

dialektische Materialismus by Gustav Wetter (Verlag Herder, Freiburg). The first is a series of essays by different experts on the meaning of *Humani Generis* for philosophy, biblical study, Evolution, etc. All the essays are very correct, informative and somewhat wooden; they will help people to see what it was all about without greatly enlightening those who knew already what it was about. Wetter's study of dialectical materialism was originally published in Italian and was immediately acclaimed as the most comprehensive and objective treatment of the subject so far. It would certainly be rash for anyone now to venture an opinion on dialectical materialism without first consulting his Wetter, in which he will find many surprises. The similarities between scholastic thought and this form of materialism will surprise many whose knowledge of it is derived from apologetic pamphlets.

DONALD NICHOLL



REVIEWS

PASCAL: HIS LIFE AND WORKS. By Jean Mesnard; translated by G. S. Fraser. (The Harvill Press; 18s.)

It is only a little over a century since the original text of Pascal's *Pensées* was first published. Before 1844 the world had had to be content with the unfaithful version put out by Port-Royal in 1670, served up periodically with a few additions and, once, by Condorcet with a new classification on 'philosophic' lines. Since Faugère carried out Cousin's plan of making the original available, study upon study of Pascal's thought has appeared. The tempo has increased with time until, during the last ten or fifteen years, the quantity of new works about him has become very great indeed. The monumental studies of his thought by Abbé Baudin and Jeanne Russier lead us deeply into his world and relate him ever more broadly to thought currents of his time, particularly to Descartes and the *libertins*. Textual criticism, after the first great stride of 1844, has advanced more slowly and up to recent years we were still living on Brunschwig's recension of 1897. Then, in quick succession, just before the war, during and after it, came the studies and editions of Tourneur, Couchoud and Lafuma. The last, basing his conclusions on a study of the oldest manuscript copy of the *Pensées*, which he considers was made immediately after Pascal's death, claims to have discovered that philosophers' stone of Pascalians, the plan of the writer's *Apology for Christianity*. M. Mesnard condenses M. Lafuma's reasoning into four pages, which is small measure for arguments that lead to so novel a conclusion, but M. Lafuma's work is accessible to readers of French, and M. Mesnard

is concerned with the whole Pascal, and not merely with the author of the *Apology*. Not every scholar admits the soundness of Lafuma's thesis and Père Blanchet, in particular, has criticised it acutely in *Études* for September 1952 and reached the opposite conclusion that, far from revealing the long-sought plan, a study of this copy only proves that it never existed, and that Pascal himself had not reached the stage in which his final scheme was clearly outlined in his own mind, let alone ever expressed in speech or writing. When one compares Lafuma's thesis and Blanchet's counter-thesis, it is hard not to lean to the latter's sceptical attitude, disappointing though it be.

The fact that Mesnard endorses so completely Lafuma's views does not prevent his work from being a valuable and lively contribution to Pascal studies and one is glad to have it in English form. It rectifies many a misconception still current about its hero, the image of whom is still often based on that first outlined by Voltaire who had, let it be remembered, only the adulterated Port-Royal edition to judge him by. Pascal was not a 'madman', not even 'of genius'. Even after his mystical experience of November 23, 1654, he never became the 'fierce solitary of Port-Royal' of which so many biographers speak. He did not abandon the world but sought to conquer it. He never 'discovered' for himself, as a child of twelve, the first thirty-two theorems of Euclid and his sister never claimed he did; what she says is that 'he was surprised by his father when he was seeking to demonstrate the thirty-second theorem' itself. Divided as he was between scientific and mathematical research and the pursuit of that *unum necessarium* which Baudin calls his soteriological pragmatism, he would swing from one to the other, but he did not give up his scientific studies till 1659, a couple of years before his death, and he did so not under the influence of frigid asceticism but of ill-health, which made sustained thought impossible. In this light, the tendentious lamentations of Sully-Prudhomme or Paul Valéry, weeping over the loss to science caused by his devotion to religion, sound rather ludicrous.

Pascal has long been recognised as an ancestor of existentialism and one of Mesnard's most enlightening remarks is his approximation of 'ennui' to Sartre's 'nausea' and his explanation of the much-criticised wager argument—criticised, too often, in what sanctimonious tones!—as meaning that man is 'committed'; indeed, Pascal's own term 'embarqué' is close to the modern 'engagé'.

Pascal, as man and thinker, is presented clearly and forcefully, without special pleading. The truth of Mesnard's portrait is not affected by his bias towards Jansenism, which leads him to water down considerably its predestinationism and to overstate the teaching of the Jesuits, as when he speaks of 'the absolute liberty of man postulated by' them. Surely no Jesuit was ever as Pelagian as that!

Mr Fraser's translation reads almost always extremely well and is good by current standards. But there are a number of mistakes, of which I quote a few. P. 11 a 'minime' is a Minim or Friar of St Francis de Paul, not a Friar Minor. P. 14: 'a little placard in poster form' is a meaningless rendering of 'petit placard en forme d'affiche'. P. 18: 'le grand monde' is not 'the great world' but 'society'. P. 29: the English for 'bénéfice' is '(ecclesiastical) living'. P. 36: 'a pamphlet' does not translate 'un ouvrage'. P. 37: 'repretrait' means 'found fault with', not 'again took up'. P. 42: 'grands principes' are not 'grand principles'. P. 47: the 'sacre' of a king is what we call a 'coronation' (two different moments of the same ceremony), not 'consecration'. P. 143: 'à sa mort' is here 'at', not 'on his death', and 'passé dans le trou d'une aiguille' does not mean 'passed through the hole made by a needle'. P. 193: 'worry' should be 'disturb' and the succession of 'it's' in lines 24 to 26 should all be 'he's', except the first. 'And ceremonies' (line 25) and 'unquestioning' (line 35) have been added by the translator. On p. 73 Baius is miscalled Balus. The 'Rue de la Tissanderie' (p. 6) should be 'Tisseranderie', known also as 'Tixeranderie'. On p. 18, for '1638' (line 55) read '1639'.

Mr Fraser frequently makes a mistake common in English translations from the French by spelling 'Monsieur' in full when it should be abbreviated to 'M.', although the mistake never occurs in M. Mesnard's original. It is only in addressing letters that Frenchmen spell 'Monsieur' in full before a name. He also adopts the irritating practice of prefixing the definite article to 'Abbé'. This word is a designation, not a description, and is comparable, not to 'duc' but to 'père, général, professeur', none of which is rendered in English with the article when it precedes a name. 'The Abbé Bossut' is as incorrect as 'the General John, the Professor Smith, the Bishop Butt' or 'the Father Evans'.

The frontispiece reproduces a portrait of Pascal with the caption: 'From the original picture by Philippe de Champagne' (sic). This can hardly be accurate. The only Pascal portrait which is certain is that by Quesnel, made after his death. Quite recently a picture has been discovered which is claimed to be by Philippe de Champaigne and to represent Pascal; it was exhibited in Paris in February 1952. The attribution to Philippe is generally admitted but the identification of the sitter with Pascal has been disputed. In any case this, the only portrait by Philippe claimed to show him, is not that reproduced in this book. Has a second Philippe portrait been unearthed in the last twelve months? It seems unlikely.

C. M. GIRDLESTONE

NEWMAN'S WAY. By Sean O'Faolain. (Longman; 25s.)

The interest of this volume and the intimacy of its style are well illustrated by the following passage about the Cardinal's visit to his brother