History of Political Thought in the Sixteenth Century, (London, 1928), p.484.

(2) op.cit., XIV, XXVIII. J.N.Figgis has however pointed out the error of indiscriminately applying all that Saint Augustine says on the subject of the opposition between the "civitas Dei" and the "civitas terrena" to that between Church and civil state. The Political Aspects of S. Augustine's 'City of God', (London 1923), p.51 ff.

virtue cannot exist apart from true religion, so that the virtues of the heathen in fact constitute 'splendid vices'.⁽¹⁾ Yet implicit in this dualism is a note of social optimism absent from Pascal's, for the disparagement to which it leads, of all that properly falls within the purview of secular government, only applies so long as this is not brought into due subordination to the spiritual realm. Hence Saint Augustine's insistence that the "civitas Dei" supplies the best conditions for earthly prosperity, and his claims as to the effects of the love of God and of neighbour in teaching every kind of civic duty.⁽²⁾ In Pascal's view however the gulf between secular and sacred is too wide to permit even this hierarchical relation to operate. Besides, not only does Saint Augustine allow that the state possesses a relative justice or righteousness of its own⁽³⁾ - even a robber band must have that - but the peace and order at which the civil state aims are acknowledged and used by the heavenly city in its earthly pilgrimage.⁽⁴⁾ And although the pessimistic view of all worldly activities is plain enough in The City of God, it is counteracted, to some extent at least, by the genuine appreciation which Saint Augustine also shows there of the positive goods of human life and of nature.⁽⁵⁾ Unlike Pascal he does not believe that relative degrees of moral goodness and badness on the secular level appear on a par when looked at from the otherworldly

(1) *ibid.*, XIX, XXI, XXIV, XXV; XXI, XXV.

(2) cf. De Moribus Ecclesiae, I, xxx, and Ad Marcellinum, 138, c.15.

(3) The City of God, XIX, XV.

(4) *ibid.*, XIX, XVII. "The celestial society while it is here on earth, ... being unconcerned by the different temporal laws that are made; yet not breaking but observing their diversity in divers nations, so long as they tend unto the preservation of earthly peace, ...the heavenly city observes and respects this temporal peace here on earth, and the coherence of men's wills in honest morality, ...yea, and so far desires it, making use of it for the attainment of the peace celestial;..."

(5) *ibid.*, XXII, XXII, XXIV.

standpoint.⁽¹⁾

With respect to this rigid dualism however, Pascal's thought exhibits certain inconsistencies, which seem to indicate that he does not altogether discard Christian principles in formulating his idea of political society. Thus in the fourteenth Provinciale he alleges that the complex juridical procedure, which it is necessary to go through in order to secure the conviction of a person, has been instituted for the express purpose of trying to assimilate as far as possible the civil law with that contained in the Gospels:

".. de peur que la pratique extérieure de la justice ne fût contraire aux sentiments intérieurs que des Chrétiens doivent avoir." (p.828; G.E.VI, p.149)

Yet is this not an illustration of the very process which Pascal's absolute dualism rules out - the spilling-over as it were of the Christian spirit from its own order into the purely secular sphere, where it exercises a formative influence on the existing structures of the social order? And there is no hint here that, as in the Pensées, the result of such an attempt to carry the Christian spirit into the workings of secular justice represents merely a thin veneer, a "fausse image"; hiding the "vilain fond de l'homme", which remains underneath unchanged.

(1) Such is the force of passages like the following: "...it is true that the fire of hell shall be more forcible against some than against others, according to the diversity of their deserts, whether it be adapted to the quality of their merits, or remain one fire unto all, and yet be not felt alike by all." op.cit., XXI, XVI. "...in the judgement of God not even this fact will be without its influence, - that one man will have sinned more, or sinned less, than another, even when both are involved in the condemnation of the same ungodliness." On the Spirit and the Letter, 48.

Another example of the same inconsistency occurs earlier, in the eighth Provinciale where, objecting to Escobar's dictum that it is permissible to steal when in 'grave necessity', on the grounds that it leaves the door wide open for a huge increase in larceny, Pascal reproaches the Jesuits pointing out that they have a much more real duty to repress this sort of thing than the appropriate civil authorities:

"...vous qui devez maintenir parmi les hommes non seulement la justice, mais encore la charité, qui est détruite par ce principe." (p.746; G.E.V, p.148)

The expression "parmi les hommes" has all the appearance in this context of being a generic term, referring in a comprehensive way to the members of society without any notion of discrimination; and it certainly cannot be intended as referring exclusively to the members of the Church, since ex hypothesi they would be the least likely to have any inclination to commit the offences in question. Moreover, Pascal uses the term "charité" here, not in its specifically theological sense of love the product of supernatural grace, but rather as signifying the purely civil respect for property and person which forms the groundwork of the fabric of any organized society. This is evident when he goes on to ask:

"Car enfin n'est-ce pas la violer, et faire tort à son prochain, que de lui faire perdre son bien pour en profiter soi-même?" (ibid)

Implicit in this recognition that the clergy therefore has a duty of censorship over lay morals is a trace of the old Mediaeval doctrine of tutelage of the state by the Church. And in this way Pascal once again accords to the Church a positive role in society, which must involve some commerce between the two orders elsewhere asserted to be radically disparate.

The Quatrième écrit sur la grâce provides yet a further, and slightly different, instance of this inconsistency on Pascal's part in regard to his own dualistic outlook. He answers the objection, that it is futile for the Church to condemn errors never yet embraced by any heretics, by drawing the following significant analogies:

".. par quel étrange renversement cette vigilance si salubre qui est louable aux particuliers, aux familles, aux Etats et à toutes sortes de gouvernements, quoiqu'ils soient sujets à périr, deviendra-t-elle ridicule à l'Eglise dont les soins doivent être tout autrement étendus, par l'assurance qu'elle a de son éternelle durée?" (p.1017; G.E.XI, p.270)

Pascal is here concerned to proclaim, in the most unequivocal terms, that what is good for the civil state in this respect is good also for the Church, thus implying that there is some measure at least of similarity between them as institutions.

CONCLUSION

The three orders.

Conclusion: the three orders

(i) The evolution of the conception as a scale of values

The notion of different orders, which underlies Pascal's valuations of all purely natural and human institutions and achievements, forms a sort of leit-motif running through nearly all his writings, so that its evolution can be traced from what appears to be the mathematical source up to the most complete expression in the Pensées.

The original definition of the term "ordre", in the sense of category or class, occurs in a subsidiary treatise appended to the Traité du triangle arithmétique, dating from the end of 1654, and entitled Usage du triangle arithmétique pour les ordres numériques. Pascal there alleges that arithmeticians have already treated of the different progressions, powers and degrees of numbers, but that those with which he is concerned have suffered unwarranted neglect. He continues:

"...et même ils n'ont pas de nom; ainsi j'ai été obligé de leur en donner; et parce que ceux de progression, de degré et de puissance sont déjà employés, je me sers de celui d'ordres.

J'appelle donc 'nombres du premier ordre' les simples unités:

1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, etc.

J'appelle 'nombres du second ordre' les naturels qui se forment par l'addition des unités:

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.

J'appelle 'nombres du troisième ordre' ceux qui se forment par l'addition des naturels, qu'on appelle triangulaires:

1, 3, 6, 10, etc.

C'est-à-dire, que le second des triangulaires, savoir 3, égale la somme des deux premiers naturels, qui sont 1, 2; ainsi le troisième triangulaire 6 égale la somme des trois premiers naturels, 1, 2, 3, etc." (p.108-9; G.E.III, p.466)

This nomenclature, applied by Pascal to a particular type of numerical series arrived at by means of his arithmetical triangle, which he claims elsewhere "n'est autre chose que la table des ordres numériques",⁽¹⁾ is therefore an entirely formal definition signifying merely particular arrangements of numbers that enjoy certain properties in common. It is noteworthy however, that the term "ordre" as it is used in the above context, although it has the sense of class or category, does not carry with it the further notion of heterogeneity, since numbers belonging to the second and third orders are formed simply by addition of those contained in the first and second orders respectively,

Closely allied to the term "ordre" in Pascal's usage, and also first occurring in his vocabulary in a mathematical context, is the word "grandeur". The standard translation by Drion of the general rule with which he concludes the short Potestatum numericarum summa, reproduced by Lahure, Brunschvicg and Chevalier in their editions of Pascal's works, runs as follows:

"...on n'augmente pas une grandeur continue lorsqu'on lui ajoute, en tel nombre que l'on voudra, des grandeurs d'un ordre d'infinitude inférieur. Ainsi les points n'ajoutent rien aux lignes, les lignes aux surfaces, les surfaces aux solides; ou - pour parler en nombres comme il convient dans un traité arithmétique - les racines ne comptent pas par rapport aux carrés, les carrés par rapport aux cubes En sorte qu'on doit négliger, comme nulles, les quantités d'ordre inférieur." (2)

In Pascal's original Latin the principle is enunciated in these terms: "in continua quantitate, quotlibet quantitates cuiusvis generis quantitati

(1) p.130; G.E.III, p. 504.

(2) Translation in notes, p.1432; G.E.III, p.367.

superioris generis additas nihil ei superaddere."⁽¹⁾ The translator therefore, and presumably those who reproduce his version, appear to have understood Pascal as implying by the single Latin word "genus" (the normal rendering of which in French would be "genre" or "ordre") the phrase "ordre d'infinitude", although neither the actual text nor the context require such a translation.⁽²⁾ Clearly the commentators have tacitly assumed that Pascal is here referring to the principle, developed at length in the De l'esprit géométrique, that a particular mathematical concept even when raised to infinite degree is not thereby transformed into a different one.⁽³⁾

At all events the meaning of the term "grandeur" emerges very plainly from the passage under consideration, as a component of a given order. The idea of heterogeneity is also emphasized by Pascal's assertion that the magnitudes of lower orders should be disregarded, as if non-existent, when any particular order is in question. And since the relevant portion of the Latin text contains the significant words "inferiores gradus, nullius valoris existentes", it is evident that he not only considers the various orders to be generically different one from another, but furthermore that he regards their value as wholly dependent

(1) p.171; G.E.III, p.366

(2) F.Strowski however, in his Pascal et son temps, (Paris, 1907), vol.II, p.288, translates the Latin word by the single French word "ordre", as does also R. Vernaux in his article La doctrine pascalienne des trois ordres, Revue de philosophie, 1938, p.314.

(3)cf. p.587 ff.; G.E.IX, p.261 ff. As Brunschvicg (ed.min.,p.179,n.) and Chevalier (Pascal,p.182-4) have noted, Pascal there formulates, by implication at least, one of the basic principles of infinitesimal calculus, according to which there are different orders of infinitude between whose components no comparison is possible. However, in the absence of any reference to the infinite in the passage under discussion, the transfer to that context of the notion from the De l'esprit géométrique seems to me largely a matter of surmise.

upon whether the particular order is considered in itself or in relation to a higher one.

The term "grandeur" appears again in the De l'esprit géométrique, where Pascal, in support of his contention that the difference between the number one and any other number is merely quantitative and not qualitative, cites the following Euclidean definition of 'homogeneous magnitudes':

"Les grandeurs, dit-il, sont dites être de même genre, lorsque l'une étant plusieurs fois multipliée peut arriver à surpasser l'autre." (p.589; G.E.IX, p.265) (1)

An illustration of concepts belonging to heterogeneous 'magnitudes' is provided by the difference between zero and positive numbers:

"...car le zéro n'est pas du même genre que les nombres, parce qu'étant multiplié, il ne peut les surpasser:... Et on trouvera un pareil rapport entre le repos et le mouvement, et entre un instant et le temps; car toutes ces choses sont hétérogènes à leurs grandeurs, parce qu'étant infiniment multipliées, elles ne peuvent jamais faire que des indivisibles d'étendue,..." (p.590; G.E.IX p.267-8)

Thus the definition proposed earlier of "grandeur", as a component of a given order, is confirmed in these extracts, where the word "genre" is clearly used in a sense identical with that of "ordre" in previous passages. The "grandeurs" included within the scope of any one order are homogeneous; but in relation to those belonging to a different order they are, like the orders which they compose, rigorously heterogeneous.

(1) This definition serves the purpose of clarifying Pascal's previous assertion regarding: "...les noms d'unité, binaire, quaternaire, dizaine, centaine, différents par nos fantaisies, quoique ces choses soient en effet de même genre par leur nature invariable, et qu'elles soient toutes proportionnées entre elles et ne diffèrent que du plus ou du moins..." (p.588; G.E.IX, p.264) There is a striking resemblance in idea between these definitions of heterogeneous orders made up of homogeneous components and the second definition of the first part of Spinoza's Ethics: "That thing is said to be finite in its kind ('in suo genere finita') which can be limited by another thing of the same kind. E.g. a body is said to be finite because we can conceive another larger

The earliest appearance in the non-mathematical writings of the conception of things belonging to different watertight compartments, as it were, is in the Préface pour le traité du vide, although the actual terms "ordre" and "grandeur" are not used there in the sense detailed above. In the course of drawing his celebrated distinction between those fields where rational and experimental enquiry is essential if knowledge is to advance, and those on the other hand where the voice of authority must be maintained supreme, Pascal states:

"Mais où cette autorité a la principale force, c'est dans la théologie, parce qu'elle y est inséparable de la vérité, et que nous ne la connaissons que par elle: ...parce que ses principes sont au-dessus de la nature et de la raison, et que, l'esprit de l'homme étant trop faible pour y arriver par ses propres efforts, il ne peut parvenir à ces hautes intelligences s'il n'y est porté par une force toute-puissante et surnaturelle." (p.530; G.E.II, p.131)

Then after describing how the current trend is precisely the reverse of what he is recommending - to observe rigorously the authority of the 'ancients' in scientific matters, and to give free rein to rational discussion and innovation in theology - he continues:

"Je laisse aux personnes judicieuses à remarquer l'importance de cet abus qui pervertit l'ordre des sciences avec tant d'injustice, et je crois qu'il y en aura peu qui ne souhaitent que cette liberté s'applique à d'autres matières, puisque les inventions nouvelles sont infailliblement des erreurs dans les matières que l'on profane impunément; et qu'elles sont absolument nécessaires pour la perfection de tant d'objets incomparablement plus bas, que toutefois on n'oserait toucher." (p.531; G.E.II, p.133-4)

(cont. from p.359) than it. Thus a thought is limited by another thought. But a body cannot be limited by a thought, nor a thought by a body." Everyman ed., p.1.

It is possible to see in germ in the first of these two passages the three orders of the definitive fragment from the Pensées⁽¹⁾ - "nature"; "raison"; "principes de théologie" - and furthermore Pascal ranges them in an ascending scale, for he explicitly affirms that the third category is superior to ("au-dessus") the two others. In fact it is absolutely transcendent, since there can be no natural progression to it by mind from the level of "raison": the mind requires to be elevated to it by a force outside itself which must be supernatural. And the judgement contained in the second extract not only further stresses the heterogeneity of the different orders, as they may be termed, but also reintroduces the element of rank. Those fields where fresh discoveries and new thought are indispensable if they are to be brought to 'perfection', ("toutes les sciences qui sont soumises à l'expérience et au raisonnement") are adjudged 'incomparably inferior to' theology.

A point of incidental interest is that the "ordre des sciences", which Pascal claims is 'perverted' by the abuses he attacks, represents the standard Jansenist conception and not that current in the Schools. Indeed Pascal is doing little more here than reaffirm the sharp break-away from the traditional Scholastic view of the nature and scope of theology and philosophy initiated by Jansenius himself in the Augustinus.⁽²⁾

(1)cf. below p.369f.

(2) cf. Augustinus, t.II,"Liber Prooemialis: De ratione et auctoritate in rebus theologicis. cap.IV, Discrimen inter Philosophiam ac Theologiam. Illi servit ratio, huic memoria:...Sic igitur, quemadmodum intellectus Philosophiae suscipiendae propria facultas est, ita memoria Theologiae. Ille quippe intellecta principia penetrando Philosophum facit; haec ea, quae sibi scripto aut praedicatione tradita sunt, recordando, Theologum Christianum". cf. also A. Gazier, Blaise Pascal et Antoine Escobar, (Paris, 1912), p.51. Yet it should also be noted that Thomas Aquinas, although he believes that reason and faith cannot be inconsistent, nonetheless envisages them as dealing with radically different spheres, and lays it down that: "impossibile est quod de
cont. p.362

In a letter to Queen Christina of Sweden, in reply to a request for one of his arithmetical machines, Pascal sets up a very significant contrast between physical domination and intellectual prowess:

"Les mêmes degrés se rencontrent entre les génies qu'entre les conditions; et le pouvoir des rois sur les sujets n'est, ce me semble, qu'une image du pouvoir des esprits sur les esprits qui leur sont inférieurs, sur lesquels ils exercent le droit de persuader, qui est parmi eux ce que le droit de commander est dans le gouvernement politique. Ce second empire me paraît même d'un ordre d'autant plus élevé, que les esprits sont d'un ordre plus élevé que les corps, et d'autant plus équitable, qu'il ne peut être départi et conservé que par le mérite, au lieu que l'autre peut l'être par la naissance ou par la fortune. Il faut donc avouer que chacun de ces empires est grand en soi;..."
(p.503; G.E.III, p.30-1)

Although the "droit de persuader" exercised by "esprits" is depicted here as equivalent in its appropriate sphere to the "droit de commander" exercised by "rois", the notion of rank is also present, for, since the dominion of monarchs over their subjects is merely an image of the eminence of mind over mind, it must on that account alone be held inferior. Moreover, Pascal explicitly asserts that the latter "empire", as he puts it, is of a correspondingly more elevated order as minds belong to a higher order than bodies. And a further, and very radical, ground for this superiority is alleged to lie in the fact that the empire of mind over mind is more equitable than temporal sovereignty, since it is dependent upon merit, whereas accidents of birth or fortune determine the latter. Hence, when allowances have been made for the circumstances of the letter, it must be recognized that it provides valuable indication of the development of the

(cont. from p.361) eodem sit fides et scientia." Philosophy relies on proofs which are exclusively rational, while theology depends always on authority. Qu. disp. de Veritate, XIV, art.9.

conception of various orders of being, for, despite the fact that no mention is made of their heterogeneous character, the orders of bodies and of minds are quite clearly in evidence, and the term "degré" appears in place of "grandeur" to denote the component of a given order.

Despite the break in chronological sequence which it will involve, it is convenient here, from a subject-matter point of view, to consider the Trois discours sur la condition des grands, in so far as they bear on the present discussion. In the second Discours the following important statements are made:

"Il y a dans le monde deux sortes de grandeurs; car il y a des grandeurs d'établissement, et des grandeurs naturelles. Les grandeurs d'établissement dépendent de la volonté des hommes, ...Les dignités et la noblesse sont de ce genre. ..

Les grandeurs naturelles sont celles qui sont indépendantes de la fantaisie des hommes, parce qu'elles consistent dans des qualités réelles et effectives de l'âme ou du corps, ...

Nous devons quelque chose à l'une et à l'autre de ces grandeurs; mais comme elles sont d'une nature différente, nous leur devons aussi différents respects.

Aux grandeurs d'établissement, nous leur devons des respects d'établissement, c'est-à-dire certaines cérémonies extérieures qui doivent être néanmoins accompagnées, ...d'une reconnaissance intérieure de la justice de cet ordre, ...

Mais pour les respects naturels qui consistent dans l'estime, nous ne les devons qu'aux grandeurs naturelles; et nous devons au contraire le mépris et l'aversion aux qualités contraires à ces grandeurs naturelles." (p.618-9; G.E. IX, p.369-70)

The term "grandeur" appears here for the first time outside a purely mathematical context; but it is clear that in this extract, despite a shift of emphasis, the definition of it proposed earlier, as a component of a

given order, still applies. Although Pascal refers only cursorily to the latter term, yet this single usage, together with the fact that the words "nature", in the phrase "mais comme elles les grandeurs sont d'une nature différente", and "genre" are used in an identical sense, suffices to make the meaning definite. But these "grandeurs" do not merely belong to different orders: the fact that one is called upon to pay certain purely formal respects to "grandeurs d'établissement", whereas "grandeurs naturelles" demand esteem, and that it is quite legitimate, indeed in some cases one's duty, to despise a person of noble rank who does not possess any of the "grandeurs naturelles", indicates that in the scale of values the order of "grandeurs naturelles" occupies a considerably higher place than that of "grandeurs d'établissement".

The similarity between the two orders of "grandeurs" described in the above passage and the two "empires" outlined in the letter to the Queen of Sweden is very marked, and when it is recalled what constitutes the basis of monarchical power in Pascal's eyes,⁽¹⁾ it becomes apparent that the "pouvoir des rois" referred to in the latter context is merely an example of a "grandeur d'établissement", dependent on the will of men.

Since these Discours were delivered, according to Nicole, as late as the autumn of 1660 it is not surprising to find reference made in them to the supernatural order of charity. In the third section, having contrasted the condition of his aristocratic pupil as a "roi de concupiscence" with that of God as a "roi de charité", and having pointed out to him the obligations which his rank entails, Pascal concludes with the following exhortation:

(1) cf. above, p.272 + 308, and "La puissance des rois est fondée sur la raison et sur la folie du peuple, et bien plus sur la folie." Pensées, p.1163; B.330.

"Ce que je vous dis ne va pas bien loin; et si vous en demeurez là, vous ne laisserez pas de vous perdre;...Il faut mépriser la concupiscence et son royaume, et aspirer à ce royaume de charité où tous les sujets ne respirent que la charité, et ne désirent que les biens de la charité." (p.620-1; G.E.IX, p.372-3)

Consequently the duke, even if he should succeed in combining the qualities entitling him to "respect naturel" with his "grandeur d'établissement", thus becoming both "duc et honnête homme", and avoiding that "bassesse d'esprit" which deserves "mépris intérieur", does not thereby come any nearer to attaining the supernatural "royaume de charité". These Discours contain therefore in a reasonably complete form the doctrine of the three orders as it is set out in the Pensées, the chief divergence consisting in the "grandeurs d'établissement" which by no means completely exhaust the "ordre des corps", while the "grandeurs naturelles" include some elements which in the Pensées are ascribed to the "ordre des corps" rather than to the "ordre des esprits".

In strict chronological sequence the next work which should be considered after the letter to Queen Christina is the Entretien avec M.de Saci. Although no explicit mention is made there of different orders of being, a notable assertion occurs as to the absolute discontinuity of nature and grace. The error of Epictetus and Montaigne is to attribute respectively the greatness and weakness observable in man's behaviour to his own nature, whereas:

"...la foi nous apprend à les mettre en des sujets différents: tout ce qu'il y a d'infirme appartenant à la nature, tout ce qu'il y a de puissant appartenant à la grâce." (p.572; G.E. IV, p.54)

Pascal understands by the word "nature" here man's native capacity considered in itself, quite apart from any divine assistance, so that nature may therefore be regarded as subsuming both "corps" and "esprit", forming a purely human order which stands in sharp contrast to the supernatural order of grace. For, according to Pascal, all which has value in human life and achievement, all which is intrinsically good in human motive and aspiration, stems from the supernatural, while all which tends to the corruption and debasement of this proceeds from nature. Natural capacity is thus limited to the potentiality for evil, the sole outcome of its activity being to impair the few remaining noble sparks in man, whereas grace on the other hand is the sole effective source of good.

The seventh letter to Mlle de Roannez contains a sketchy outline of the notion which was to develop into the doctrine of the three orders, as well as a pointed statement as to their relative value:

"..ce ne sont ni les austérités du corps ni les agitations de l'esprit, mais les bons mouvements du coeur qui méritent, et qui soutiennent les peines du corps et de l'esprit."
(p.515; G.E.VI, p.219)

The definitive fragment from the Pensées appears again here in germ - "corps"; "esprit"; "charité" - for that Pascal regards the "bons mouvements du coeur" as the product of divine grace, and hence as properly belonging to the supernatural order, is attested both by the present context and by further similar usages of the expression.⁽¹⁾ The absolute discontinuity

(1) cf. in particular the sixth strophe of the Prière pour le bon usage des maladies: "Achevez, ô mon Dieu, les bons mouvements que vous me donnez. Soyez-en la fin comme vous en êtes le principe. Couronnez vos propres dons; ...tous les mouvements naturels de mon coeur, se portant vers les créatures ou vers moi-même, ne peuvent que vous irriter. Je vous rends donc grâces, mon Dieu, des bons mouvements que vous me donnez,..." (p.609; G.E.IX, p.329-30)

of the human and the divine is brought out clearly in this short extract by the insistence that no amount of physical asceticism or intellectual effort by itself is capable of achieving any real good - it requires to be sustained, nourished and raised to a higher plane by divine grace. Once again the assignment of value is an entirely relative affair, since, by using the verb "mériter" to qualify the "bons mouvements du coeur" alone, Pascal ascribes all worth to them, although the actual context implies that they may in turn project value, as it were, on to the "austérités du corps" and the "agitations de l'esprit". In other words the two latter only have no worth when considered in themselves, apart from the supernatural element, which is in effect their sine qua non of value.

At the commencement of the second part of the De l'esprit géométrique, where Pascal outlines the rules for what he designates the Art de persuader, a sharp distinction is drawn between "vérités divines" and "vérités de notre portée", the second group alone constituting the subject-matter of Pascal's 'art':

"Je ne parle pas ici des vérités divines, que je n'aurais garde de faire tomber sous l'art de persuader, car elles sont infiniment au-dessus de la nature: Dieu seul peut les mettre dans l'âme, et par la manière qu'il lui plaît. Je sais qu'il a voulu qu'elles entrent du coeur dans l'esprit, et non pas de l'esprit dans le coeur,...

En quoi il paraît que Dieu a établi cet ordre surnaturel, et tout contraire à l'ordre qui devait être naturel aux hommes dans les choses naturelles." (p.592-3; G.E.IX, p.271-2)

The element of transcendence is very much in evidence here, and Pascal for the first time makes use of the intensive "infiniment" in what is plainly an attempt to convey a more precise notion of the absolute disparity of the

natural and supernatural. However, the term "ordre" in the second paragraph, used of the supernatural order instituted by God completely contrary to that which should be natural for man, has the sense not so much of category or class as of method - it signifies the means whereby divine truths are borne in on the human soul.

Pascal's Prière pour le bon usage des maladies dates, according to Mme. Périer,⁽¹⁾ from the last four years of his life, and although the actual terms "ordre" and "grandeur" do not occur in it, there is a striking resemblance in phraseology between the passage which follows and the fragment from the Pensées describing the three orders. Recognizing that his heart has become so hardened that nothing, apart from "une assistance extraordinaire de grâce divine", will suffice to effect even the first beginnings of his conversion, he directs his appeal to God:

"C'est pourquoi, mon Dieu, je m'adresse à vous, Dieu tout - puissant, pour vous demander un don que toutes les créatures ensemble ne peuvent m'accorder. Je n'aurais pas la hardiesse de vous adresser mes cris, si quelque autre pouvait les exaucer. Mais, mon Dieu, comme la conversion de mon coeur, que je vous demande, est un ouvrage qui passe tous les efforts de la nature, je ne puis m'adresser qu'à l'auteur et au maître tout-puissant de la nature et de mon coeur." (p.607-8; G.E.IX, p.327)

This confrontation of nature and grace, of the human and the divine, reveals the utter discontinuity between the two, in addition to emphasizing the worthlessness of the former when contrasted with the power for good inherent in the latter. The two phrases "un don que toutes les créatures ensemble ne peuvent m'accorder", and "un ouvrage qui passe tous les efforts de la

(1) Vie, p.20; G.E.I, p.83.

nature", provide excellent illustrations of "choses hétérogènes à leurs grandeurs", since no amount of effort on the part of individuals belonging to the purely natural order will suffice to effect an operation which requires supernatural initiative. ⁽¹⁾ Moreover, these two phrases bear a striking resemblance to the expressions used in the Pensées to indicate the qualitative difference between the various orders there.

It is usual with respect to the conception of different orders of being to cite only one passage from the Pensées, although there are in fact two separate fragments which bear upon the notion. Since the less well-known and shorter fragment is also more sketchy in outline it can probably be taken as representing a slightly earlier stage in the evolution of the idea in Pascal's mind. However, since it is for the same reason rather difficult to interpret in some places without seeking clarification from the better-known passage, it will be more convenient to quote and analyse this one first:

"La distance infinie des corps aux esprits figure la distance infiniment plus infinie des esprits à la charité; car elle est surnaturelle.

Tout l'éclat des grandeurs n'a point de lustre pour les gens qui sont dans les recherches de l'esprit.

La grandeur des gens d'esprit est invisible aux rois, aux riches, aux capitaines, à tous ces grands de chair.

La grandeur de la sagesse, qui n'est nulle sinon de Dieu, est invisible aux charnels et aux gens d'esprit. Ce sont trois ordres différents de genre.

Les grands génies ont leur empire, leur éclat, leur grandeur, leur victoire, leur lustre, et n'ont nul besoin des grandeurs charnelles, où elles n'ont pas de rapport. Ils sont *vus* non des yeux, mais des esprits; c'est assez.

(1) It will be recalled that the Euclidean definition of homogeneous magnitudes, which Pascal endorses, is that "l'une étant plusieurs fois multipliée peut arriver à surpasser l'autre", cf. above, p.359.

Les saints ont leur empire, leur éclat, leur victoire, leur lustre, et n'ont nul besoin des grandeurs charnelles ou spirituelles, où elles n'ont nul rapport, car elles n'y ajoutent ni ôtent. Ils sont vus de Dieu et des anges, et non des corps ni des esprits curieux: Dieu leur suffit.

Archimède, sans éclat, serait en même vénération. Il n'a pas donné des batailles pour les yeux, mais il a fourni à tous les esprits ses inventions. O qu'il a éclaté aux esprits!

Jésus-Christ, sans biens et sans aucune production au dehors de science, est dans son ordre de sainteté. Il n'a point donné d'invention, il n'a point régné mais il a été humble, patient, saint, saint, saint à Dieu, terrible aux démons sans aucun péché. O qu'il est venu en grande pompe et en une prodigieuse magnificence, aux yeux du cœur et qui voient la sagesse!

Il eût été inutile à Archimède de faire le prince dans ses livres de géométrie, quoiqu'il le fût.

Il eût été inutile à Notre-Seigneur Jésus-Christ, pour éclater dans son règne de sainteté, de venir en roi; mais il y est bien venu avec l'éclat de son ordre! ...

Mais il y en a qui ne peuvent admirer que les grandeurs charnelles, comme s'il n'y en avait pas de spirituelles; ** comme s'il n'y en avait pas d'infiniment plus hautes dans la sagesse.

Tous les corps, le firmament, les étoiles, la terre et ses royaumes, ne valent pas le moindre des esprits; car il connaît tout cela, et soi; et les corps rien.

Tous les corps ensemble, et tous les esprits ensemble, et toutes leurs productions, ne valent pas le moindre mouvement de charité. Cela est d'un ordre infiniment plus élevé.

De tous les corps ensemble, on ne saurait en faire réussir une petite pensée: cela est impossible, et d'un autre ordre. De tous les corps et esprits, on n'en saurait tirer un mouvement de vraie charité: cela est impossible, et d'un autre ordre, surnaturel." (1)
(p.1341-2; B.793)

(1) Professor F.T.H. Fletcher, in his chapter on the three orders in Pascal and the Mystical Tradition, (Oxford, 1954), cites passages from Saint Augustine and Berulle, which he considers may have aided Pascal in formulating this fragment. Probable sources for the actual expression "ordre de charité" have been traced by E.Jovy, in vol.VIII of his Etudes pascaliennes, p.120-36

** et d'autres qui n'admirent que les spirituelles,

A mere cursory glance is sufficient to discern how far this passage is an amalgam of what has gone before: the use of the terms "ordre" and "grandeur", enriched by the added significance which they have gradually acquired as the result of their application to non-mathematical concepts, yet still retaining markedly mathematical overtones; the insistence on the infinite qualitative distinction between each of the three orders, with the two higher absolutely transcendent in regard to the first, and the third in a similar relation to the second, so that no degree or amount of the content of a lower order will ever suffice of itself to produce a higher one; and finally the third order of charity envisaged as a supernatural one.

Perhaps the most striking fresh emphasis (for the idea was latent in the extract quoted earlier from the Trois discours) is the reiterated assertion that each of the three orders in question is self-contained, that each forms a complete entity by itself, standing in no need of, nor in any necessary relation to, any of the others. This development is particularly interesting when considered in conjunction with the following passage from the eighteenth Provinciale:

"D'où apprendrons-nous donc la vérité des faits? Ce sera des yeux, ...qui en sont les légitimes juges, comme la raison l'est des choses naturelles et intelligibles, et la foi des choses surnaturelles et révélées. ..ces trois principes de nos connaissances, les sens, la raison et la foi, ont chacun leurs objets séparés, et leur certitude dans cette étendue. Et comme Dieu a voulu se servir de l'entremise des sens pour donner entrée à la foi: 'Fides ex auditu', tant s'en faut que la foi détruise la certitude des sens, que ce serait au contraire détruire la foi que de vouloir révoquer en doute le rapport fidèle des sens." (p.898; G.E.VII, p.49-50)

Now it is evident that these three principles correspond, approximately at least, to the three orders: ⁽¹⁾ each has validity in its own domain and cannot legitimately encroach on that of another; their results will always remain heterogeneous, so that one cannot supply the place of another. However, although each principle is thus regarded as having its own particular field of operation within which it can achieve certain knowledge, yet this in no way signifies a complete independence of faith from the remaining two principles. On the contrary, if deprived of its point of self-insertion through the senses faith is cut off at the roots. A further extract from the Pensées illustrates this same difficulty:

"Lettre qui marque l'utilité des preuves, par la machine.
-La foi est différente de la preuve: l'une est humaine, l'autre est un don de Dieu. 'Justus ex fide vivit': c'est de cette foi que Dieu lui-même met dans le coeur, dont la preuve est souvent l'instrument, 'fides ex auditu';...
(p.1220; B.248)

Although there is no question here as to the generic difference between faith and proof, the divine and the human, yet the former appears as in a sense dependent on the latter to provide the necessary medium through which its influence may be exerted. The divine action must be worked on human material.

Moreover, in the letter to Queen Christina Pascal maintains that this relation of mutual dependence holds also between the two lower orders, for he there asserts:

"Quelque puissant que soit un monarque, il manque quelque chose à sa gloire, s'il n'a pas la pré-éminence de l'esprit; et quelque éclairé que soit un sujet, sa condition est toujours rabaissée par la dépendance." (p.503; G.E.III, p.31)

(1) This correspondence has been worked out at length, and somewhat tendentiously it seems to me, by M. Jacques Chevalier in his article, La méthode de connaître d'après Pascal, Revue de métaphysique et de morale, 1923, p.184ff.

The contrast is very marked between such a view and the predominant one in the fragment on the three orders:

"Les grands génies ... n'ont nul besoin des grâces charnelles, où elles n'ont pas de rapport. ... Les saints... n'ont nul besoin des grâces charnelles ou spirituelles, où elles n'ont nul rapport,..."

This doctrine of different orders of being does not however represent merely a scale of ontological concepts - the notion of value also occupies a very important place. Pascal claims that the totality of the physical universe is not equal in value to the least "esprit", for the latter is cognizant of the material aspect of life and of itself, whereas the universe has no awareness of anything. It follows therefore that it is the cognitive power of the mind which secures for it a superior rank in the scale of value, and one cannot but recall that other well-known fragment, where Pascal contrasts the magnitude of the physical world with the seemingly puny power of thought possessed by man to the latter's advantage.⁽¹⁾ Then again all bodies and minds, together with all their 'productions', are not equal in value to the least motion of charity, for charity is of an infinitely superior order.

The second fragment from the Pensées which is basically concerned with the doctrine of the three orders runs as follows:

"Concupiscence de la chair, concupiscence des yeux, orgueil, etc. - Il y a trois ordres de choses: la chair, l'esprit, la volonté. Les charnels sont les riches, les rois: ils ont pour objet le corps. Les curieux et savants: ils ont pour objet l'esprit. Les sages: ils ont pour objet la justice.

(1) "L'homme n'est qu'un roseau, le plus faible de la nature; mais c'est un roseau pensant. Il ne faut pas que l'univers entier s'arme pour l'écraser: une vapeur, une goutte d'eau, suffit pour le tuer. Mais, quand l'univers l'écraserait, l'homme serait encore plus noble que ce qui le tue, puisqu'il sait qu'il meurt, et l'avantage que l'univers a sur lui, l'univers n'en sait rien."
(p.1156-7; B.347)

Dieu doit régner sur tout, et tout se rapporter à lui. Dans les choses de la chair, règne proprement la concupiscence; dans les spirituelles, la curiosité proprement; dans la sagesse l'orgueil proprement. Ce n'est pas qu'on ne puisse être glorieux pour les biens ou pour les connaissances, mais ce n'est pas le lieu de l'orgueil; car en accordant à un homme qu'il est savant, on ne laissera pas de le convaincre qu'il a tort d'être superbe. Le lieu propre à la superbe est la sagesse: car on ne peut accorder à un homme qu'il s'est rendu sage, et qu'il a tort d'être glorieux; car cela est de justice. Aussi Dieu seul donne la sagesse; et c'est pourquoi 'Qui gloriatur, in Domino gloriatur'." (p.1303; B.460)

There is no difficulty about the first two orders here as they clearly correspond to the matching ones in the previous fragment, where the expressions "les charnels" and "les grands de chair", are in fact used of those who belong to the "ordre des corps". But the use of the term "volonté" to designate the third order is somewhat unexpected, since it is difficult to conceive *prima facie* of a relationship between "volonté" as such and charity. The word has a variety of meanings in Pascal's terminology however, and in that part of the De l'esprit géométrique from which a quotation has already been made ⁽¹⁾ it is equated with "coeur", in a context where the latter is described as the receptive organ for divine truths. The "sages" therefore (and the use of this term to denote those who belong to the third order has a parallel in the previous fragment, where Pascal speaks of "la grandeur de la sagesse, qui n'est nulle sinon de Dieu"), the members of the "ordre de la volonté", might be regarded simply as those to whom knowledge of divine truth has been vouchsafed. ⁽²⁾ A further usage of the term "volonté", illuminating in this respect, occurs in the 'wager' passage:

(1) cf. above, p.367.

(2) Thus in the previous fragment Christ is alleged to have come "en grande pompe et en une prodigieuse magnificence, aux yeux du coeur et qui voient la sagesse."

"Vous avez deux choses à perdre: le vrai et le bien, et deux choses à engager: votre raison et votre volonté, votre connaissance et votre béatitude; ...Votre raison n'est pas plus blessée, en choisissant l'un que l'autre, ...Voilà un point vidé. Mais votre béatitude?" (p.1213-4; B.233)

"Béatitude", which in Pascal's terms can only appertain to a supernatural order, is here seen to be, if not exactly synonymous with "volonté", at least its proper and connate object.

Nor has the word "justice", as used in the fragment under consideration to designate the 'object' of those belonging to the third order, any exact parallel in the previous extract; but three texts drawn from different writings show that its usage in such a theological context is not unique:

"...Dieu étant la justice et la sagesse même..." (14th Provinciale, p.820-1; G.E.VI, p.134)

"....la continuation de la justice des fidèles n'est autre chose que la continuation de l'infusion de la grâce..." (à Mme.Périer, p.488; G.E.II, p.380)

"...sans la faim des choses spirituelles on s'en ennue. Faim de la justice: béatitude huitième." (Pensées, p.1155; B.264)

Clearly therefore, according to Pascal's own terms of reference, it is quite consistent to represent the members of the supernatural order as directing their efforts towards "justice" as their goal.

Most difficult to account for however are the terms "orgueil", "glorieux", "superbe", employed to describe the appropriate state of soul of those who have attained to "sagesse". Brunshvicg, in a note to this fragment,⁽¹⁾ remarks: "La gloire désigne, comme on sait, dans le langage théologique, la béatitude en Dieu". Yet it is precisely because Pascal does

(1) ed.min., p.544, n.1.

not use the word "gloire" in this fragment that the difficulty arises. for nowhere in his extant writings is it possible to find the term "orgueil", "superbe", "glorieux", used to signify beatific "gloire". Indeed they usually denote exactly the reverse - the state in which, ipso facto, it is impossible for man to be in any relation at all with God.⁽¹⁾ But although such inconsistent linguistic usage tends to make Pascal's meaning rather obscure in this respect, it must be allowed that this fragment has particular significance as indicating that he conceives of the three orders of being above all as moral categories, in which individuals range themselves according to the nature of the 'end' which they pursue as the goal of existence.

Professor C.C.J. Webb has advanced some important philosophical criticisms of this conception of heterogeneous orders as it is set out in the main fragment from the Pensées. He regards Pascal's insistence on the disparateness of the first two orders of bodies and minds as simply an example of the normal Cartesian dualism, and alleges that: "The moment that one substitutes for bodies, as such, bodies regarded as organic to consciousness and thought, you have left the disparateness behind and jumped, so to say, the problems which it raises. Yet this Pascal does when he assigns the life of captains and kings and the glory thereto belonging to the 'order of bodies'."⁽²⁾ And with respect to the third order of charity, Webb

(1) The following examples, among others, occur in the Pensées: "Vos maladies principales sont l'orgueil, qui vous soustrait de Dieu... Si les philosophes vous ont donné Dieu pour objet, ce n'a été que pour exercer votre superbe:.." (p.1225; B.430) "Je vois mon abîme d'orgueil, de curiosité, de concupiscence. Il n'y a nul rapport de moi à Dieu,.." (p.1314; B.553) "Comme les deux sources de nos péchés sont l'orgueil et la paresse, Dieu nous a découvert deux qualités en lui pour les guérir: sa miséricorde et sa justice. Le propre de la justice est d'abattre l'orgueil." (p.1309; B.497) "...l'impiété intérieure des sages superbes et des pharisiens." (p.1337; B.905)

(2) Pascal's Philosophy of Religion, (Oxford, 1929), p.108.

maintains, contrary to Pascal, that: "...it is obvious that we are still speaking of thoughts and feelings, ...so that however superior in value the saint may be to Archimedes and spiritual wisdom to science, the latter is plainly not removed from the former by the same absolute disparateness as lies between a body ... and 'une petite pensée'." (1)

Although these criticisms are not made without some justification, the fact that Webb appears to have overlooked the essentially moral connotation of the terms "corps", "esprit", "charité", as Pascal uses them in this context, invalidates much of his criticism. For example Pascal nowhere in the fragment in question intimates that when he refers to the qualitative division between the first two orders he has in mind the sort of rigid dualism between matter and thought - 'res extensa' and 'res cogitans' - envisaged by Descartes. Indeed the very fact that he does select persons as exemplifying his orders makes it plain how far this is from being the case. Pascal is quite as well aware as anyone else that it is impossible to refuse all power for conscious thought to the captains and kings who typify the "ordre des corps". What he is concerned to point out is that they, and those of their ilk, are exclusively preoccupied with 'material' achievement and satisfaction; that they direct all their intellectual, as well as physical, effort to this purely worldly end; and that they are therefore in his own terminology "charnels". Similarly with Archimedes and his fellow-members of the "ordre des esprits"; their lives are wholly taken up with the quest for knowledge to be acquired through the senses and reasoning. And both these types of individuals, characterized by the objects

(1) op.cit., p.109.

which they set themselves to achieve, are cursed with the purblindness that results from preoccupation.

And when Webb, in regard to the division between the second and third orders, maintains that in the latter we are still dealing with 'thoughts' and 'feelings', so that the disparity here is not as marked as that between the first and second, he entirely fails to see that in this respect Pascal is primarily concerned with the groundwork and range of the two orders. The naked human mind is perfectly capable by itself of carrying out disciplined research into the relations between the phenomena of the visible world, or of wrestling with abstract problems of geometry, but no amount of striving on its own part will ever suffice to bring it to an awareness of the supernatural. It is the qualitative difference between the two that is important, for all the scientists in the world put together would not suffice to produce even the first beginnings of a saint - in Pascal's view it is only by grace, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that this can be achieved.

As Pascal depicts them, the members of the lower orders just do not see the values prized in the order above their own⁽¹⁾ - their private pursuits act as a film drawn over their eyes. In other words their respective fields of vision are limited to the aspect of experience in which they place their end, and seek their fulfilment. Thus it is evident that the terms "corps" and "esprit" are used merely as convenient labels to symbolize the dominant characteristic of the particular order of values. And it is noteworthy

(1) There is something of an echo here of the fundamental Neo-Platonic doctrine of the correspondence and mutual dependence of subject and object: 'like alone sees like'. cf. W.R.Inge, The Philosophy of Plotinus, (London, 1928, 3rd ed.), p.137-8.

that the term "pensée", laboured by Webb, occurs only once in the whole fragment, while "corps" is used only when some neat formula is required to represent the first order in a comparison where an elaborate definition would tend to produce obscurity.

The way in which the sort of values they pursue in life determines the particular order of being to which various individuals belong emerges very clearly in connection with the elaborate doctrine of the "figuratifs" worked out in the Pensées, and applied especially to the Old Testament prophetic utterances, in order that these may be interpreted as presaging the advent of Jesus Christ. The relevant aspect of the doctrine is adumbrated in a brief extract from a letter to Mlle. de Roannez where Pascal, to illustrate the symbolic character of the divine self-disclosure to man, refers to:

"...le secret d'Esprit de Dieu caché encore dans l'Ecriture. Car il y a deux sens parfaits, le littéral et le mystique; et les Juifs s'arrêtant à l'un ne pensent pas seulement qu'il y en ait un autre, et ne songent pas à le chercher;..."
(p.510; G.E.VI, p.89)

The significance of this failure on the part of the Jews to recognize that certain passages in the Scriptures are figurative in meaning is that they are thereby prevented from seeing the values of the spiritual order upon which these rest, and which should be presented to the mind through their agency. Their plight, as it is depicted in the Pensées, shows how their attempt to find satisfaction in the values of the 'material' order blinds them to those of the supernatural order:

"Les Juifs charnels attendaient un Messie charnel; les chrétiens grossiers croient que le Messie les a dispensés d'aimer Dieu; les vrais Juifs et les vrais chrétiens adorent un Messie qui les fait aimer Dieu." (p.1231; B.609)

"Au temps du Messie, ce peuple se partage. Les spirituels ont embrassé le Messie; les grossiers sont demeurés pour lui servir de témoins." (p.1236; B.748)

"Les Juifs le refusent, mais non pas tous: les saints le reçoivent, et non les charnels." (ibid.; B.760)

"Les Juifs charnels n'entendaient ni la grandeur ni l'abaissement du Messie prédit dans leurs prophéties. Ils l'ont méconnu dans sa grandeur prédite, ... ils ne le croyaient pas si grand qu'il fût éternel. Et ils l'ont méconnu de même dans son abaissement et dans sa mort. ... Ils ne le croyaient donc ni mortel, ni éternel: ils ne cherchaient en lui qu'une grandeur charnelle." (p.1272; B.662)

"Les Juifs ont tant aimé les choses figurantes, et les ont si bien attendues, qu'ils ont méconnu la réalité, quand elle est venue dans le temps et en la manière prédite. Les rabbins prennent pour figures ... tout ce qui n'exprime pas l'unique but qu'ils ont, des biens temporels." (p.1274; B.670)

The "Juifs charnels", members of the "ordre des corps" as the qualifying adjective denotes, unable to see the deeper significance of the 'figures', to penetrate to the 'reality' behind them, to set their goal above the 'material' satisfaction afforded by the things of this world, are consequently incapable of appreciating the true nature of the spiritual Messiah, or the prophecies announcing his coming. In this they illustrate the truth of the claim, made with respect to the supernatural values in the three orders fragment, that: "La grandeur de la sagesse, ... est invisible aux charnels et aux gens d'esprit". Here again the Neo-Platonic doctrine that like alone sees like, subject and object somehow involving and implying each other, is in evidence. For those of the Jews who were not carnally-minded,

the "spirituels", the "saints", did welcome the Messiah and were able to perceive the reality behind the figures, because the "saints" belong to the "ordre de charité", the order whose Glory Christ came to make manifest:

"Les saints ont leur empire, leur éclat, leur grandeur,
 ...et n'ont nul besoin des grandeurs charnelles .. Jésus-
 Christ, sans biens ... est dans son ordre de sainteté....
 O qu'il est venu en grande pompe et en une prodigieuse
 magnificence, aux yeux du coeur et qui voient la sagesse!"

The "Juifs charnels" on the other hand were expecting this pomp and magnificence to be of the 'material' order, for it was in this light that they had interpreted the promises made through the Old Testament prophets. ⁽¹⁾ It was but natural, since they were "charnels", that they should not see beyond the temporal and the material, in fact the mere "figures", for as members of the "ordre des corps" this is all their world, and not for one moment can they see beyond it. Their inability to perceive the true spiritual significance of the figures is but a particular example of that purblindness, characteristic of the preoccupation of members of the two lower orders of being, which renders them incapable of seeing the values prized in the order outside their own. ⁽²⁾

(1) "Dans ces promesses-là chacun trouve ce qu'il a dans le fond de son coeur, les biens temporels ou les biens spirituels, Dieu ou les créatures;.." (p.1265; B.675) "...l'intelligence des biens promis dépend du coeur, qui appelle 'bien' ce qu'il aime;..." (p.1276; B.758)

(2) Saint Augustine likewise notes concerning the failure to perceive the figurative significance of certain passages in the Scriptures that: "There is a miserable servitude of the spirit in this habit of taking signs for things, so that one is not able to raise the eye of the mind above things that are corporeal and created to drink in eternal light." On Christian Doctrine, III, v,9. Pascal follows him in setting up 'charity' as the criterion which determines whether the sense of a particular passage is to be taken literally or figuratively. This means that ipso facto the members of the "ordre des corps", and especially the carnally-minded Jews who, as the result of their exclusive attachment to the material and temporal designed merely to prefigure the supernatural and eternal, reverse the true order of things, must of

Moreover, in the scheme of the orders as thus applied ontological and moral values coalesce, since, by allowing themselves to be ensnared in the figures, so that they do not mount beyond them to the reality symbolized, the Jews have become absorbed in what are no more than mere illusions. For Pascal defines and contrasts the two terms "figure" and "réalité" as follows:

"Figure porte absence et présence, plaisir et déplaisir."
(p.1266; B.677)

"Figures, - Un portrait porte absence et présence, plaisir et déplaisir. La réalité exclut absence et déplaisir."
(ibid.; B.678)

Clearly on this view the figure is the bearer of 'presence' and 'pleasure' only when it is treated as a means to lead the mind to something real beyond itself, and is not permitted to draw the interest to itself, thus hindering the process it is meant to further. Since in the case of the Jews the figures do not help them to reach the reality behind, but act as snares which hinder the mind from rising, it follows that the values they pursue, seen in their true light, can procure but 'absence' and 'displeasure'.

(cont. from p.381) necessity misconstrue the whole significance of the Scriptures: "Tout ce qui ne va point à la charité est figure. L'unique objet de l'Écriture est la charité. Tout ce qui ne va point à l'unique but en est la figure. Car, puisqu'il n'y a qu'un but, tout ce qui n'y va point en mots propres est figure." (p.1274; B.670) "La charité n'est pas un précepte figuratif. Dire que Jésus-Christ, qui est venu ôter les figures pour mettre la vérité, ne soit venu que mettre la figure de la charité, pour ôter la réalité qui était auparavant, cela est horrible. 'Si la lumière est ténèbres, que seront les ténèbres?'" (p.1283; B.665) cf. Saint Augustine, op. cit., III, x,15. "...Scripture teaches nothing but charity, nor condemns anything except cupidity,..." III,xv,23. "...in the consideration of figurative expressions a rule such as this will serve, that what is read should be subjected to diligent scrutiny until an interpretation contributing to the reign of charity is produced. If this result appears literally in the text, the expression being considered is not figurative."

(ii) The criterion of rank in the scale: reality

The emphatic statements with which the long fragment from the Pensées devoted to the exposition of the doctrine of orders concludes (1) shows that the three orders, qualitatively different as Pascal asserts them be earlier, nonetheless comprise a scale, which is both an ontological scale and also a scale of values. True there is no such overlap of categories as is normally associated with a scale of values, nor is there any suggestion that the lower order is continued in the higher, no more than that the higher merely transcends the lower adding something new to it - the higher is reckoned to be absolutely transcendent in regard to the lower. But although such a position might seem in fact to preclude the possibility of any scale whatsoever, there can be no mistaking the purport of Pascal's words - he states quite plainly that the least amount of the higher order exceeds in value the greatest amount of the lower.

An extract from a letter to Mme. Périer throws some light in determining what constitutes the criterion of rank in this scale:

"...l'alliance que la nature a faite entre nous ...celle que la grâce y a faite ... je trouve que notre bonheur a été si grand d'être unis de la dernière sorte, que nous nous devons unir pour le reconnaître et pour nous en réjouir. Car il faut avouer que c'est proprement depuis ce temps que nous devons nous considérer comme véritablement parents, et qu'il a plu à Dieu de nous joindre aussi bien dans son nouveau monde par l'esprit, comme il avait dans le terrestre par la chair.

..C'est en quoi nous devons admirer que Dieu nous ait donné et la figure et la réalité de cette alliance; car, comme nous avons dit souvent entre nous, les choses corporelles ne sont qu'une image des spirituelles, et Dieu a représenté les choses invisibles dans les visibles. Cette pensée est si générale et si utile, qu'on ne doit point laisser un espace notable de temps sans y songer avec attention." (p.483-4; G.E.II, p.248-9)

(1) cf. above, p.370.

Especially noteworthy here for the present purpose are the pairs of antitheses which derive from the original contrast between nature and grace: "chair-esprit" (in the sense of the spirit of love infused by divine grace), "monde terrestre-nouveau monde", "figure-réalité", "choses corporelles - choses spirituelles". The two states envisaged represent respectively the figure and the reality of the bond which unites Pascal and the other members of his family - the natural or biological relation operative in the terrestrial world merely symbolizes the spiritual relation effected by divine grace in the 'new' world.⁽¹⁾ And this is alleged to be but a particular example of the general principle that corporeal things are no more than the image of spiritual things, and that God uses visible and natural objects and relationships to symbolize invisible and supernatural ones.

Now the dominant characteristic of images or figures, at least as Pascal conceives of them, is that they lack the reality of the objects for which they stand.⁽²⁾ It is to this characteristic therefore that he makes oblique reference when he maintains that it is properly speaking only since they have been conjoined by grace in a spiritual union that the members of his family have been truly related to one another. And the use of the adverb "véritablement", to denote the real as opposed to the merely figurative relation, attests the extent to which truth and reality are synonymous terms in Pascal's vocabulary in this respect.⁽³⁾ The conclusion to which the foregoing points is that what differentiates the spiritual

(1) This expression is clearly used to designate not 'the world to come', but that Pauline kingdom of the Spirit which Pascal is inclined to regard as synonymous with the Church.

(2) cf. cf. above, p. 382

(3) cf. below, p. ~~382~~ 389, n. 1.

relation from the natural, and invests it with greater worth, is the fact that it is real whereas the other is only symbolic, so that in this case reality constitutes the value-determinant.

In view of the assertions in this passage as to the significance and utility of the notion that the natural is an image of the supernatural,⁽¹⁾ and more especially since the contrasted terms of the antitheses correspond to those used to describe the "ordre des corps" and the "ordre de charité",⁽²⁾ the transfer of the implied value-determinant, reality, appears justified. This would be equivalent to affirming that the supernatural order of charity, and that which it embraces, is the only mode of being which is fully and completely real, and hence is of immeasurably greater worth than the orders on the lower confines of reality, as it were, for their reality is entirely derivative and reflected;⁽³⁾ in precisely the same way as

(1) Moreover the letter continues: "Nous avons discoursé assez particulièrement du rapport de ces deux sortes de choses, c'est pourquoi nous n'en parlerons pas ici; car cela est trop long pour l'écrire et trop beau pour ne t'être pas resté dans la mémoire, et, qui plus est, nécessaire absolument, suivant mon avis."

(2) It should however be noted that the adjective "spirituel", used in the fragment from the Pensées of the "ordre des esprits", in the extract from the letter refers to what is characteristic of the supernatural, that which has been endued with divine grace.

(3) It is also noteworthy here that Pascal adopts the standpoint of traditional Christian metaphysics which identifies Being with God. In a letter to Mme. Périer he alleges that: "...le péché.. est le véritable néant, parce qu'il est contraire à Dieu, qui est le véritable être..." (p.485; G.E.II, p.251) This 'anhypostatic' notion of evil was borrowed by Saint Augustine from Platonism, which viewed evil as nothing positive, but as a defect or absence of good, the measure of a thing's distance from the source of being. For the Platonist all being, in so far as it is true being, is good since it derives from God. Thus Saint Augustine writes in On Christian Doctrine that: "Because He is good, we are; and in so far as we are, we are good. ...in so far as we are evil, to that extent is our being lessened. For He is the highest and first being who is altogether immutable ...In this way other things which are cannot be unless they take their existence from him, and they are good only in so far as He grants them existence." (xxxll, 35) cf. also Of True Religion, xl, 21: "There is no life which is not of God, for God

the spiritual relation is more valuable and significant in comparison with the natural by virtue of the fact that it is real whereas the latter is merely figurative. Yet since Pascal's orders are clearly orders of being, and since the essential characteristic of being is reality, if the variable or criterion of rank in the scale is also reality, this means that the assignment of value becomes largely a question of perspective: a thing from a given order taken by itself is real and has value, but when compared with something from a higher order it loses both its reality and its worth, being reduced to the status of a mere image. Thus the relativism which has been shown to characterize Pascal's judgements of value is inherent in the conception of orders on which they are based.

The evidence garnered from this letter with respect to reality as the criterion of rank in Pascal's scale is confirmed by the dominant theme of the brief treatise Sur la conversion du pécheur. The process is there described whereby the soul gradually becomes aware that the pleasures, relationships and good things of this world to which it has become attached are transitory, unreal and valueless when seen sub specie aeternitatis. As the result of the first influx of divine grace which it receives the soul experiences some discomfort:

(cont. from p.385) is supreme life and the fount of life. No life is evil as life but only as it tends to death. Life knows no death save wickedness ('nequitia') which derives its name from nothingness ('ne quidquam')." The conception of being as truly realized only in God appears again in Pascal's letter to Mme. Périer at the time of their father's death: "...dans la mort, par l'anéantissement de la vie, la créature rend à Dieu tout l'hommage dont elle est capable, en s'anéantissant devant les yeux de sa Majesté, et en adorant sa souveraine existence, qui seule existe réellement." (p.493; G.E.II, p.544) The implication which this Christian ontology carries for conceptions of the material universe has been insisted on by M.Gilson: "Si Dieu est l'Être, il n'est pas seulement l'être total: 'totum esse'; comme on vient de le voir, il est encore l'être véritable: 'verum esse'; ce qui signifie que le reste n'est que l'être partiel et ne mérite même pas véritablement le nom d'Être. Voilà donc tout ce qui nous semble au premier abord constituer la réalité par

cont. on p.387.

"D'une part, la présence des objets visibles la touche plus que l'espérance des invisibles, et de l'autre la solidarité des invisibles la touche plus que la vanité des visibles."
(p.548; G.E.X, p.422)

Here again it is the antitheses which are important - the visible objects although present are seen to be mere vanity, of no substance or duration; whereas the invisible, although as yet unrealized and still the object of hope, possess the solidity, the reality lacking in the former.

The soul comes to recognize that the perishable things of this world, from which it has so far derived its sole enjoyment, are passing from its grasp every moment, and that finally it will find itself completely bereft of all on which it has pinned its hopes of happiness:

"De sorte qu'elle comprend parfaitement que son coeur ne s'étant attaché qu'à des choses fragiles et vaines, son âme se doit trouver seule et abandonnée au sortir de cette vie, puisqu'elle n'a pas eu soin de se joindre à un bien véritable et subsistant par lui-même, qui pût la soutenir et durant et après cette vie." (p.549; G.E.X, p.423)

In this comparison between the "bien véritable et subsistant par lui-même", capable of sustaining the soul both during and after this life, on the one hand, and the "choses fragiles et vaines" which cease with this life, on the other, the contrasted pairs of adjectives, "fragiles et vaines" - "véritable et subsistant", show that the value-determinant here is the reality to which the latter point, as against the necessarily ephemeral nature of whatever the former qualify. And Pascal further maintains in this context that the claim that things of this world are capable of transmitting any "plaisir

(continued from p.386) excellence; le monde de l'étendue et du mouvement qui nous entoure, rejeté dans la pénombre de l'apparence et relégué dans la zone inférieure d'une quasi-irréalité." L'esprit de la philosophie médiévale, p.63.

solide" is proved to be unfounded "par un nombre infini d'expériences si funestes et si continuelles"; so that once again solidity, reality is denied in the light of the supernatural to things which properly belong to the "ordre des corps" or the "ordre des esprits", while their relative worthlessness is held to consist in precisely that deficiency.

"Conversion" therefore in Pascal's terms implies a definite transition, under the influence of divine grace, from the common experience of life to a new and higher order, the supernatural order of charity. Once perceived the values of this order appear as the sole reality by the side of which everything that has preceded, which formerly was taken as valuable in itself, appears as a great shadow or illusion. Thus in the seventh letter to Mlle. de Roannez he speaks of:

"..un si grand bonheur et un si grand honneur que Dieu leur a fait. Tous les honneurs du monde n'en sont que l'image; celui-là seul est solide et réel, .." (p.515; G.E.VI, p.219)

The familiar contrast is here made in explicit terms - the superior worth and greater desirability of the supernatural good stems from the fact that it alone is truly real, while the temporal is a mere shadow of it.

However, this 'image-relation', as it may be described, is operative not only between natural and supernatural, in terms of the contrast between the "ordre de charité" and the two lower orders, but also between these two lower orders themselves; between the intellectual and the corporeal. In the letter to the Queen of Sweden, in the course of marking the differences between these two orders, Pascal affirms:

"..et le pouvoir des rois sur les sujets n'est, ce me semble, qu'une image du pouvoir des esprits sur les esprits qui leur sont inférieurs,..." (p.503; G.E.III, p.30-1)

Since intellectual dominion has the reality lacking in sheer physical dominion it follows that the superiority of the "ordre des esprits" over the "ordre des corps" does not reside solely in the cognitive power generic to the former, but more significantly in the fact that when juxtaposed the former appears as real and the latter merely as an image.

In an important passage from the sixteenth Provinciale the 'image - relation' is applied to what is in this case essentially a scale of knowing, which illustrates the correspondence Pascal sees as existing between the reality apprehended and the sort of knowledge that results:

"L'état des Chrétiens ... tient le milieu entre l'état des bienheureux et l'état des Juifs. Les bienheureux possèdent Jésus-Christ réellement sans figures et sans voiles. Les Juifs n'ont possédé de Jésus-Christ que les figures et les voiles, ... Et les Chrétiens possèdent Jésus-Christ dans l'Eucharistie véritablement et réellement, mais encore couvert de voiles. 'Dieu', dit saint Eucher, 's'est fait trois tabernacles: la synagogue, qui n'a eu que les ombres sans vérité; l'Eglise, qui a la vérité et les ombres; et le ciel où il n'y a point d'ombres, mais la seule vérité'. Nous sortirions de l'état où nous sommes, qui est l'état de foi, que saint Paul oppose tant à la loi qu'à la claire vision, si nous ne possédions que les figures sans Jésus-Christ, parce que c'est le propre de la loi de n'avoir que l'ombre, et non la substance des choses." (p.857; G.E.VI, p.2756)

Since it is the reality, or lack thereof, corresponding to the range of vision in each instance which determines whether the resultant knowledge is "vérité" or merely "ombres", reality once again appears as the cachet that distinguishes the various states one from another. ⁽¹⁾ The Jews possessed

(1) Pascal's practice of using "vérité" and "réalité" as synonymous terms in antithesis to "figure" suggests that not merely reality, but also truth, properly pertains only to the supernatural order, and hence is foreign to the two purely natural orders. Three extracts from the letter to M. et Mme. Périer, written at the time of his father's death, contain significant comparisons in this regard: "...étouffons ou modérons, par l'intelligence de la vérité, les sentiments de la nature corrompue et déçue qui n'a que les fausses images, et qui trouble par ses illusions la sainteté des sentiments que la vérité et l'Evangile nous doit donner." (p.495; G.E.II, p.548) "Ne considérons un homme comme ayant cessé de vivre, quoique la nature suggère; mais comme commençant
continued on p.390

only figures in their state of being under the law, so that their knowledge was restricted to mere "ombres". Although the Christians do have access to the reality through the Eucharist, yet, since they do not enjoy unimpeded vision of it as it is, even their knowledge is not unmixed with "ombres". It is for the blessed in heaven alone that the state of faith is absorbed in the clear sunlight of beatific vision, wherein the supreme reality is seen, not 'through a glass darkly', but 'face to face'.

In the Pensées also Pascal refers to this difference between the state of faith and that of glory in terms of the familiar 'image - relation'. Having pointed out, in connection with figurative interpretation of certain expressions in the Old Testament, that "la nature est une image de la grâce", he goes on:

"Et même la grâce n'est que la figure de la gloire, car elle n'est pas la dernière fin. Elle a été figurée par la loi, et figure elle-même la gloire: mais elle en est la figure, et le principe ou la cause." (1) (p.1264;B.643)

The conception adumbrated in the passage from the sixteenth Provinciale and implied again in this fragment from the Pensées, of three different states into which individuals are grouped according as they stand in relation to the supernatural reality, is a recurring one in Pascal's writings. Thus in a letter to Mlle. de Roannez he alleges with respect to the bliss of union with God that:

(continued from p.389) à vivre comme la vérité l'assure". (p.496;G.E.II,p.549)
 "Eclairons donc l'erreur de la nature par la lumière de la foi." (p.497; G.E.II, p.552)

(1) cf. from the Troisième écrit sur la grâce: "...la grâce est donnée pour mériter la gloire,..." (p.979;G.E.XI,p.170) and from a letter to Mme.Périer: "...la béatitude des bienheureux est un effet et une suite de la grâce,..." (p.488;G.E.II, p.380)

"Les bienheureux ont cette joie sans aucune tristesse; les gens du monde ont leur tristesse sans cette joie, et les Chrétiens ont cette joie mêlée de la tristesse d'avoir suivi d'autres plaisirs, et de la crainte de la perdre par l'attrait de ces autres plaisirs qui nous tentent sans relâche." (p.515-6 G.E.VI, p.221)

In the Prière pour le bon usage des maladies the notion recurs in the following form:

"..Seigneur, vous avez laissé languir le monde dans les souffrances naturelles sans consolation, avant la venue de votre Fils unique: vous consolez maintenant et vous adoucissez les souffrances de vos fidèles par la grâce de votre Fils unique: et vous comblez d'une béatitude toute pure vos saints dans la gloire de votre Fils unique. Ce sont les admirables degrés par lesquels vous conduisez vos ouvrages." (p.611-2; G.E.IX, p.335)

Again in the letter to Mme. Périer on the death of their father Pascal writes:

"Il n'est donc pas juste aussi que nous soyons sans douleur comme des anges qui n'ont aucun sentiment de la nature; mais il n'est pas juste aussi que nous soyons sans consolation comme les Païens qui n'ont aucun sentiment de la grâce: mais il est juste que nous soyons affligés et consolés comme Chrétiens, et que la consolation de la grâce l'emporte par-dessus les sentiments de la nature; .." (p.499; G.E.II, p.556)

Now although this theme affords no exact parallel with that of the three orders of being, the two are to some degree at least correlative: ⁽¹⁾ the state of those deprived of all awareness of the supernatural corresponds with the two lower purely natural orders of being, while the states of faith and glory, which clearly do not differ in kind but merely in degree in their approach to the supernatural, can both be subsumed under the "ordre de charité".

(1) The triple gradation noted above, p.332, further exemplifies this theme.

(iii) Value as a perspective of the orders.

It is obvious that where a conception is sufficiently basic to act as the background determining a writer's judgement in particular instances, explicit references to it will be rare except when he is concerned to expound it at length. Although this applies in Pascal's case in regard to the notion of different orders of being, the way in which it does determine his estimates of value comes out very plainly in two notable passages from his writings.

The removal of justice from the gamut of secular society and politics, which follows logically from the argument of passages cited earlier,⁽¹⁾ has numerous parallels in the Pensées,⁽²⁾ but a very significant one also occurs in the Entretien avec M. de Saci. In his assessment there of the benefits to be derived from a study of the writings of Montaigne and Epictetus, Pascal is reported as saying that:

"Montaigne est incomparable pour confondre l'orgueil de ceux qui, hors la foi, se piquent d'une véritable justice..."

The teaching of Epictetus on the other hand, although it counteracts apathy, has a tendency to induce pride, and on that account may prove harmful to those unaware of :

"...la corruption de la plus parfaite justice qui n'est pas de la foi." (p.574;G.E.IV, p.55-6)

And the full significance of this last line in particular for an appreciation of the assumptions underlying Pascal's views on ethics and politics becomes apparent when it is considered alongside a passage taken from a group of fragments usually appended to the Pensées, but more closely related in subject-matter to the Provinciales:

(1) cf. above, p.342.

(2) cf. above, p.286ff.

"S'ils ne renoncent à la probabilité, leurs bonnes maximes sont aussi peu saintes que les méchantes, car elles sont fondées sur l'autorité humaine. Et ainsi, si elles sont plus justes, elles seront plus raisonnables, mais non pas plus saintes; elles tiennent de la tige sauvage sur quoi elles sont entées." (p.1073;B.920)

Now it is evident from these two extracts that with respect to justice and ethics generally Pascal is prepared to recognize that on the purely human and secular level varying degrees of such concepts as goodness or justice, and their opposites, are realizable in actions performed, decisions made, etc.: that relative to other acts on the same plane certain acts may be adjudged better, more just, more in accordance with what is there regarded as rational behaviour. But, when looked at from the standpoint of acts characteristic of the supernatural order, these relative differences are so slight as to be negligible, so that from this point of view two adjacent terms on the natural level, one of which is good the other bad relatively to each other, will appear indistinguishable. The goodness in question will not merely be an inferior sort of goodness, but will not be goodness at all in the sense which that word connotes in the supernatural order.

As Pascal was probably aware, he might have appealed to the authority of Saint Augustine in justification of this habit of thinking on two levels, and of assigning value accordingly. For the latter, although he does not go so far as to say that viewed from the supernatural order secular virtues and vices appear on a par, nonetheless contrasts the two planes on occasion in such a way as to imply that what is characteristic of the lower taken by itself is in every sense worthy, except that compared

to the higher it is worthless. (1)

Such an approach on Pascal's part testifies not merely to the influence on his thinking of the basic notion of the orders, but also to the very mathematical mould in which his mind is cast, and to the extent to which his terms of reference, regardless of the particular context, are instinctively mathematical. For these extracts provide an example of the application of the general principle enunciated at the conclusion of the short treatise entitled Potestatum numericarum summa - that a continuous magnitude of a given order is not increased by the addition to it of any number of magnitudes of a lower order; points add nothing to lines, lines add nothing to surfaces, etc.:

"En sorte qu'on doit négliger, comme nulles, les quantités d'ordre inférieur." (2) (p.171; G.E.III, p.367)

However, Pascal offers no justification, and doubtless it never crossed his mind that any was necessary, for this transference of the relation holding between mathematical concepts to the field of ethics.

It is this practice of falling back in thought on the aspect of things as viewed from the supernatural order, engendered by his theory of qualitatively different orders of being, that leads Pascal to the purely otherworldly standpoint from which he treats as null all earthly activities. Whence the pessimistic tone of such passages from the Pensées as the following:

(1) cf. e.g. the following passage from *The City of God*, v,xix: "...no man can have true virtue without true piety,..nor is that virtue true either, when it serves but for human ostentation. But those that are not of the eternal city ..the city of God, are more useful to their earthly city in possessing that purely world-respecting virtue, than if they lacked that also. ..But let that virtue that serves human glory without piety be never so much extolled, it is not comparable even with the imperfect beginnings of the saints' virtues, whose assured hope stands fixed in the grace and mercy of the true God".

(2) cf. above, p.357.

"Il ne faut pas avoir l'âme fort élevée pour comprendre qu'il n'y a point ici de satisfaction véritable et solide, que tous nos plaisirs ne sont que vanité ... Qu'on fasse réflexion là-dessus et qu'on dise ensuite s'il n'est pas indubitable qu'il n'y a de bien en cette vie qu'en l'espérance d'une autre vie, qu'on n'est heureux qu'à mesure qu'on s'en approche..."⁽¹⁾ (p.1174;B.194)

This^{is} equivalent to affirming, not merely that earthly existence has no value save, and in so far, as it leads us on, but that the sole earthly value lies in the hope of the life to come.

(iv) The contribution of Platonism to this theme.

The tendency latent in the conception of the orders as forming the background of Pascal's thought to neutralize the value of everything which belongs to space and time is heightened by his ready acceptance of the implications of the Platonic theme in the Augustinian theology, with which he was acquainted through his association with Port-Royal. It was one of the most notable achievements^e of Saint Augustine to adapt to the Christian doctrine of creation the characteristic Platonic doctrine of exemplarism,⁽²⁾

(1) cf. Saint Augustine, The City of God, xix, xx: "Then therefore is the good of the holy society perfect, when their peace is established in eternity, ..What man is he that would not account such an estate most happy, or comparing with that which man has here on earth, would not avouch this latter to be most miserable, were it ever so well fraught with temporal conveniences? Yet he that has the latter in possession, and applies it all with reference to his hope's firm and faithful object, may not unfitly be called happy already, but that is rather in his expectation of his future state than in his fruition of the present. For this present possession without the other hope is a false beatitude and a most true misery. For herein is no use of the mind's truest good, because there is lacking the true wisdom, which ... should refer his intent in all these unto that end, where God shall be all in all, where eternity shall be firm, and peace most absolute and perfect."

(2) On this aspect of Saint Augustine's thought cf. E. Gilson, (cont.p.396)

consisting above all in the recognition of an unseen world of unchanging reality behind the flux of phenomena, of a spiritual universe compared with which the world of appearances grows pale and becomes a mere symbol. The reception which Pascal accords to this view of the world of sensible phenomena as the shadow or reflection of a higher world of reality is strikingly illustrated in a passage from a letter to Mme. Périer, very reminiscent of Plato's famous parable of the shadow in the cave:

"...les choses corporelles ne sont qu'une image des spirituelles, et Dieu a représenté les choses invisibles dans les visibles. ...comme nos péchés nous retiennent enveloppés parmi les choses corporelles et terrestres...il faut que nous nous servions du lieu même où nous sommes tombés pour nous relever de notre chute. C'est pourquoi nous devons bien ménager l'avantage que la bonté de Dieu nous donne de nous laisser toujours devant les yeux une image des biens que nous avons perdus, et de nous environner dans la captivité même où sa justice nous a réduits, de tant d'objets qui nous servent d'une leçon continuellement présente.

De sorte que nous devons nous considérer comme des criminels dans une prison toute remplie des images de leur libérateur et des instructions nécessaires pour sortir de la servitude;.." (1)
(p.484; G.E.II, p.249-50)

The Platonic conception of the visible world as a pale copy of the unseen, eternal one is adapted here by Pascal to his own purpose, but the depreciation which the world of the material senses undergoes consequent on its being

(cont. from p.295) Introduction à l'étude de Saint Augustin, (Paris, 1929) p.253-78.

(1) Chevalier (Pascal, Paris, 1922, p.80-1) appears to consider that Pascal actually had in mind the passage from The Republic when writing this letter, but it seems to me much more likely that he was familiar with this Platonic theme through his study of Saint Augustine. In Of True Religion for example, Augustine outlines a very similar view of the symbolism of sensible appearances, which enables the mind to rise above these to the reality they reflect: "If we cleave to the eternal Creator we must necessarily be somehow affected by eternity. But because the soul, implicated in and overwhelmed by its sins, cannot by itself see and grasp this truth, if in human experience there were no intermediate stage whereby man might strive to rise above his earthly life and reach likeness to God, God in his ineffable mercy by a temporal

cont. p.397

reduced in status in this way to a 'prison-house' filled with mere 'images' needs no emphasis. (1) Not only is the phenomenal thereby denied any positive value in itself, but its symbolic significance becomes entirely relative, dependent upon whether it fulfils its purely representative function or rather tends to insinuate itself into the position of the real and final, thus attracting to itself the attention which it should direct elsewhere. Pascal goes on in the same letter to condemn the 'idolatry' to which this latter alternative gives rise:

"..l'on voit que dans les ténèbres du monde on les suit par un aveuglement brutal, que l'on s'y attache et qu'on en fait la dernière fin de ses désirs, ce qu'on ne peut faire sans sacrilège, car il n'y a que Dieu qui doit être la dernière fin comme lui seul est le vrai principe. (2) Car, quelque ressemblance que la nature créée ait avec son Créateur, et encore que les moindres choses et les plus petites et les plus viles parties du monde représentent au moins par leur unité la parfaite unité qui ne se trouve qu'en Dieu, (3) on ne peut pas légitimement leur porter le souverain respect, parce qu'il n'y a rien de si abominable aux yeux de Dieu et des hommes que l'idolatrie,.." (p.484-5; G.E. II, p.250)

(cont. from p.396) dispensation has used the mutable creation, .. to remind the soul of its original and perfect nature, and so has come to the aid of individual men and indeed of the whole human race. ..The treatment of the soul, which God's providence and ineffable loving-kindness administers, is most beautiful in its steps and stages. ..we dwell among temporal things, and love of them is an obstacle to our reaching eternal things, ...Wherever a man falls there must he lie until he is raised up. So we must strive, by means of the carnal forms which detain us, to come to know those of which carnal sense can bring us no knowledge." x,19, and xxiv, 45. The likelihood of Pascal's being acquainted with this particular work of Saint Augustine is considerable in view of the fact that it was translated by Arnauld in 1647, while the letter in question is dated 1 April, 1658.

(1) The implication of the passage is therefore that subsequent to the Fall man lost his capacity of immediate, direct vision of supernatural realities, and has been dependent since on the analogical, indirect sort of knowledge which can be gleaned from the 'images' that surround him on all sides in his state of servitude. cf. from the *Pensées*, where the "Sagesse de Dieu" is represented as saying: "...vous n'êtes plus maintenant en l'état où je vous ai formés. J'ai créé l'homme saint, innocent, parfait; je l'ai rempli de lumière et d'intelligence; je lui ai communiqué ma gloire et mes merveilles. L'oeil de l'homme voyait alors la majesté de Dieu. Il n'était pas alors dans les ténèbres qui l'aveuglent,.." (p.1224; B.430)

(2 and 3 cont. p.398)

Man on Pascal's view is imprisoned, as the result of the Fall, among the shadows of the world of sensible phenomena, but should be engaged on the return journey, as it were, to his heavenly home. The great moral danger involved in this is that he should forget himself en route, overlook the symbolic character of all that belongs to the world of space and time, and lose sight of his true end and goal. By allowing mere finite objects, harmless enough in themselves, to be mistaken for the end of life, the eye of man is kept fixed downwards to the things of earth, the images, instead of being raised to the heavenly reality. It follows therefore that it is impossible in Pascal's terms to acknowledge this world as of interest or value in itself without prejudice to its significance as a symbol of the eternal.

(2 from p.397) Pascal is at one with Plato in the primarily moral character of this concern that men should rise beyond the symbols to the contemplation of the higher reality which they veil. The following comments of R.L. Nettleship on Plato's allegory of the cave (The Republic, VII,515f) are particularly significant in this regard: "It would be a great mistake to regard the darkness of the cave as a mere darkness of intellectual ignorance, or the escape from it as a mere intellectual enlightenment. In the mind of Plato, reason is never for long dissociated from emotion, or knowledge from purpose; the highest impulse to him is the impulse towards truth, and the highest knowledge is knowledge of the end of action. Thus the great reason why the spark of 'divine' intelligence is so nearly smothered in man is not primarily the difficulty of learning or the mysteriousness of nature; the fetters which bind men in the cave are those 'leaden weights which the pleasures of gluttony and the like gather round them, and which turn the eye of the soul to the earth'. ..It is because men will not rouse themselves to the reality which is there if they had the eyes to see it, because they mistake the passing shows of sense for the eternal essence of which they are the mere outside, ..that 'before they are well awake in this world they find themselves in the other, sleeping the heavy sleep of death.' " The Theory of Education in the 'Republic' of Plato, in Hellenica, (London, 1880),p.154-5.

(3) Saint Augustine similarly holds that all things partake in some degree in the unity which is truly realized in God alone: "...there is no form or material thing which does not have some trace of unity,.." op.cit.,xxxii,60. cf. ibid. xxxvi, 66.

A notable example of the application of this Platonic theme to a concrete instance, and one which brings out the value-judgement implicit in it, occurs in another letter to Mme. Périer, in connection with her husband's projected building-plans. Pascal objects to the extravagance of these: if carried out they will require Périer to go for a considerable period of time without turning his mind to anything else, so that he will end by devoting to the building operation:

"..le temps qu'il faudrait pour se détromper des charmes secrets qui s'y trouvent." (p.489;G.E.II, p.383)

Pascal urges Mme. Périer to take thought on the matter, and to encourage her husband to restrict himself to the bare necessity:

"..de peur qu'il arrive qu'il ait bien plus de prudence et qu'il donne bien plus de soin et de peine au bâtiment d'une maison qu'il n'est pas obligé de faire, qu'à celui de cette tour mystique, dont tu sais que saint Augustin parle dans une de ses lettres, .." (p.490;G.E.II, p.383)

Man therefore must be ever on his guard against getting caught in the net of sensual indulgence in whatever form, which will blind him to the reality beyond, behind and above the merely material. The danger to which such an elaborate project exposes Périer is that he will become so bound up with it, an inessential and purely worldly enterprise, that he will neglect and eventually lose all sight of that which alone is essential and has reality.

But perhaps most illuminating as to the way in which this Platonic view of the symbolism of the sensible world helps to qualify Pascal's appreciation of the purely temporal and this-worldly is a further passage from the previous letter. After sounding his warning about the idolatry of those who set up some object from the material order as the supreme goal of their desires, he continues:

"..ceux à qui Dieu fait connaître ces grandes vérités doivent user de ces images pour jouir de Celui qu'elles représentent, et ne demeurer pas éternellement dans cet aveuglement charnel et judaïque qui fait prendre la figure pour la réalité." (p.485; G.E.II, p.251)

The injunction to penetrate to the reality shadowed forth by the images, implying as it does that reality in the highest sense of the term is identified with the supernatural,⁽¹⁾ and the figures with the world of sensible phenomena, is of less significance in some ways than the appearance, in this context, of the two verbs "user" and "jouir". For Pascal's employment of these two particular verbs to distinguish the sort of attitude appropriate to the phenomenal and the supernatural respectively points to his familiarity with, and endorsement of, Saint Augustine's division of things into the two categories of use and enjoyment.⁽²⁾ The reference to the "aveuglement charnel et judaïque" of those whose attention is rivetted to the sensible image, so that it conceals instead of revealing the reality behind, is also significant in this regard as foreshadowing the main theme of the doctrine of the "figuratifs" elaborated in the Pensées. The error of the "Juifs charnels" is there alleged to consist precisely in their reversal of the

(1) cf. also above, p.385 n.3.

(2) The passage from Saint Augustine's writings which Pascal has in mind here is almost certainly the following one from the treatise On Christian Doctrine, with which he was acquainted as a reference to it in the Pensées attests (p. 1260,n.; B.900): "To enjoy something is to cling to it with love for its own sake. To use something, however, is to employ it in obtaining that which you love, provided it is worthy of love. ..Suppose we were wanderers who could not live in blessedness except at home, miserable in our wandering and desiring to end it and to return to our native country. We would need vehicles .. But if the amenities of the journey and the motion of the vehicles itself delighted us, and we were led to enjoy those things which we should use, we should not wish to end our journey quickly, and, entangled in a perverse sweetness, we should be alienated from our country, ..Thus in this mortal life, wandering from God, if we wish to return to our native country where we can be blessed we should use this world and not enjoy it, so that the 'invisible things' of God 'being understood by the things that are made' may be seen,

true order of things with respect to images and reality, use and enjoyment. (1)

In their 'cupidity' they enjoy what ought to be used and use what ought to be enjoyed, thus making reality subservient to images by finding their end in what ought to be the means, and their means in what ought to be the end:

"..quand les biens sont promis en abondance, qui les empêchait d'entendre les véritables biens, sinon leur cupidité, qui déterminait ce sens aux biens de la terre? Mais ceux qui n'avaient de bien qu'en Dieu les rapportaient uniquement à Dieu. Car il y a deux principes qui partagent les volontés des hommes, la cupidité et la charité. Ce n'est pas que la cupidité ne puisse être avec la foi en Dieu et que la charité ne soit avec les biens de la terre; mais la cupidité use de Dieu et jouit du monde; et la charité, au contraire." (2) (p.1271; B.571)

This assignment of whatever belongs to the world of here and now to the category of "use", so that it becomes a mere means to the attainment of an end which lies outside its own order, contributes to the effect of the dominant Platonic theme in depriving it of all value in itself.

(v) Relativism remains the dominant characteristic of Pascal's estimates of value.

Although Pascal conceives of the world of sensible phenomena as sacramental and symbolic, witnessing to the existence of a spiritual reality behind and above, (3) he does not share the conviction of Thomas Aquinas

(cont. from p.400) that is, so that by means of corporeal and temporal things we may comprehend the eternal and spiritual." I, iv, 4. cf. *ibid.*, I, xxii, 20; I, xxv, 39; II, xxiii, 36. Also *Of True Religion*, III, 101, where he again interprets the passage from *Romans*, I, 20, with Platonic overtones, as "...the return from temporal to eternal things, .."; *ibid.* liv, 105; *The City of God*, I, xxviii.

(1) cf. also above, p.379ff.

(2) cf. Saint Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, III, x, 16; "I call 'charity' the motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of God for His own sake, and the enjoyment of one's self and of one's neighbour for the sake of God; but 'cupidity' is a motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of one's self, one's neighbour, or any corporeal thing for the sake of something other than God." *On Divers Questions*, xxx: "...all human perversity, or vice, consists in wishing to enjoy what we ought to use, and to use what we ought to enjoy."

(3) Further references to this sacramental aspect of the world of nature occur in the letters to Mlle. de Roannez: "Dieu veut que nous jugions de la grâce

cont. p.402.

that its symbolic character can be discerned by man simply through the exercise of his natural faculties. In the parable of the prison the various 'images' and 'instructions', provided in order to enable the captive to make good his escape, cannot be read aright by the naked human eye:

"..mais il faut avouer qu'on ne peut apercevoir ces saints caractères sans une lumière surnaturelle; car comme toutes choses parlent de Dieu à ceux qui le connaissent, et qu'elles le découvrent à tous ceux qui l'aiment, ces mêmes choses le cachent à tous ceux qui ne le connaissent pas." (p.484; G.E.II, p.250).

The value of the physical world therefore as a medium of revelation is entirely relative; for it will show a different face according as the observer who presents himself before it brings an eye already lightened by supernatural faith or not. (1) If the former, the universe will appear to him as but the phenomenon for expressing God's eternal reality; if the latter, it will be turned from a medium of instruction to an instrument of delusion, which ensnares him by captivating his senses so that he becomes unable to see beyond to the true ground which lies behind.

(cont. from p.401) par la nature, ..(p.509; G.E.VI, p.85) "..le secret de la nature qui couvre Dieu,.." (ibid; G.E.VI; p.87) "Dieu est demeuré caché sous le voile de la nature qui nous le couvre jusqu'à l'Incarnation;.." (p.510; G.E.VI, p.88) "Le voile de la nature qui couvre Dieu.." (ibid.; G.E.VI; p.89), and in the Pensées; "La nature a des perfections, pour montrer qu'elle est l'image de Dieu, et des défauts, pour montrer qu'elle n'en est que l'image." (p.1200; B.580) "..la conduite de Dieu est cachée sous la nature, comme en tous ses autres ouvrages." (p.1334; B.876)

(1) Although Saint Augustine likewise holds that the possibility of nature revealing its spiritual ground depends on the eye of the beholder, he does not stipulate for faith as the prerequisite in this regard. On the contrary, as the following passages serve to show, he believes with Plato that the capacity for recognition is possessed by all alike if they will but rouse themselves to exercise it: "All things are present to the blind as to the seeing. A blind man and one who hath sight, standing on the same spot, are each surrounded by the same forms of things; but one is present to them, the other absent, ...not because the things themselves approach the one and recede from the other, but on account of the difference of their eyes. ..Thus also is God everywhere

(cont.p.403)

Thus in the fourth letter to Mlle. de Roannez, where Pascal insists at some length on the importance of the sacramental aspect of the sensible world, it is the Christians alone who are envisaged as capable of perceiving its symbolic references:

"Toutes choses couvrent quelque mystère; toutes choses sont des voiles qui couvrent Dieu. Les Chrétiens doivent le reconnaître en tout." (1) (p.510; G.E.VI, p.89)

The Christian alone is able to see through and over the sensible appearances in this way to the reality which they veil - the world of nature lies open to his eye, which has been illuminated by divine grace, and so is enabled to trace there the footprints of the supernatural creator. The success which Pascal achieves in thus reinvesting the natural order with value as sacramental remains therefore wholly relative. (2)

(Cont from p.402) present, everywhere whole..." On The Psalms, XCIX, 5-6. "If a man merely stares at the world, while another not only sees but questions it, the world does not appear differently to them; but appearing the same to both, it is dumb to one and answers the other. Or rather it speaks to all, but only those can understand it who compare its answer with the truth that is within them." Confessions, X,vi, 10.

(1) The same point is made in a slightly different way in a short fragment from the Pensées: "Le monde subsiste pour exercer miséricorde et jugement, non pas comme si les hommes y étaient sortant des mains de Dieu, mais comme des ennemis de Dieu, auxquels il donne, par grâce, assez de lumière pour revenir, s'ils le veulent chercher et le suivre, mais pour les punir, s'ils refusent de le chercher..." (p.1293;B.584) Those whose eye has been enlightened by divine grace are therefore enabled to see in mere visible phenomena pointers beyond the world of sense to the spiritual reality: a condition which contrasts both with that of original righteousness, when no special gift of grace was necessary for man to perceive in the seen world an index to the unseen, and with that of the indifferent, for whom the material order constitutes simply a barrier to the spiritual since they have no inclination to seek after God. Thus in the first case the 'world', man's temporal surroundings, exercises a ministry of compassion by providing a pointer to the supernatural, while in the latter it acts as judgement, since men fail to take advantage of the opportunity it affords them of seeking for God.

(2) Saint Augustine is much more successful in this respect. In his scheme of creation based on the Platonic doctrine of 'participation' there are degrees of reality, and all things are graded according to their likeness to

(cont. on p.404)

This relativist attitude toward the world of sensible phenomena as shadowing forth its spiritual ground is perhaps most marked in Pascal's anti-deism - his rigorous denial of the worth of religion which relies on the argument from design in nature.⁽¹⁾ In this regard he entirely repudiates the view that nature can suggest to man the existence of God or of a spiritual order as an idea hitherto strange. He believes that God can, and indeed ought to, be recognized in nature, but not known from nature; that if a man be already firm in the knowledge of God he cannot help but see him in nature, but that it is impossible to discover him there if previously unknown. Thus he does not consider the Christian's contemplation of providence and life to be of the nature of a search after God, but rather to be of the nature of a recognition and observation of the operation of the God whom he already knows.

(cont. from p.403) God. Thus in The City of God he affirms that: ..nothing in nature being evil, ..but everything from earth to heaven ascending in a scale of goodness, and so from the visible unto the invisible, unto which all are unequal. And in the greatest is God the great workman, yet no less is he in the less: which little things are not to be measured by their own greatness, being near to nothing, but by their Maker's wisdom:.." (XI, XXII) Again in the same work he speaks of "running through all things under us (which could not be created, formed, nor ordered without the hand of the most essential, wise, and good God), and so through all the works of the creation; gathering from one more plain, and from another less apparent marks of his essence;.." (XI, XXVIII) Moreover, unlike Pascal, Saint Augustine does not hesitate to avail himself of the way in which natural objects reflect in their order, unity and beauty the unity and immutable perfection of God as proof of his existence: "For withersoever thou turnest He speaks to thee by the marks which he has impressed on his works, and when thou art slipping back to exterior things, he recalls thee by the very forms of these things ..Gaze at the sky, the earth, the sea, and all the things which shine in them or above them, or creep or fly or swim beneath them. They have forms because they have rhythm; take this away and they will no longer be. From whom then are they save from him, from whom rhythm is; since they have being only in so far as they are rhythmically ordered." (On Free Will, II,xvi. cf. also Confessions, XI,iv.

(1) The following passages from the Pensées attest this attitude: "J'admire avec quelle hardiesse ces personnes entreprennent de parler de Dieu. En adressant leurs discours aux impies, leur premier chapitre est de prouver la

(cont.on p.405)

Obviously such a position entails the rejection of the traditional Aristotelean proof of the supernatural reality, based on the fact that the physical universe gives no account of itself as a self-sustaining and self-contained system, but always implicitly postulates something beyond itself as sustaining it. But more than this it attests that curious blend of Pascal's fundamental notion of disparate orders of being with the element of Neo-Platonism detected in his thought earlier.⁽¹⁾ Since spiritual things are spiritually discerned it follows that the members of the two lower orders of being are precluded from the knowledge of them, for they are blind to the values of the supernatural order which lie without their purview. In Neo-Platonic terms, like alone sees like, or, as Plotinus's famous canon runs, "the spiritual world is not outside the Spirit..⁽²⁾ percipient and object in some mysterious way depend upon and correspond to each other. It is therefore inconceivable that the "charnels" or "savants" should be able by mere scrutiny to perceive the sacramental character of the world of nature; that world as seen by the spiritual man must of necessity be a very different world from the one seen by the carnal or intellectual man.

(cont. from p.404) Divinité par les ouvrages de la nature. Je ne m'étonnerais pas de leur entreprise s'ils adressaient leurs discours aux fidèles, car il est certain que ceux qui ont la foi vivre dedans le coeur voient incontinent que tout ce qui est n'est autre chose que l'ouvrage de Dieu qu'ils adorent. Mais pour ceux en qui cette lumière s'est éteinte, et dans lesquels on a dessein de la faire revivre, ces personnes destituées de foi et de grâce, qui, recherchant de toute leur lumière tout ce qu'ils voient dans la nature qui les peut mener à cette connaissance, ne trouvent qu'obscurité et ténèbres:.." (p.1183-4; B.242) " 'Eh quoi, ne dites-vous pas vous-même que le ciel et les oiseaux prouvent Dieu?' - Non. - 'Et votre religion ne le dit-elle pas?' - Non. Car encore que cela est vrai en un sens, pour quelques âmes à qui Dieu donne cette lumière, néanmoins cela est faux à l'égard de la plupart." (p.1183; B.244) "...je n'entreprendrai pas ici de prouver par des raisons naturelles, ou l'existence de Dieu, ..non seulement parce que je ne me sentirais pas assez fort pour trouver dans la nature de quoi convaincre des athées endurcis, mais encore parce que cette connaissance, sans Jésus-Christ, est inutile et stérile. ..Tous ceux qui cherchent Dieu hors de Jésus-Christ, et qui s'arrêtent dans la

The spiritual illumination which accompanies faith, itself the product of divine grace, enabling man to see what he could not otherwise see, is conceived of by Pascal somewhat after the pattern of the higher intellectual education in The Republic, whereby the eye of the soul is converted from the idols of the cave to the upper world of sunlight, and finally to the vision of the Good.⁽¹⁾ Thus the short treatise Sur la conversion du pécheur opens with the following statement:

"La première chose que Dieu inspire à l'âme qu'il daigne toucher véritablement, est une connaissance et une vue tout extraordinaire par laquelle l'âme considère les choses et elle-même d'une façon toute nouvelle." (p.548; G.E.X, p.422)

After receiving this illumination which transforms itself and its environment together, the soul undergoes an elevating process in the course of which it is converted from its preoccupation with this-worldly 'goods', and is finally brought to appreciate the values of the supernatural order:

"..sa raison aidée de la lumière de la grâce lui fait connaître qu'il n'y a rien de plus aimable que Dieu.." (p.550; G.E.X, p.425)

More significant for the present purpose however is the tonic effect which grace is represented as having on man's natural capacity, throwing open a whole new world consequent on the act of faith, so that the Christian's eye is illuminated and then turned back on the world with transfigured sight.

(cont. from p.405) nature, ou ils ne trouvent aucune lumière qui les satisfasse, ou ils arrivent à se former un moyen de connaître Dieu...sans médiateur, et par là ils tombent, ou dans l'athéisme ou dans le déisme..." (p.1281; B.556)

(from p.405 (1) cf. above, p.378-380.

" " (2) cf. Inge, op.cit., loc.cit.

(1) cf. Nettleship, op.cit., p.157ff. It is significant that Nettleship actually remarks that: "The general principle, then, of the higher education is expressed in the term 'conversion'." p.157.

This function of grace as a sort of tonic acting on man's natural faculties and thereby opening fresh perspectives to the eye of the believer, is further emphasized in a rather different context in a letter to Mme. Périer, in connection with the ability to perceive the spiritual significance, not of the world of sensible phenomena, but of Scriptural texts:

"..pour y entendre ce langage secret et étranger à ceux qui le sont du ciel, il faut que la même grâce, qui peut seule en donner la première intelligence, la continue et la rende toujours présente .. car notre mémoire, aussi bien que les instructions qu'elle retient, n'est qu'un corps inanimé et judaïque sans l'esprit qui les doit vivifier." (p.488-9; G.E.II, p.379-81)

By insisting in this way on the necessity for the spiritualized insight of faith for man to be able to trace the lineaments of the supernatural in the world of nature, Pascal is in effect doing little more than reaffirm the disparateness of the different orders of being. For the notion that man is capable of reaching to a knowledge of God through his own efforts is not only foreign to his mind as such, but runs counter to the whole gist of that conception. Hence the insistence that awareness of the supernatural can only come about in the first instance as the result of a discovery by God of himself to man.⁽¹⁾

Despite the fact therefore that Pascal arranges his various orders of being in a hierarchy in accordance with their correlative values, alleging elsewhere moreover that the meanest material forms belonging to the corporeal order represent the supernatural reality, because even they partake in some

(1) cf. especially the following: "La foi est un don de Dieu. Ne croyez pas que nous disions que c'est un don de raisonnement." (p.1222; B.279) "Dieu seul peut mettre les vérités divines dans l'âme, et par la manière qu'il lui plaît." (De l'esprit géométrique, p.392; G.E.IX, p.271-2) "..il est impossible que Dieu soit jamais la fin, s'il n'est le principe." (p.1203; B.448)

measure in the unity which is truly realized only in God, the gulf remains unbridged between the different standpoints whence proceed his sometimes contradictory estimates of value. Since he stipulates that it is only to the true spiritual eye, illuminated by grace, that natural phenomena reveal their relation to the supernatural, such an attempt to give back value to the natural order does but add a further dimension to the relativity of his scale. The mere fact that the visible to the Christian's eye is in every part a revelation of the invisible, so that he sees even in the things of the natural order a witness to the supernatural, does not break down the duality; considered in itself this order still manifests varying degrees of positive worth; but when considered in relation to the supernatural order all is changed, and it appears as in itself worthless. Thus, just as in Pascal's scheme of reality there is no step by step rise from a lower order to a higher one through a 'chain of being', so also at the critical points in his scale of values differences of degree cease to have any relevance when a radical difference of kind is in question.

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