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Anti-Humanism as the Objectifying Logic of Politics :

A Pascalian Detour to Reread Althusser

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The starting point of this study is a question that arises in reading Louis Althusser: what is the relationship between Althusser's philosophy and that of Blaise Pascal, the seventeenth century philosopher and scientist ? The question stems from the following passage in Althusser's article entitled "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses":

"[W]e are indebted to Pascal's defensive 'dialectic' for the wonderful formula which will enable us to invert the order of the notional schema of ideology. Pascal says, more or less: 'Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe'. He thus scandalously inverts the order of things [...] A fortunate scandal that makes him stick with Jansenist defiance to a language that directly names the reality."¹

"Kneel down, move your lips in prayer, and you will believe" — In the context of this article, Althusser's phrase corresponds to a specific thesis, that of the materiality of ideology. According to Althusser, our spontaneous reasoning vis-à-vis belief remains idealistic. For instance, we often think that spiritual consciousness precedes prayer, unconsciously assuming that a prayer expresses consciousness. This order of things, in which a religious awareness precedes a physical act of prayer, reveals, in Althusser's terminology, an "ideological representation" of ideology, and is therefore idealistic². But the materialist

analysis of ideology that Althusser advocates contradicts the primacy of the ideal over the material. Based on this analysis, the physical act of prayer does not emanate from the idealized existence of God. In fact, it is precisely by repeating a series of gestures with the body — kneeling and moving one's lips, for example — that the individual manages to imprint the idea of God on his or her mind. Althusser sees the repeated gestures of prayer as a major explanatory principle of the existence of ideology. To emphasize that body gestures play a key role, Althusser does not hesitate to approach the Foucauldian argument of "the discipline of the body"³.

If we consider the "theory" of interpellation Althusser develops in the article, the question of repeated body gestures goes beyond the seventeenth century. The theory seeks to explain what secularized twentieth-century society produces.

In this study, we deal directly with the source from which Althusser found his inspiration, namely Pascalian philosophy. According to Althusser, Pascal was the only author whose texts he could read while in captivity during the Second World War⁴. This study examines three characteristics that Pascal and Althusser seem to share: their epistemological interests in the notion of the void; their anthropologic tendency that can be called anti-humanist; and their critical look at the legitimacy of the State. Let's examine each in turn.

1. The Epistemology of the Void

Void is one of the notions that clearly betray the presence of Pascalian thought in Althusser. It literally haunts Althusser's texts⁵. For example, Althusser describes his daily life at l'École normale supérieure in a 1961 letter: "This morning, (···) I was talking with the Deputy Director, a great Pascal specialist,

on the theoretical problems posed by the extract from the *Treatise on Vacuum*". This letter was addressed to his friend Franca Madonia whose dissertation was on Pascal⁶. In addition, in a manuscript from the 1980's entitled "The undercurrent of materialism", Althusser returns to the notion of the void, for instance, in the following: "In the 17th century we see Pascal considering [the idea of the object of philosophy], and introducing the void as a philosophical object"⁷.

The extract from the *Treatise on Vacuum* to which Althusser makes reference in this sentence is among the Pascalian writings on physics. Starting in 1646, Pascal reproduces and develops the Torricelli's experiment. Essentially, Torricelli's experiment involves sealing one end of a long glass tube and completely filling it with mercury, then plugging the other end before turning the tube upside down and putting it in a basin of mercury. Then bottom plug is removed, opening the tube in the mercury. The mercury is seen to descend in the tube, creating a vacuum above it. In the academic milieu of that period, the question of knowing how to interpret this "apparent void" aroused great interest. As we know, Pascal takes a "vacuist" interpretation which is opposed to Aristotelian physics. According to the latter, nature abhors a vacuum. A void could not exist, and this "apparent void" had to be interpreted differently: for example, we could suppose that it was filled with some "subtle matter", as the "plenists" affirmed. Pascal triggered a controversy against this plenist interpretation represented by the Jesuit Etienne Noël.

Pascal's argument in *Preface to the Treatise on Vacuum* is based on a pattern of opposition between the ancients and the moderns. In his view, the ancients have the right to say that nature abhors a vacuum, because they had no experiment to help them realize the erroneous nature of the hypothesis. That said, the authority of the ancients is not undeniable with regards to "subjects falling under the senses or under reasoning". Indeed, Pascal would like to

separate those domains where authority has the last word and those where reason prevails over authority. Let's briefly comment on this separation. On one hand, authority plays a primordial role in such subjects as history, law, and theology, where "one wishes only to know what others have written". With regard to theology, Pascal emphasizes that authority alone determines truth here. He says: "[The] principles [of theology] are above that of nature and reason, and that, the spirit of man being too weak to attain them by his own efforts, can't reach these intellectual heights if he is not supported by an omnipotent and supernatural strength". On the other hand, in domains where "all sciences [...] are subjected to experiment and to reasoning", Pascal observes that each generation brings new elements to knowledge that previous generations have acquired. In *Preface to the Treatise on Vacuum*, this vision of the accumulation of knowledge leads to a captivating image of progress, according to which human reason is created for an infinite process⁸.

"In a way, people today are in the same state as the ancient philosophers were, if they could have aged until the present, adding to their knowledge that which their studies would have enabled them to acquire with the advantage of so many centuries. From there comes, by particular prerogative, not only that each man advances from day to day in the sciences, but that all mankind together make continual progress as the universe ages, because the same thing happens in the succession of men as in the different ages of a particular individual. So that the entire series of men, during the course of centuries, should be considered as one man who subsists forever and learns continuously."⁹

In this way, Pascal derives a double consequence from the plenist formula that "nature abhors a vacuum". The first consequence is that Pascal contributed

to scientific progress by admitting to the existence of a vacuum in nature. The second consequence concerns the relationship between two categories of knowledge. Despite his belief in scientific progress, Pascal accepts the distinction between knowledge based on authority and knowledge based on the senses and reasoning. This finding is crucial insofar as this distinction itself derives not from natural science but theology. Shortly we will reflect on the question of which system of values Pascal uses to maintain the primacy of theology. But before that, we need to examine an anthropological presupposition of this distinction, that is to say, anti-humanism.

2. Anti-Humanism

Althusser defines humanism as an ideology and thus suggests that any humanist interpretation of Marx is idealist. It follows that Marx's theoretical anti-humanism establishes, according to Althusser, "the absolute (negative) precondition [*condition de possibilité*] of the (positive) knowledge of the human world itself, and of its practical transformation"¹⁰. Without going into a detailed analysis, we can characterize the function of the term "anti-humanism" in Althusser in two ways. On one hand, this term brings Althusser closer to other contemporary thinkers insofar as Kojève, Levi-Strauss, Derrida, and Foucault each evoked in their own way the "disappearance", "end" or "dissolution of man"¹¹. On the other hand, Althusser opposes other Western Marxists whose hallmark is humanism. The "theoretical anti-humanism" of Marx is his battle cry for claiming that the scientific nature of *Capital* cannot be reduced in any way to the political posturing of the Communist Party (French or Soviet). But as Gérard Ferreyrolles pointed out, Pascal is often considered as an apolitical philosopher¹². Therein, it seems, lies a paradoxical convergence between Pascal and Althusser. They indeed share an anthropology that radically questions the

legitimacy of the State. For Pascal, it is about emphasizing the temporal nature (and thus ephemeral nature) of honors; to Althusser, it is about challenging Gaullist authoritarianism and the Communist inability to produce a substantive criticism of Stalinism. In this study, we hereafter name this calling into question of existing institutional politics “the political” (*le politique*).

Henry Gouhier, who studied seventeenth century anti-humanism, gives a threefold definition of humanism.

"1. Humanism signifies a certain sufficiency in man, albeit relative in Christian humanism; such would be the case if man, even if a sinner, can do something, only with the strengths that make him human, notably reason and will."

"2. Which means: by only the strengths of his nature. It is no coincidence that the notion of nature has always been linked to humanism, at least until contemporary existentialisms in which the notion of history replaced it. The sufficiency that humanism recognizes is, in fact, that of nature [...] [I]t implies a relative goodness in nature."

"3. This nature of man is unique in that it expresses itself in and by culture."¹³

This definition of humanism led Gouhier to suggest that anti-humanism – Christian anti-humanism, among others – be described with inverted propositions of the three above-mentioned characteristics. Namely: 1) Man is so weak that he will never attain self-sufficiency. For his own salvation, he needs the grace of God. 2) Human nature becomes bad after the Fall. 3) Culture highlights the misery of man's conditions. If this definition of anti-humanism is relevant, we can see a concrete example in Pascal's text on grace.

As Franz Borkenau noted in one of his works, it is important to take into

account "the affinity between him [Pascal] and the Calvinists"¹⁴. If we adopt the definition we have just given, both Pascal and the Calvinists seem to be anti-humanists. But this definition we have made would not be appropriate for Pascal, because this affinity with the Calvinists would have made his ideological battles against the Jesuits within the Catholic Church difficult to sustain. So, to avoid any confusion, Pascal highlights the differences between his own theological understanding and that of the Calvinists:

"[The] Calvinists differ horribly from us regarding the will of God in the creation of man, and we are conform in words to God's absolute will for redemption, but differ in meaning, in that we believe that the decree of God comes after the anticipation of Adam's sin and is given to criminal men, while they claim that this decree is not only prior to but causes Adam's sin and is given to men who are still innocent."¹⁵

We can summarize the Pascalian argument in three stages. First, Pascal seeks to differentiate himself from the Calvinists. Second, he makes the theological distinction between before and after the Fall of Adam. Third, the "decree of God" does not come before the anticipation of "sin", with due respect to the Calvinists.

This argument puts Pascal in a particular position in the discursive configuration of the seventeenth century, which was described by Jean Dagens as "the century of St. Augustine."¹⁶ Indeed, he is fighting on two fronts. As for the first the distinction between before and after the Fall of Adam helps Pascal to affirm himself as Catholic by allowing him to emphasize the importance of free will. Pascal accuses the Calvinists of suppressing it with the doctrine of double predestination. As to the second, Pascal is dealing with internal enemies to Catholicism, the Molinists. Being themselves humanists, they could attack

Pascal in the following manner: if, as the Molinists would say, Pascal is anti-humanist, what would free will then mean to him ? Pascal prepares to respond to this attack in *Writings on Grace*. Indeed, in it he clarifies once again his position on the distinction between before and after the Fall of Adam. But this time he does not do it to contradict the Calvinists but puts free will on the side of the innocent man before the Fall.

"Adam's free will, says St. Augustine, had nothing in itself to do with concupiscence, and this is not disputed by anyone: such that being entirely free and unconstrained, he could by this shortly sufficient relief [*par ce secours prochainement suffisant*] remain in justice, or move away from it, without being either forced or attracted by one or the other. But now, in the corruption that has infected the body and soul, concupiscence, having heightened, rendered man a slave to his delight, such that being a slave to sin, he cannot be delivered from this slavery except by a more powerful delight that makes him a slave to righteousness."¹⁷

According to Henri Gouhier, the opposition between Augustinianism and Molinism in the seventeenth century is not only about doctrinal disputes. In his words, in reality, every doctrine conceals "a psychological substructure"¹⁸. In Augustinism, grace manifests itself with a sense of freedom. The feeling of freedom is interpreted here as the absence of constraint in that grace frees man from the bondage of lust. It goes without saying that the choice of the elected remains a mystery to man. This Augustinism corresponds at least in part to the position of Pascal. In Molinism, meanwhile, grace always creates a sense of freedom but with a less restrictive theology regarding human behavior. Casuistry is there to clear the conscience with the most diverse behaviors. In the eyes of the friends of Port Royal, the Jesuits lose sight of the essence of belief in their

loosening of moral discipline in efforts to gain more followers. Pascal takes a more rigorous position. For him, grace is a source of help for man, who is too weak to break the yoke with concupiscence on his own. Grace guides man toward a prayer that would be the only way to reach salvation. Thus Pascal makes anti-humanism compatible with the theme of freedom.

Returning to Althusser, it is in this anti-humanist pattern of prayer that he meets Pascal. To grasp the nature of this pattern, let us refer to the famous passage from *Pensées* on Pascal's wager.

"But at least learn that your inability to believe, since reason brings you to this and you nevertheless cannot believe. Work, then, not to convince yourself with the increasing proof of God, but by diminishing your passions. You would like to find faith, and you do not know the way? You want to heal your unfaithfulness, and you are asking for the remedies to do so? Learn from those who have been bound like you and who now wager all of their good: they are people who know the path you would like to follow and are cured of a pain from which you too wish to be healed. Follow the way by which they began: it is by doing everything as if they believed, taking holy water, having masses said, etc. Even naturally, this will make you believe and you will be stupefied [*Naturellement même cela vous fera croire et vous abêtira*]." ¹⁹

Philippe Sellier explains the use of the verb "abêtir" in the following way: "[This verb] does not mean to make oneself stupid, but to use what is common to man and animals, that is "the machine"[...] of the body, to encourage to custom "the automaton"[...] to belief"²⁰. In other words, the root of the verb "abêtir" – the noun "bête" (beast) – suggests that the man is an "automaton" and equally a "spirit"²¹. If the repetition of external actions is essential to lead

man to belief, it is because this type of physical repetition makes the “beast” that we are accustomed to a deep conviction. Custom, which is nothing other than an institutionalized form of this repetition, effectively works the spirit of man. In this regard, Pascal gives the following formula: “[Custom] inclines the automaton, which leads the spirit even without thinking”²². In short, anti-humanism is a chain connecting Althusser to Pascal, and consists of a triad of body, custom, and belief. Thus the anti-humanist anthropology implied by the use of the verb “abêtir” lays the foundation for an analysis of what we call the political.

3. The Mystical Foundation of Authority

Jacques Derrida evokes the notion of “the mystical foundation of authority” in his work entitled *Force of Law*²³. He explicitly refers to a passage of *Pensées*²⁴. In this work, Derrida addresses what we have termed the calling into question of existing institutional politics. According to Derrida, the law, which is at the heart of institutional politics, contains a dimension of violence not only in the moment of its foundation but also in the time of its conservation²⁵. The key point for Derrida is the equivocity of justice that emanates from this link between law and political violence. He gives a formula that sums up this ambiguity by quoting Walter Benjamin: “there is [...] something rotten at the heart of the law”²⁶.

We cannot amply comment on Derrida’s text in this study. However, let us note that this ambiguity of temporal justice comes from Pascal’s argument, which puts into perspective the conscience of those who take the established order as evident. It highlights a worldview whose engine is nothing other than the concupiscence of men. Pascal did not totally reject temporal justice, but limits the domains in which it exercises supremacy. Indeed, what Derrida

describes as "the assumption of [the] Christian pessimism" leads Pascal to take into account its limited legitimacy²⁷. Temporal justice represents an authority whose system of values is ultimately inferior to the justice of spiritual salvation.

Let's refer to the *Discourses on the Condition of the Great* in which Pascal describes the ambiguity of temporal justice in the form of three stories addressed to a child of an aristocratic family.

The first discourse begins with an allegorical story.

"A man was thrown by a tempest onto an unknown island, the inhabitants of which were seeking their king, whom they had lost; and as he had accidentally some resemblance to him both in face and figure, he was mistaken for the king, and recognized as such by all the people. At first he knew not how to act: but he resolved, at length, to yield to his good fortune. He received, therefore, all the respect with which they honored him, and allowed himself to be treated as their king"²⁸.

The moral of this passage is that the aristocratic child, to whom Pascal is speaking, must have a "double thought" [*double pensée*] as the character in this story. "Double thought" is necessary for a noble because it makes him lucid enough to survive his condition. Pascal refers to this thought as double in that it divides the existence of man into two parts: the outer appearance and the inner conviction. The character in this story, who owes his status of king to bodily resemblance, inevitably becomes aware of the gap between the inner life and the outer disguise. If we return to the aristocratic child to whom Pascal is speaking, the law – that is to say, the existing legal system – favors him by giving him a hereditary succession. But this first speech of Pascal is not intended to criticize the existing legal system. What is essential in his view is, in particular, the imaginary relationship that the prince maintains with the authority of laws.

To this imaginary relationship we have with the law, the second discourse adds the distinction between two kinds of greatness. It distinguishes the greatness of the establishment, based on the rank of the family from which the individual comes, with the natural grandeur bestowed for example upon a talented geometrician. Pascal pulls out from this distinction the duties that correspond to each type of greatness. He also refuses there is any confusion here between outer appearance and inner conviction. Let us refer to one of Pascal's formulae that crystallizes what is owed to the greatness of establishment: "It is not necessary, because you are a Duke, that I think of highly of you; but it is necessary that I salute you"²⁹. By formulating thus, Pascal points to a possible fault, that of confusing external greetings we offer to the greatness of establishment with the intimate feeling of respect that natural grandeur naturally inspires.

To this separation between outer appearance and inner conviction, the third discourse adds an opposition, that between lust and love. On one hand, Pascal raises the notion of "the kingdom of charity" that reigns in God's order. It despises lust and seeks only the "goods of charity". On the other hand, temporal power bears no resemblance to the order of God: its power is to satisfy human greed. The best thing a ruler can do is be as generous as possible with his subjects.

Truthfully speaking, there is not only morality in the ruler's incentive to generosity. It also corresponds to a utilitarian rationality of power. If politics functions according to concupiscence, why not regulate it through the redistribution of wealth ? Nevertheless, Pascal's argument does not seek to optimize such a cost-benefit relationship for the exercise of power. Instead, it purports to exceed the logic of utilitarian calculation. It is primarily a refusal to bury oneself inside this rationality. According to Pascal, a ruler is not immune from perdition, even if he is generous with his subjects. Admittedly, as Pascal

says, a generous ruler would be more "honest" than "people who are damned [...] by greed, by brutality, by debauchery, by violence, by outbursts, by blasphemies". Yet Pascal suggests that acting as a "gentleman" [*honnête homme*] does not save the ruler from the death of the soul. Ultimately, temporal justice belongs to the realm of concupiscence³⁰.

The extract from *Pensées* known by the name of "the mystical foundation of authority" shares the theme of the ambiguity of temporal justice. The *Discourses on the Condition of the Great* already put the authority of law in perspective with the opposition between love and concupiscence. Now, it is through geographic boundaries that Pascal puts it into perspective.

"[...] we see nothing just or unjust that does not change in quality when the climate changes. Raising the bar by three degrees overturns all jurisprudence. A meridian decides the truth. After a few years of possession, the fundamental laws change. The law has its epochs, the entry of Saturn in Leo marks the origin of a crime for us. Pleasant justice that is bounded by a river ! Truth is on this side of the Pyrenees, error is beyond."³¹

Just as with Montaigne, it is in his relationship with the war, in particular, that Pascal calls into question the authority of law. A war almost always occurs at geographic borders. But the justice that temporal power produces in a given territory is unable to resolve conflicts between monarchs.

Indeed, the authority of law, which presupposes the supremacy of a temporal power over a given territory, is powerless in conflicts where the issue is precisely this supremacy itself. To this relativism, philosophy usually opposes natural laws. This is what Pascal does. He calls the natural laws "common to all countries" and says that without a doubt they exist.

But, men are corrupt after the Fall. After having confirmed the universality

of natural law, Pascal immediately adds a proposition that makes one think of the anti-humanism which we mentioned earlier. He says "this good reason once corrupted has corrupted all". In our view, this addition means that the natural laws are in fact rejected as a basis for politics. Pascal believes that the surest foundation of the law is "current custom".

"[...] one says that the essence of justice is the authority of the legislator, another that it is the convenience of the sovereign, another that is current custom. And it is the most sure. Nothing, according to reason alone, is just in itself, all changes with time. Custom creates equity, for the simple reason that it is accepted. It is the mystical foundation of its authority."³²

Pascal's position is thus clear. It is custom that lays the basis for the authority of law. But this Pascalian acceptance of relativism allows for an equivocal reading.

In one sense, by identifying custom as a basis of authority, Pascal is brought closer to conventionalism. We define conventionalism as a doctrine according to which the legitimacy of an institution does not come from the conclusion reached by a rational examination of the laws, but through conformity with the custom historically rooted in a given society. Indeed, conventionalism has a feature in common with the anti-humanist notion of prayer, in that it does not presuppose any ideal principle that would transcend the custom.

In another sense, the function of custom changes character when Pascal analyzes the issue of the opinion of the people. In his view, the people take the ancientness of laws and custom "as evidence of their truth"³³. Still, according to Pascal, the semi-learned criticize the opinion of the people for taking into account only external signs when it comes to judging the merit of a man or the fairness of a law. The semi-learned thus despise of the opinion of the people and

triumph by showing what they call "the madness of the world," that is to say the myopia of the common people³⁴. Besides the people and the semi-learned, Pascal introduces a third and final category, the learned. The learned deem the opinion of the people to be sound. They approve of it then, but not quite for the same reason as the people. If we take again a formula from *Pensées*, it is because of a "hidden thought" [*pensée de derrière*] that the learned endorse the opinion of the people³⁵. Let us briefly try to describe this "hidden thought". For Pascal, the greatest evil is civil war. To prevent it, the people must obey laws and customs. If they do this, it is only because they believe that the laws and customs represent justice. But the semi-learned would say that the laws and customs do not always represent the truth. In their eyes, the opinion of the people is based solely on "authority only, without truth" of the laws and customs³⁶. This discourse of the semi-learned, which would characterize the opinion of the people as authoritarian and obscurantist, has a flaw : it does not take into account the practical consequence engendered by the act of stating a negative judgment about it. Indeed, the people obey as they believe that the truth remains in laws and customs. Pascal is concerned that this confidence can collapse among common people. He says, "[the people] are susceptible to revolt as soon as they are shown that [the laws and customs] are worthless"³⁷. This is why the discourse of the semi-learned criticizing the opinion of the people must be challenged³⁸. Otherwise, the laws and customs that make up the "mystical foundation" of the authority would lose legitimacy, and would degrade into what Pascal calls the "grimace". An extract from *Pensées* anticipates a scene of insurgency in which the people attack the authority of law : "When force attacks the grimace [...] a simple soldier takes the square cap of the presiding judge and spins it out of the window"³⁹.

However, such a "hidden thought" cannot be reduced to an anti-revolutionary utilitarianism of nobility. Indeed, Pascal's attitude to the opinion

of the people is itself twofold. Politically, Pascal finds healthy the obedience to authority that ensues. On a purely rational level, however, the opinion of the people is futile. In short, a healthy opinion is not necessarily a true opinion. Pascal said, "It is still true that the people are vain"⁴⁰. We assume that this proposition applies only to the realm of reason, not the realm of politics. The epistemological dichotomy we have discussed in relation to the concept of vacuum seems to approve this disjunction.

Let us conclude by commenting on this disjunction between politics and reason. Here, Pascal's expression "the madness of the world" we mentioned above is interesting. Indeed, interpreted literally, it could signify something other than the irrationality of the opinion of the people, and could mean instead the perversion of the world as it is reflected in the eyes of the semi-learned. Pascal characterizes this perversion of the world as a permanent gap between politics and reason. As a good philosopher, he summons Plato and Aristotle as representatives of reason. In an extract from *Pensées*, he explains why Plato and Aristotle wrote their political treaties : "If they wrote about politics, it was as if to settle a lunatic asylum". Added to this is that Pascal considers the writing of these treaties to be "the least philosophical and serious part of their lives". In short, they would have written them for *divertissement*. But these treaties have a very solemn air. Let's refer to a passage in which Pascal explains why they are so.

"[If Plato and Aristotle] pretended [to] talk about [politics] as a great thing, it is because they knew that the madmen to whom they were speaking thought themselves kings and emperors. They entered into their principles to moderate their folly with the least trouble possible."⁴¹

The problem is that it seems neither Dionysius I of Syracuse for Plato nor Alexander of Macedonia for Aristotle suffered from psychological problems

requiring hospitalization. On the contrary, history teaches us that Dionysius I and Alexander were sufficiently intelligent to expand their influence. They were therefore not sick people who falsely considered themselves monarchs ; as such, they were true rulers. So why does Pascal speak of them as "mad"? It could be that he believes that a gap between reason and political authority is inevitable. Among those with names such as "kings and emperors", the disjunction between reason and political authority reaches a level where the gap between words and deeds becomes "crazy." In another extract from *Pensées*, Pascal still alludes to Plato. He says : "This is why the wisest of legislators said that for the good of man, you often have to trick them"⁴². This is the Platonic theme of noble lies.

In fact, Althusser opposes Pascal to Plato in order to develop his thesis on the "eternity" of ideology. In the eyes of Althusser, the Platonic theme of noble lies is equivalent to the analysis of ideologues of the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries (e. g. Cabanis, Destutt de Tracy)⁴³. In their view, ideology is seen as a means of manipulation created by the ruling class in order to deceive the exploited class⁴⁴. But Althusser takes as materialist a problematic according to which "Human societies secrete ideology as the very element and atmosphere indispensable to their historical respiration and life" (including classless societies)⁴⁵. Pascal's presence in Althusser seems to correspond to this "eternal" element of ideology. The "theory" of interpellation, which illustrates the presence of this element in Althusser, gives "the Christ of Pascal" as the Subject (written with a capital letter) who interpellates individuals as subjects⁴⁶. Then the latter will recognize in themselves the phenomenon of a split, such as "double thought" or "hidden thought". Finally, this split is considered to be a precondition for ideological and political struggles. Just as *Pensées* anticipates a scene of popular insurgency against the "grimace", Althusser notes that the "ideological sub-formations 'produced' in the apparatuses [...] 'make the gears grate and grind'"⁴⁷. He finds out, in these noises, the potentiality for revolution

to come⁴⁸. Until it comes, Althusser's "eternal" anti-humanism continues to struggle against an ideological core, namely, the idea of man as a constituent subject. The theoretical anti-humanism allows individuals to objectively represent to themselves our capitalist societies, which evoke in several respects what the author of *Pensées* has called the realm of concupiscence.

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1 Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, translated by G. M. Goshgarian, Verso, 2014, p. 260.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 259-260.

3 Louis Althusser, *L'Avenir dure longtemps* suivi de *Les Faits*, Stock/IMEC, 2007, p.473.

4 *Ibid.*

5 Cf. François Matheron, "The Recurrence of the Void in Louis Althusser", translated by Erin A. Post, *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture & Society*, Volume 10, Issue 3, 1998, pp. 22-37.

6 Louis Althusser, *Lettres à Franca*, Stock/IMEC, 1998, p.114.

7 Louis Althusser, *Écrits philosophiques et politiques*, tome I, Stock/IMEC, 1994, p.547.

8 All quotes in this paragraph are from B. Pascal, "Sur le traité du vide. Préface" in *Les Provinciales, Pensées et Opuscules divers*, texts edited by Gérard Ferreyrolles et Philippe Sellier, Livre de Poche, Classiques Garnier, 2004, p.84-92.

9 *Ibid.*, p.89-90.

10 Louis Althusser, "Marxism and Humanism" in *For Marx*, translated by Ben Brewster, The Penguin Press, 1969, p. 229. ; Althusser, *Pour Marx*, La Découverte, 1996, p. 236.

11 Cf. Stefanos Geroulanos, *An Atheism that is not Humanist emerges in French Thought*, Stanford University Press, 2010, p. 14.

12 Cf. Gérard Ferreyrolles, *Pascal et la raison du politique*, P.U.F., 1984, p. 5.

13 Gouhier, *L'anti-humanisme au XVIIe siècle*, Vrin, 1987, p.20-21.

14 Franz Borkenau, *Der Übergang vom feudalen zum bürgerlichen Weltbild* (1934), Arno

Press, 1975, S. 493.

- 15 Blaise Pascal, *Œuvres complètes*, tome III, Desclée de Brouwer, 1991, p. 768.
- 16 Cf. Philippe Sellier, *Pascal et Saint Augustin*, Albin Michel, 1995.
- 17 Pascal, *Œuvres complètes*, tome III, *op.cit.*, p. 703.
- 18 Gouhier, *op.cit.*, p.35.
- 19 [B233] (« B » = Édition Brunschvicg)
- 20 B. Pascal, *Les Provinciales*, *op.cit.*, p.1215.
- 21 Cf. [B252]
- 22 *Ibid.*
- 23 Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: "The Mystical Foundation of Authority"" in Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld, David Gray Carlson (eds.), *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*, Routledge, 1993, pp. 3-67.
- 24 *Ibid.* p.14. Cf. [B294]
- 25 *Ibid.* p.38.
- 26 *Ibid.* p.39.
- 27 Jacques Derrida, *Force de loi. Le « fondement mystique de l'autorité »*, Galilée, 1994, p.32.
- 28 B. Pascal, *Les Provinciales*, *op.cit.*, p.748.
- 29 *Ibid.*,p.751.
- 30 All quotes in this paragraph are from B. Pascal, *Les Provinciales*, *op.cit.*, pp. 753-754.
- 31 [B294]
- 32 [B294]
- 33 [B325]
- 34 [B337, 324]
- 35 [B337]
- 36 [B325]
- 37 [B325]
- 38 [B328]
- 39 [B310]
- 40 [B328]
- 41 [B331]
- 42 [B294]
- 43 Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, p. 182, p.253.
- 44 *For Marx*, p.235 ; *Pour Marx*, p. 242.
- 45 *For Marx*, p.232, p.236 ; *Pour Marx*, p.238, p. 242.

46 *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, p. 195.

47 *On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, p. 88.

48 "When nothing is happening, the Ideological State Apparatuses have worked to perfection. When they no longer manage to function, to reproduce the relations of production in the 'consciousness' of all subjects, 'events' happen, [...] more or less serious events, as in May, the commencement of a first dress rehearsal [*une première répétition générale*]. With, at the end, some day or the other, after a long march, the revolution" (*On the Reproduction of Capitalism*, p. 206 ; *Sur la reproduction*, p.242).