

regime. The discordant elements which go to make up the Nazi Party are, nearly all, radically opposed in theory to the domination of usury. The party itself is an amalgam of all the varied forces of revolt, mainly justified, in modern Germany. Hence its appeal, hence also—since it is an amalgam—its violence and its apparent irrationality. While all these discordant elements are in revolt against the liberal ideology and its accompanying economic exploitation, the philosophic basis of the revolt is insufficient. For while a policy of revolt against a dominant mood is sufficient to produce a revolution, it is insufficient to produce a new social order. This lack of a really effective philosophic basis explains two curious facts—the domination of the movement by finance *in practice* and the absorption of Socialists and Communists into the Nazi ranks—which is generally admitted. The distinction between two rival brands of totalitarian statolatry is, in practice, difficult for the masses. Incidentally, the Nazi agrarian policy is by no means the fiasco which the author suggests.

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PHILOSOPHY

ETUDES SUR PASCAL : DE L'AUTOMATISME A LA FOI. By Georges Desgrippes. (Paris: Téqui. 14 frs.)

This is primarily an analysis of the doctrine of Pascal concerning the process of conversion—a design which leaves little room for originality, but supplies many opportunities for distortions and blunders of all kinds. “Nos instruments sont trop mousses” On pp. 53 and 81, for example, there are sentences which look as though Desgrippes has overlooked one meaning of the word “coeur” in Pascal’s vocabulary—a purely intellectual faculty, “le coeur sent qu’il y a 3 dimensions dans l’espace”; and it may be thought that Pascal’s reiterated and eloquent denial of the possibility of learning the Existence of God by reason has not received, in the fourth *Etude*, all the attention which the structural importance of this denial in the *Argument du Pari* demands for it. On the other hand, the whole theory of “l’automate,” as invented by Descartes and illustrated in the *Pensées*, is analyzed with excellent lucidity: this part of the book is perhaps the best work that has been done on the subject.

But there is discussion here, as well as analysis. The degree and manner in which Nature and Grace are inter-related in the life of man were matters upon which Pascal professed interesting opinions. He recognized a Christian ethos, which could be separated both in theory and in practice from Christian belief. He recommended the imitation of specifically Catholic behaviour

as a stepping-stone between agnosticism and faith. He declared that Nature *offers itself* to Grace "by humiliations." He conceived of a state ("oui, mais . . . je suis fait de telle sorte que je ne puis croire") in which the desire of an ideal, darkly seen, may be the very work of Grace in a soul still immersed in Nature. The importance and complexity of Pascal's theory of Habit in relation to these problems are excellently shown in Desgrippes' first two *Etudes*, and his apology for the Pascalian "abêtissement" is at once original and persuasive. Let man once make the wager, admit the necessity of the incomprehensible, and deliberately order his life in accordance with a principle of topsyturvydom, apparently contrary to all the dictates of Nature (though sanctioned by Reason—"rien n'est si conforme à la raison que ce désaveu de la raison"), and he will be "abêti": then not only will serious Natural "obices" be removed, but positively, because "la soumission est un appel d'amour," the prerequisite conditions of conversion will be achieved, and Grace is invited.

Somewhat less convincing is the discussion, in the third *Etude*, of the difference between belief by Habit ("qui fait tant de chrétiens"), and belief by Inspiration. Pascal seems to have indicated no observable diversity between the two, but to have been content with the irreducible opposition which separates them in the Divine view. Desgrippes' teleological explanation contributes little to our understanding of Pascal, and may even be regarded as an anachronism.

Pascal's rejection of orthodox natural theology, the reasons for which are sympathetically analysed in the fourth *Etude*, is complicated by a capital inconsistency. In the margin of the MS. of the *Argument du Pari*, beside the short passage of dialectic which was intended to dispose finally of the metaphysical proofs, Pascal has noted: "N'y a-t-il point une vérité substantielle, voyant tant de choses [vraies] qui ne sont point la vérité même?"—as clear an epitome of one form of the argument from contingency as could be desired. After writing the *Pari*, then, Pascal moved so much nearer to the orthodox view as to question the validity of his most important assumption—but not so far as to abandon the vicious argument. In these circumstances, there remains little hope of codifying the position of Pascal in this matter. The fluidity of his opinion is its best apology. "Pascal n'est pas un philosophe"; and if the extraordinary vigour and activity of his mind incessantly led him to philosophize, he may yet claim the indulgence, as he receives all the patronizing condescension, due to his amateur status.

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