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PASCAL AND MELANCHOLY*

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This article shows how two concepts for which Blaise Pascal's Pensées *(1670) are best known—*divertissement *and* ennui *(often mistranslated as "boredom")—inherited and transformed medical conceptions of melancholy along with one of melancholy's signature therapeutic protocols: diversion. Instead of limiting the genealogy of Pascal's concepts to more obvious textual sources (St Augustine, Montaigne, etc.), here they are read against the background of an epistemological paradigm dominant in his time: Galenic medicine. Drawing on a large corpus of early modern French medical texts, this article discloses how melancholy, stripped of its overt medical status, remerges in Pascal's analysis of subjectivity, which valorized melancholic* ennui *against the values of a nascent civil society subservient to the monarchic order. Once used to describe outlying temperaments and exceptional pathologies, the discourse on melancholy becomes fundamental to the human being per se in Pascal's theological and anthropological perspective. Thus transformed, the older forms of melancholy and its remedies ensured the possibility of their survival—disguised and unrecognized—in modern theories of subjectivity and psychology. Understanding melancholy's latent presence in the* Pensées*, in other words, sheds new light on the affective aspects of Pascal's social critique and invites us to investigate the modern afterlife of early modern melancholy.*

> Cheerfulness cannot be excessive, but is always good; melancholy, on the other hand, is always evil.
>
> Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans. Edwin Curley (New York, 1996), IVP42.

Moraliste of the "misery of man," Blaise Pascal (1623–62) seems both an obvious and an unlikely figure to include in the Western history of melancholy. For the early modern part of this history, the name that likely first comes to mind is Albrecht Dürer, and the work his *Melencolia I* (1514). Dürer's engraving condenses entire traditions of medical, theological, astrological,

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and philosophical discourses on melancholy, which reached an apogee in the Renaissance.[1] In this time, which self-styled melancholic Marsilio Ficino set under the sign of Saturn,[2] lovesick delusions were often lauded and Aristotle was commonly cited on the affinity between genius and "diseases arising from black bile."[3] Intellection itself could be considered an atrabilious act on the thin line dividing reason from madness.[4] In short, *Melencolia I* "would be a good emblem for the whole sixteenth century."[5]

Unlike Dürer—or the other epitomist of early modern melancholy, Robert Burton—Pascal never used the term *mélancolie* in the hundreds of fragments known as the *Pensées* (1670). Read this text against the history of medical conceptions of melancholy and its treatments, however, and something incompatible with the term's absence emerges: the *Pensées* begin to seem as emblematic of melancholy as Dürer's engraving or Burton's *Anatomy* (1621). In signature concepts from the *Pensées*, I shall argue, medical discourse on melancholy and its treatments is latently present. I frame this presence in terms of Pascal's antagonism to certain seventeenth-century social norms, the Augustinian anthropology he uses to describe the human condition, and shifts in early modern medicine. *Mélancolie* is not in the *Pensées*, but melancholy profoundly shaped subjectivity as analyzed by Pascal.

If melancholy in the *Pensées* has gone unnoticed by scholars, this might not only be due to the term's absence, but to a notion of Pascal's time as one from which melancholy has been erased. Michel Foucault's *History of Madness*, which describes how madness lost its cosmic aura in seventeenth-century France, helped establish this notion. With madness demoted to a form of "Unreason" or "social uselessness," the administration made short shrift of the insane, exiling them to internment. In philosophy, Reason itself was delimited by this exclusion, which in politics expressed the rise of an absolutist "monarchic order."[6]

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1 Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy* (Nendeln, 1979).

2 Marsilio Ficino, *De vita libri tres* (Florence, 1489).

3 Pseudo Aristotle, "Problems Connected with Thought, Intelligence, and Wisdom," in J. Radden, ed., *The Nature of Melancholy* (New York, 2000), 57–60, at 57. The text, as later became known, was likely authored by a follower of Aristotle.

4 Peter Toohey, "Rufus of Ephesus and the Tradition of the Melancholy Thinker," in Rufus, *On Melancholy*, ed. and trans. P. Pormann (Tübingen, 2008), 221–43; Angus Gowland, "Burton's *Anatomy* and the Intellectual Traditions of Melancholy," *Babel* 25 (2012), 221–57.

5 Marc Fumaroli, "'Nous serons guéris, si nous le voulons': Classicisme français et maladie de l'âme," *Le débat* 29 (1984), 92. All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

6 Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris, 1972), 67–74, 102, 115.

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Marc Fumaroli, one of the most influential historians of seventeenth-century French culture and letters, has studied cultural changes corresponding to the institutional phenomena Foucault studied.[7] One condition for the emergence, across the seventeenth century, of the culture and values that some scholars call *classicisme français* was what Fumaroli terms a "veritable war on negative passions."[8] The nascent cultural sphere was formed in part through the exclusion of a melancholic "Other."[9] With "the melancholic temperament's devalorization . . . over the seventeenth [century]," the "fascinating monster" was tamed and sacrificed to happier affects.[10] During the second half of the sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries—a time of religious schisms and civil wars in France—the terrible excesses and grandeur of black bile could still captivate and offer a mode for describing the crises of an ailing political body.[11] But with national order urgently desired and eventually reestablished, negative affects were critiqued, even considered politically suspect, while there emerged a "classical will to *eutrapelia*" (the healthy pleasantness of the soul).[12]

To be sure, terms like *classicisme* or *âge classique*—and the values at once aesthetic, political, and moral they imply (*reason*, *order*, *measure*, *clarity*, etc.)—

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7 Fumaroli, "'Nous serons guéris,'" 92–114; Marc Fumaroli, "Saturne et les remèdes à la mélancolie," in J. Mesnard, ed., *Précis de littérature française* (Paris, 1990), 29–46; Fumaroli, "La mélancolie et ses remèdes: la reconquête du sourire dans la France classique," in J. Clair, ed., *Mélancolie: Génie et folie en Occident* (Paris, 2005), 210–24. Scholars who invoke Fumaroli's thesis include Denis Kambouchner, "Descartes: un monde sans fous? Des *Méditations métaphysiques* au *Traité de l'homme*," *Dix-septième siècle* 2/247 (2010), 213–22, at 220; Patrick Dandrey, *Sganarelle et la médecine, ou: De la mélancolie érotique* (Paris, 1998), lxxii; and Giavarini, who extends it from moral to discursive and stylistic norms: Laurence Giavarini, "Représentation pastorale et guérison mélancolique au tournant de la Renaissance: Questions de poétique," *Études épistémè* 3 (2003), 1–27.

8 Fumaroli, "Nous serons guéris," 95.

9 For Fumaroli, France's baroque "Other" was Spain. Ibid., 99.

10 Ibid., 93–4.

11 See Giavarini, "Représentation pastorale," 3, and Laurence Giavarini, *La distance pastorale: Usages politiques de la représentation des bergers (XVIe–XVIIe siècles)* (Paris, 2010), 95–126. In the *Tragiques* (1577–89), I, v. 141–5), Agrippa D'Aubigné depicted war-torn France as a sickly body: her pure "blood" turns to "phlegm" and "choler," before the whole bodily "mass degenerates" into "melancholy."

12 Fumaroli, "Nous serons guéris," 94. On neo-Stoic and misogynist critiques of melancholy in France around 1590, and how melancholy and *tristesse* were associated with the Catholic *Ligue* and hence seen as politically "seditious," see Rebecca M. Wilkin, *Women, Imagination and the Search for Truth in Early Modern France* (Aldershot, 2008), 97–139. See also Allen Thiher, *Revels in Madness: Insanity in Medicine and Literature* (Ann Arbor, 1999), 73–6; Radu Suciu, "Introduction," in André du Laurens, *Discours des maladies mélancoliques (1594)*, ed. R. Suciu (Paris, 2012), lxxvii–liii, 79–81.

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have been intensely scrutinized in recent decades.[13] The idea that, over the seventeenth century, comportment and discourse were increasingly subject to regularizing, rationalist, and sociable political and social norms, however, seems less controversial.[14] In step with absolute monarchy's development, there flourished ideals of *civilité* and *honnêteté*, discussed below. More than in the imperative to "love reason" from Nicolas Boileau's *Art poétique* (1674), then, the cultural ideology resounded in *académicien* Paul Pellisson's *Discours* (1656), which, as Alain Viala argues, defined the great writer as upholding the value of *urbanité*: that is, as striving to appeal across the social spectrum.[15] Melancholy spoke boldly before; she was silenced by a more civil seventeenth-century society.

A passage from Walter Benjamin's *Origin of German Tragic Drama* is pertinent here. Benjamin saw the image or "paradigm" of melancholy in one of the

[13] See Blaise Wilfert and Martine Jey, "'XVIIe siècle classique' et 'siècle d'Élisabeth': Deux constructions d'un classicisme national par l'université (France–Angleterre, 1890–1914)," *Les cahiers du Centre de recherches historiques* 28–9 (2002), online at https://ccrh.revues.org/1052; Alain Viala, "Qu'est-ce qu'un classique?" *Bulletin des bibliothèques de France* 37 (1992), 6–15; Jean-Charles Darmon and Pierre Force, "Introduction," *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 107/2 (2007), 261–71; Emmanuel Bury, "Classique, classicisme," in L. Bély, ed., *Dictionnaire de l'Ancien Régime* (Paris 1996), 261–4; Jean-Claude Vuillemin, *Épistémè baroque: Le mot et la chose* (Paris, 2013), 77–136; and John D. Lyons, "What Do We Mean When We Say 'classique'?" in R. W. Tobin, ed., *Racine et/ou le classicisme* (Tübingen, 2001), 497–504, which notes how, in Foucault, "l'âge classique" covers *c.*1650–1815.

[14] Fumaroli, "Nous serons guéris," 94–101; Fumaroli, "Saturne et les remèdes," 30–39. Seminal works on *civility* include Maurice Magendie, *La politesse mondaine et les théories de l'honnêteté, en France, au XVIIe siècle, de 1600 à 1660* (Paris, 1925); and Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1978–82). On linguistic norms, see Hélène Merlin, "Langue et souveraineté en France au XVIIe siècle: La production autonome d'un *corps de langage*," *Annales: Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 49/2 (1994), 369–94; Fumaroli, "Le génie de la langue française," in P. Nora, ed., *Les lieux de mémoire*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1993), 911–73.

[15] For the Boileau–Pellisson comparison, see Viala, "Qu'est-ce qu'un classique?" 14, who considers *urbanité* (or *galanterie*) better than *classicisme* for naming what is common to authors included in the "classical" canon. *Urbanité* meant "Civilité, politesse, courtoisie qu'on trouve parmi les gens du beau monde. L'urbanité consiste aussi aux jeux et passetemps, et à entretenir joyeusement une compagnie sans offenser personne" ("Civility, politeness, courtesy, which is found in people who belong to high society [*du beau monde*]. Urbanity entails games and pastimes, and the capacity to cheerfully and pleasantly converse [*entretenir*] with a group of people without offending anyone"). Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel* (The Hague, 1690). Primarily a social or moral ideal, *urbanity* underscores the interweaving of aesthetic *and* social norms in *classicisme*. See also Andreas Gipper, "Urbanité et honnêteté: de la traduction d'un idéal culturel chez Guez de Balzac et Perrot d'Ablancourt," *Papers on Seventeenth-Century French Literature* 38/75 (2011), 329–45; Alain Pons, "Civilité–urbanité," in A. Montandon, ed., *Dictionnaire raisonné de la politesse et du savoir-vivre du Moyen Âge à nos jours* (Paris, 1995), 91–109.

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Pensées, the "king without diversion [*divertissement*]" (137/169),[16] in which "Pascal gives voice to the feeling of his age."[17] Though Benjamin's reading problematically assimilates Pascal into the Lutheran context of his book, some scholars have posited an affinity between Pascal's anti-Jesuit Augustinianism and Luther's.[18] Pascal wrote for a mostly Catholic France, whose immunization against melancholy partly reflected theological conflicts. Serving the Counter-Reformation, in their pastoral work and numerous *collèges* the Jesuits combated the negative affects once associated with the medieval sin of *acedia*, often compared to melancholy.[19] In Pascal's anti-Jesuit polemics, we will see, the issue of negative affects was a crucial front on which he led his attack.

But Benjamin gave no justification for seeing melancholy in Pascal. His insight presumes what requires demonstration: that fragment 137/169, for example, is an emblematic depiction *of melancholy*, which expresses a "feeling of [Pascal's] age." Since *mélancolie* does not figure in the *Pensées*,[20] to discern melancholy there, more must be said on its history and on France's reaction to "negative passions." Grasping this reaction will help delineate the latent form that melancholy assumes in the *Pensées*.

HONNÊTETÉ

Over Pascal's lifetime (1623–62), France underwent profound reorganizations of power and culture that influenced the valorization or repudiation of certain modes of social comportment. This can be studied in the development of civil society and its norms, in the consolidation of the nascent absolutist or

[16] Citations from the *Pensées* refer, respectively, to Blaise Pascal, *Oeuvres*, ed. L. Lafuma (Paris, 1963); and Pascal, *Pensées, opuscules et lettres*, ed. P. Sellier (Paris, 2011).

[17] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. J. Osborne (New York, 2009), 142–3. See Hall Bjørnstad's excellent study: "'Giving voice to the feeling of his age': Benjamin, Pascal, and the *Trauerspiel* of the King without Diversion," *Yale French Studies* 124 (2013), 23–35.

[18] See Hélène Michon, *L'ordre du cœur: Philosophie, théologie et mystique dans les Pensées de Pascal* (Paris, 2007), 173–210. On melancholy and Protestantism see Angus Gowland, "The Problem of Early Modern Melancholy," *Past and Present* 191 (2006), 77–120, *passim*.

[19] Fumaroli, "Nous serons guéris," 93, 102; Fumaroli, "Saturne et les remèdes," 38; Fumaroli, "La mélancolie et ses remèdes," 220–21; Wilkin, *Women, Imagination*, 106–7; Peter Pormann, "Melancholy in the Medieval World: The Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Traditions," in Rufus, *On Melancholy*, 179–96.

[20] In Pascal's *Oeuvres*, ed. Lafuma, the word appears in Jesuit Père Noël's first letter on *le vide* (199) and as spoken by a fictional Jesuit in the *Provinciales* (409). *Mélancolie* thus appears under the sign of an obsolete Aristotelianism, a worldview Pascal critiqued scientifically, theologically, and morally.

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monarchical state,[21] and in theological debates on the individual's autonomy in the economy of salvation and requisite attitude towards "worldly" life.[22] These axes—the culture of civility or *honnêteté*, absolutism's development from Richelieu through Louis XIV, and the conflicts between Jesuits and Jansenists—are inextricably tied to one another, and to the *Pensées*. Pascal was implicated in them all and an outlier to each. They form the context in which the political and philosophical force of Pascal's focus on melancholic affects becomes visible.

Arising in Parisian *salons* around 1630 before establishing itself at court, from which it radiated through society at large, the model of *honnêteté* inherited courtly ideals of sixteenth-century Italy and became a criterion of social existence.[23] Among the aspects outlined in the numerous seventeenth-century treatises and manuals on the topic, *honnêteté* demanded infinite adaptability to social company and context; a mindset set on mutual pleasure, amusement, and the avoidance of negativity; and a discerning dilettantism insuring nonchalant brilliance in conversation—conversation being the essential activity for the interaction and self-cultivation of *honnêtes gens*.[24] To be pleasing—to have or display *agrément*—was the "master word" of this "worldly sociability."[25]

Pascal was no stranger to this culture. An ambitious mathematician and scientist, he participated in learned Parisian conversation circles.[26] During his so-called "worldly period" in the late 1640s and early 1650s, Pascal rubbed shoulders with two paragons of high society in the company of the Duc de Roannez: Damien Mitton and the Chevalier de Méré, the latter being *the* incarnation and

[21] For historiographical debates on "absolutism" see James B. Collins, *The State in Early Modern France* (Cambridge, 2009), ix–xxv; William Beik, "The Absolutism of Louis XIV as Social Collaboration," *Past and Present* 188 (2005), 195–225.

[22] See Emmanuel Bury, "Monde," in Montandon, ed., *Dictionnaire raisonné de la politesse*, 639–52.

[23] Emmanuel Bury, "À la recherche d'une synthèse française de la civilité: L'*honnêteté* et ses sources," in A. Montandon, ed., *Pour une histoire des traités de savoir-vivre* (Clermont-Ferrand, 1994), 179–214; Jean-Claude Margolin, "La civilité nouvelle: De la notion de civilité à sa pratique et aux traités de civilité," in ibid., 151–178; Annick Paternoster, "Mesure," in Montandon, *Dictionnaire raisonné de la politesse*, 593–602.

[24] Patrick Dandrey, "Préface," in Chevalier de Méré, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. C.-H. Boudhors (Paris, 2008); Paternoster, "Mesure," 597; Jean-Jacques Courtine and Claudine Haroche, *Histoire du visage: Exprimer et taire ses émotions, XVIe–début XIXe siècle* (Paris, 1988), 28, 105, 180; Matthew Jones, *The Good Life in the Scientific Revolution: Descartes, Pascal, Leibniz, and the Cultivation of Virtue* (Chicago, 2006), 92; Stefano Guazzo, *La civile conversation*, trans. G. Chappuys (Lyon, 1580).

[25] Bury, "Monde," 648.

[26] Jones, *The Good Life*, 90–92; Jean Mesnard, *Pascal* (Paris, 1967), 50–52.

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theorist of *honnêteté* in Pascal's time.[27] But after a mystical conversion experience of November 1654, Pascal proved unforgiving towards the society in which he had found success so easy.[28] *Honnêteté* became a target: Pascal drew from his acquaintance with *honnête* culture and its theorists precisely the "value system to argue against."[29] The emphasis on irrationality and despondency in the *Pensées* would fundamentally conflict with the norms voiced by de Méré or Mitton, whereby "the *honnête homme* never says nor does anything that is not pleasant, just, reasonable, and that does not strive to make everyone happy."[30]

The *sine qua non* for *honnêteté* was a capacity to dominate emotions, such that pleasant "moderation" or "measure" in behavior and mien were always maintained.[31] While *honnête* society emphasized visible exchanges of pleasure, it enjoined the rational control and repression of idiosyncratic inclinations and negative emotions.[32] This was a crucial moment in the development of a behavioral "type," which scholars term *l'homme sans passions*: between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, this ideal emerged through growing expectations for the constantly regulated expression and control of inner life, entailing the injunction to hide or silence what is displeasing and unfit for social view.[33]

The *honnête homme* had to always "regulate" his behavior, eschewing any possible "disorder," Mitton wrote.[34] This disciplinary language eerily evokes the political circumstances underlying the development of normative seventeenth-century French civil and court society. Amid broad reforms under Louis XIII, Richelieu set about bringing the French nobility, who largely controlled military power, in line with the interests of a single monarch and *raison d'état*.[35] The

27 Bury, "A la recherche d'une synthèse française de la civilité," 199, 207; Mesnard, *Pascal*, 37–65; Jones, *The Good Life*, 117–18, 146.

28 Gilberte Périer, "La vie de Monsieur Pascal," in Pascal, *Oeuvres*, ed. Lafuma, 18–33, at 21.

29 Ben Rogers, "Pascal's life and times," in N. Hammond, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Pascal* (New York, 2003), 4–19, at 13; Jones, *The Good Life*, 127–9, 132–8; David Wetsel, *Pascal and Disbelief: Catechesis and Conversion in the Pensées* (Washington, DC, 1994), 6.

30 Damien Mitton, "Description de l'honnête homme," in Charles de Saint-Évremond, *Oeuvres meslées* (Paris, 1690), 508–9, at 509.

31 See Paternoster, "Mesure," *passim*; Courtine and Haroche, *Histoire du visage*, 103–5, 164. Compare Descartes, *Les passions de l'âme* (1649), in *Oeuvres*, ed. C. Adam and P. Tannery, 11 vols. (Paris, 1897–1910), 10: 327–488, esp. Articles 50, 156, 203, 212. "AT" is hereafter used for works cited in this edition.

32 Courtine and Haroche, *Histoire du visage*, 15.

33 Ibid., 20.

34 Mitton, "Description de l'honnête homme," 508.

35 Jacques Marseille, *Nouvelle histoire de la France, vol. 1, De la préhistoire à la fin de l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 2002), 506–17. For reforms under Louis XIII and XIV see Collins, *The State*, 55–65, 115–16, 199–238.

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process was largely accomplished by the end of the Fronde (1648–53): in exchange for economic and social prestige, the nobles ceded, inter alia, certain codes of comportment and privileges enjoyed from feudal times.[36]

Part of Richelieu's power play entailed the imposition or regulation of norms defining the proper conduct of subjects towards their state and king.[37] Over time, with the court increasingly the center of civility, *honnêteté*, and sociability in general, the monarchy's power to administer its subjects from within expanded;[38] the disempowered nobles willingly internalized social ideals that implicitly served the state's interests.[39] The social and courtly values of refined behavior inherited from Italy provided cultural compensation for their loss of political identity and power.[40] The result was a "shift from a valor-centered to a pleasure-centered society": once defined by a relative, bellicose independence from the Crown, the nobles became court nobility.[41] A potentially disorderly class in tension with the royalty became, as it were, a group of self-controlled dancers, holding themselves and the others in step as they all turned around the king—a centralized hierarchy given symbolic form in Louis XIV's court ballets.[42] The ideals of *honnêteté*, and normative regulation of sociability in general, ran parallel to the consolidation of the monarchy's power over the nobility and the state.

But there is a theological component to this story of increasing homogenization, order, and repression of unruly negative passions. Following the Council of Trent and the Wars of Religion, the desire grew for emboldened devotion and a renewed Gallican Church.[43] Among the proponents was Cardinal de Bérulle, father of the Augustinian-leaning French School of Spirituality.[44] Bérulle animated the Catholic traditionalist *dévot* movement that clashed with

36 Georgia J. Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure: Louis XIV and the Politics of Spectacle* (Chicago, 2008), 12; Lucien Goldmann, *Le dieu caché: Étude sur la vision tragique dans les Pensées de Pascal et dans le théâtre de Racine* (Paris, 1959), 123; Collins, *The State*, 59.

37 Orest Ranum, "Courtesy, Absolutism, and the French State, 1630–1660," *Journal of Modern History* 52/3 (1980), 426–51. See also Collins, *The State*, 102, 148–50.

38 Jacques Revel, "Les usages de la civilité," in Roger Chartier, ed., *Histoire de la vie privée*, vol. 3, *De la Renaissance aux Lumières* (Paris, 1999), 167–208, at 193–6. See also Collins, *The State*, 148–50.

39 See Collins, *The State*, 106, 148–50: Louis XIV sought to replace an older, noble "culture of *geste* . . . with one of self-control, a control the state could then use for social and political ends." Ibid., 106.

40 Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure*, 13.

41 Ibid., 13; Goldmann, *Le dieu caché*, 141; Norbert Elias, *The Court Society* (Oxford, 1983).

42 See Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure*, 1–83.

43 Marseille, *Nouvelle histoire*, 531; Collins, *The State*, 45–6.

44 William M. Thompson, ed., *Bérulle and the French School* (New York, 1989).

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Richelieu and included the main early figure of Jansenism, Saint-Cyran.[45] In tension with the Augustinianism that would lead, with Jansenius and his followers, to theological debates that famously implicated Pascal, between 1610 and 1650 there was a twofold increase in Jesuit *collèges*, which provided schooling to young bourgeois and nobles.[46] With their less somber outlook on human nature and more entertaining educational, pastoral, and missionary techniques, the Jesuits enjoyed great success with the elite.[47]

Jesuit ascendancy derived in part from their palatable position on freedom and human agency in salvation, and their practice of casuistry, which, for Pascal and the Jansenists, overindulged human nature's concupiscence and moral shortcomings.[48] The Jesuits promoted a religious practice permissive enough for the social valorization of pleasure and the secular politics inaugurated by Richelieu in the Thirty Years War.[49] But the Jesuits were not only *de jure* in support of the civil norms of social life; they were active in their elaboration, "placing themselves deliberately in the domain of civil society and inculcating into it 'civility' and *honnêteté*."[50]

In casuistry and pastoral work, the Jesuits cultivated great flexibility in judging individual cases, a theological counterpart to the *honnête homme*'s infinite social plasticity. For Pascal, Jesuit agreeability was a religious abomination and a political ploy to gain power over every conscience.[51] With Jansenist encouragement, he wrote the *Provincial Letters* (1656–7), attacking Jesuit laxism on all fronts. Despite the abundant literature on the *Letters*,[52] the issue of melancholy, which appears at one point, has been neglected.

In the ninth letter, the fictional Jesuit priest reads from *Easy Devotion* (1652) and *Moral Paintings* (1640) by Jesuit Pierre Le Moyne, books likely for an *honnête* readership.[53] The priest cites the former in order to counter the notion that

45 See Robin Briggs, *Communities of Belief: Cultural and Social Tensions in Early Modern France* (Oxford, 1995), 345; Gérard Ferreyrolles, *Pascal et la raison du politique* (Paris, 1984), 29–33.

46 Marseille, *Nouvelle histoire*, 533.

47 Robin Briggs, "The Gallican Context for Pascal's Writings on Grace," *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 35/2 (2013), 128–30; Ferreyrolles, *Pascal*, 70–71; Collins, *The State*, 79–80.

48 See Briggs, *Communities of Belief*, 351; Ferreyrolles, *Pascal*, 66.

49 Briggs, *Communities of Belief*, 346; Marseille, *Nouvelle histoire*, 516; Ferreyrolles, *Pascal*, 14–15.

50 Courtine and Haroche, *Histoire du visage*, 219.

51 Blaise Pascal, *Provinciales*, V, in Pascal, *Oeuvres*, ed. Lafuma, 387–8. See Ferreyrolles, *Pascal*, 51–71.

52 See, e.g., Richard Parish, *Catholic Particularity in Seventeenth-Century French Writing: "Christianity Is Strange"* (New York, 2011), 140–61; Ferreyrolles, *Pascal*, 51–91.

53 Jones, *The Good Life*, 134.

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Montalte (Pascal's mouthpiece) has of the austerity of devout life: while some *dévots* are indeed "pale and melancholic in complexion, [and] adore silence and solitude ... one finds many others who are of a happier complexion and have an abundance of the sweet and warm humor and of the benign and purified blood that produces joy."[54] Le Moyne thus decouples devotion from affective disposition (melancholy or joy), reducing the latter to idiosyncratic bodily temperament (melancholic or sanguine). But his treatment is biased. Though he condemns "melancholy" as idiosyncratic and ordains that "true devotion cannot be melancholic," joy gets reattached to devotion, becoming its necessary effect.[55] Melancholy is heretic; joy, dogmatic.[56]

When people think of devout virtue, the priest reads from Le Moyne, they imagine a horrible creature that "loves solitude alone" and is "the enemy of diversions [*divertissements*] and games, which are the prime of joy and the spice of life." Not to devotion, such austerity belongs to "the character of a savage, a ferocious man," the priest says.[57] Hence, he continues, Le Moyne placed such characteristics not in some saint, but among "the ridiculous and brutish mores of a melancholic madman, in his description ... from *Moral Paintings*."[58] The priest reads the passage to Montalte, who quips ironically, "If that is not the image of someone utterly detached from precisely the sentiments the Gospel demands we renounce, I confess to not understand it at all."[59]

Another Jesuit work critiqued in the *Provincial Letters*, Étienne Binet's *Consolation and Jubilance for the Sick and Afflicted* (1616), attacked melancholy and, like Le Moyne, exiled it from devotion.[60] Binet exhorted his reader to not lose self-control or indulge in idle gloom, to show a pleasant mien when inwardly tormented. One must emulate the *honnête homme* who mocks what causes sadness, and melancholics should have mirrors to see their ugly faces.

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54 Pascal, *Provinciales*, IX, 409. Pascal's citation is inexact: see Pierre Le Moyne, *La dévotion aisée* (Paris, 1652), 86–7.

55 Le Moyne, *La dévotion aisée*, chapter titles for Book II, chaps. 1 and 2; on joy see 87.

56 See Wilkin, *Women, Imagination*, 107, for the similar neo-Stoic critique of melancholy found in Guillaume du Vair and Pierre Charron.

57 Pascal, *Provinciales*, IX, 409.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid. See Le Moyne, *Les peintures morales, où les passions sont représentées par tableaux, par charactères et par questions nouvelles et curieuses*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1640), 620–29. In the *Provincial Letters*, Pascal synthesizes this long text, in which the terms *fou mélancolique* do not appear: the gloss was Pascal's. Given the presence of traditional melancholic traits in Le Moyne's description and Pascal's gloss, he was likely familiar with traditional discourse on humors and temperaments. See n. 76 *infra*.

60 Étienne Binet, *Consolation et resjouissance pour les malades, et personnes affligées* (Paris, 1625), 154.

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Alongside these bans on melancholy in religion and society, Binet lauds the politics of a (mythical) kingdom where a decree held that "never shall anyone show himself to be melancholic, nor speak of disagreeable things, on pain of death."[61] In real society and court, failure to satisfy norms of cheery sociability did amount to exile. As de Méré wrote, "those who do not possess [*honnêteté*] are poorly received among people of good taste ... one cannot bear them."[62] Long before seventeenth-century authorities on civility described the melancholic's inferiority to a measured and cheery sanguine complexion,[63] Baldassare Castiglione, a major Italian source for *honnêteté*, forbade courtiers to appear "pensive or melancholic" in the king's presence.[64]

Understanding the social and theological situations within which Pascal lived and, after 1654, against which he wrote, justifies the expectation that his opposition to the values of *honnêteté*, pleasure-focused court society, and the Jesuits, would resist the exclusion of melancholy and negative passions. The *Pensées* would entail a negation of the negation, whereby melancholy would find renewed value and form. Pascal's notorious way of critiquing the arbitrary nature of power while calling for submission to the political status quo disallowed *overt* political opposition.[65] But his emphasis on negative affects would be inherently subversive: it undermined social and theological codes of cheery, measured behavior and pursuit of mutual diversion—codes ultimately supporting the monarchic order.

Yet Pascal's combat on this affective front has not been explored.[66] When writing that Pascal's "king without diversion" fragment "gives voice to the feeling of his age," then, Benjamin unwittingly evoked the confrontation between the isolated melancholy "feeling" in the *Pensées* and the *grand siècle*'s anti-melancholic ideology, an exclusion reflected in scholarship on Pascal. To counter this oversight, an analysis of the *diversion* that Pascal's king is lacking and the sadness that hounds him—an analysis of *divertissement* and *ennui*, as developed in the *Pensées*—will

61 Ibid., 130–54, 146; see Pascal, *Provinciales*, XI, 422.

62 Chevalier De Méré, "De la vraie honnêteté," in De Méré, *Oeuvres complètes*, 70–71.

63 Jacques du Bosc, *L'honnête femme* (Paris, 1642), 46; Antoine de Courtin, *Nouveau traité de la civilité qui se pratique en France parmi les honnêtes gens*, ed. M.-C. Grassi (Saint-Étienne, 1998; first published 1671), chap. x; Eustache le Noble, *École du monde* (Paris, 1750; first published 1694–6), 10–11.

64 Baldassare Castiglione, *Le parfait courtesan*, trans. G. Chappuys (Paris, 1585), 192.

65 See Ferreyrolles, *Pascal*, chap. 1.

66 The *Pensées* are neglected in Fumaroli's texts on France's "war on negative passions" and Dandrey's related works: Dandrey, *Sganarelle et la médecine*, lxx–lxxii; Patrick Dandrey, *Les tréteaux de Saturne: Scènes de la mélancolie à l'époque baroque* (Paris, 2003), 16–19; Dandrey, *Anthologie de l'humeur noire: Écrits sur la mélancolie d'Hippocrate à l'Encyclopédie* (Paris, 2005).

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uncover the signature form and economy of melancholy as conceived and cured by classical and early modern medico-philosophical discourse and practice.

Delving into medical history, my approach evokes recent scholarship on medicine in seventeenth-century literary depictions of feminine melancholy, and Patrick Dandrey's seminal work on Molière.[67] Yet my conclusions will be crucially distinct, not only because they concern Pascal. While the old medico-philosophical melancholy haunts his portrayal of the existentially constitutive tension between *divertissement* and *ennui*, melancholy is transformed in Pascal. Stripped of its name and medical status, melancholy reappears, now essentialized, diagnosed of the human per se. Medical discourse is *transferred*: it becomes fundamental in an anthropological, philosophical analysis of the self, ensuring its masked survival in modern discourses on subjectivity.

Neglecting the development of a "pleasure-centered" culture, and the discursive medical paradigm in which *divertissement* and *ennui* are embedded, scholarship on these concepts foregrounds more manifest elements of Pascal's discourse: Augustinianism,[68] monastic and patristic traditions, or philosophy. Daniela Pălășan, for example, reads *acedia* into Pascal's *ennui*.[69] But by Pascal's time, *acedia* had long been superseded by a more secular tradition: the medical, albeit heterogeneous, discourse on *melancholy*.[70] Based on the Galenic humoral model of body, health, and pathology, this discourse dominated early modern medicine and was so ingrained in vernacular understandings of the body that it prevailed for nearly a century after its refutation in discoveries by William Harvey (1628) and others.[71]

For another example, Jean Mesnard sees Montaignian *diversion* in Pascal's *divertissement*. But Mesnard overlooks the medical idiom in Montaigne's essay

67 Bernadette Höfer, *Psychosomatic Disorders in Seventeenth-Century French Literature* (Farnham, 2009), 41–2; Dandrey, *Sganarelle et la médecine*, 626, 642.

68 See Philippe Sellier, *Pascal et Saint Augustin* (Paris, 1995), 163–9.

69 Daniela Pălășan, *L'ennui chez Pascal et l'acédie* (Cluj-Napoca, 2005). Cf. Feld, *Melancholy and the Otherness of God*, 63–7.

70 See Jennifer Radden, "Introduction: From Melancholic States to Clinical Depression," in Radden, ed., *The Nature of Melancholy*, 3–51; Stanley Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression: From Hippocratic Times to Modern Times* (New Haven, 1986), 65–77.

71 See Vivian Nutton, "Humoralism," in W. F. Bynum and R. Porter, eds., *Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine*, vol. 1 (New York, 1993), 281–91; Laurence Brockliss and Colin Jones, *The Medical World of Early Modern France* (New York, 1997), 85–169; Dandrey, *Tréteaux*, 20–22; Gowland, "The Problem of Early Modern Melancholy," 88–9; François Lebrun, *Se soigner autrefois: Médecins, sains et sorciers au XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1995), 19; Georges Vigarello, *Histoire des pratiques de santé: Le sain et le malsain depuis le Moyen Âge* (Paris, 1999), 93–102.

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"On Diversion," and fails to investigate its persistence in Pascal.[72] Montaigne recounts his therapeutic use of *diversion* to "cure" grief, reminding readers that in such situations one is a "doctor" treating a "patient." Yet the medical uses and idiom of *diversion* were not Montaigne's invention. He writes, "When physicians cannot purge off a catarrh, they divert it [*divertissent*] and turn it to [*desvoyent*] some other less dangerous part. And I am aware this is the most ordinary practice for diseases of the mind."[73]

These words display a familiarity with "ordinary" medical practices, which used *diversion* for bodily humoral problems and mental maladies. Overlooked by commentators on Pascal's *divertissement*, *diversion*'s curative uses appear together in Furetière's definition of *diversion* (1690).[74] If Pascal's *divertissement* is related to Montaigne's *diversion*, it belongs to the medico-philosophical discourse and practices to which Montaigne and Furetière bear witness. Melancholy is legible in the *Pensées* only against the backdrop of these traditions.

Avoiding biographical readings of Pascal's own melancholy,[75] and the seemingly insoluble problem of his relation to medicine as practiced and discussed at Port-Royal,[76] in what follows the *Pensées* are set into dialogue with numerous medical texts. This allows us to overhear resonances between his *divertissement–ennui* theory and medical concepts and treatments of melancholy: correspondences in content and underlying logic, which reveal, too, crucial shifts and changes. The medical model informed the critical hermeneutics Pascal applied to the worldly culture of his time, which unveiled the social, courtly, and Jesuit taste for amusements, business, and diversions—for *divertissements*—as a vain, even pathological, attempt to treat a melancholy both incurable and inexplicable in the realm of natural causes: *ennui*.

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72 Jean Mesnard, *Les Pensées de Pascal* (Paris, 1976), 213–16; Mesnard, "De la 'diversion' au 'divertissement,'" in Mesnard, *La culture du XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 1992), 67–73.

73 Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, *Essays*, trans. Peter Coste (London, 1811), III, iv, 36–9.

74 See Furetière, "Diversion," in Furetière, *Dictionnaire*.

75 See Tony Gheeraert, "'Les accidents de la vie': Maladie, traumatisme et création chez Blaise Pascal," *Dix-septième siècle* 255 (2012), 285–303.

76 See Georges Duboucher, *Port-Royal et la médecine: Une face cachée de la communauté, une époque charnière de la pathologie* (Paris, 2010); Anthony McKenna, "Jean Hamon, médecin de Port-Royal," *Chroniques de Port-Royal* 36 (1987), 33–47. With his notorious bouts of sickness—acute headaches, partial paralyses, digestive problems and pains, and what Gilberte called his *chalheur d'entrailles*, among other chronic *grandes indispositions*—Pascal was no stranger to medical practice. For example, it was on his doctors' advice that he left Rouen for Paris in 1647. If, as Brockliss and Jones, *The Medical World*, 118, 299, claim, early modern patients were expected to speak the medical idiom of their physicians during consultations, Pascal likely knew something of Galenism. See also Andrew Wear, "Popularized Ideas of Health and Illness in Seventeenth-Century France," *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 8 (1986), 229–42.

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Revealing melancholy's survival and transformation in the *Pensées* has provocative ramifications. If the culture and "classical" ideology that emerged over Pascal's century—with its ideals of rationalism; *honnêteté*; and other corresponding political, social, and discursive norms—were born through "war" on a melancholic "Other," Pascal shows deep, unnamable melancholy as this war's irreducible remainder. Its spectacular furors and abysses exiled, its disagreeable visage hidden from society, melancholy subsists *within* the space that this exclusion circumscribes: in affects of tedium and anxiety, when alone with ourselves, and in the drive to flee them into the ecstasy of *divertissement*, in society. Pascal posited melancholy not in the extremes, nor in a familiar medical object and term, but in selfhood's default condition, as constitutive of one's *relation* to oneself. And for that, save through death, or God, there is no cure.

DIVERTISSEMENT

In the *Pensées*, *divertissement* primarily carries an older sense of "distraction," still held in Pascal's time by the word *divertir* (*divertissement* turns someone away from something); and a newer meaning: *recréation*, "amusement" (136/168).[77] This permitted Pascal's extraordinary extension of the concept to subsume "all occupations" (478/713), from dancing to hunting, scholarship to love: all social and worldly actions, pursuits, or values (139/171). The concept's equivocity has a critical edge. Pascal suggests that every recreation and occupation, usually considered simple amusement or business, fulfills a hidden function: distraction, turning away, *from oneself*.

When alone and unoccupied, people fall into a sorry state: they see or feel themselves, and meditate on their postlapsarian "wretched condition" (136/168). Dolorous self-presence or self-reflection is thus typically avoided; *divertissement*, to which we are driven by a "secret instinct" (ibid.), offers a cure, an escape. Against the heavy fixity of a lone, brooding self-relation, *divertissement* enlivens and pulses with variety, stirring the passions: "noise," "commotion," "violent occupation," "ardor," "agitation" (ibid.). Occupying the mind with concerns for people, things, and their acquisition, *divertissement* is salutary movement, variety, and plenitude. In this, the concept transposed a signature medical treatment for melancholy into the very element of secular existence and society.

Across the medico-philosophical literature on melancholy, from antiquity beyond Pascal's century, modes of distraction or recreation, especially social ones, were prescribed to treat both melancholic dispositions and afflictions caused by

77 Dom Michel Jungo, *Le vocabulaire de Pascal* (Paris, n.d.), 154; Mesnard, *Les Pensées de Pascal*, 213; Furetière, "Divertir," "Divertissement," in Furetière, *Dictionnaire.*

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the heavy, cold, dry humor, or its burnt (*aduste*), volatile counterpart.[78] Scholars of melancholy—qua temperament, illness, or humor—know how common this "*diversion* method" is.[79] Authorities advising it listed Pascal's main examples of *divertissement*: games, hunting, dancing, conversation, theater, and courtship, even work.

Before turning to French medical texts, two influential English sources for concepts and treatments of melancholy should be mentioned: Timothy Bright's *A Treatise of Melancholy* (1586) and Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). With neither translated into French until the 1990s,[80] the correspondences between English and French discourses on melancholy and remedial diversions testify to a European Galenic paradigm or *episteme* within which people and doctors conceived the atrabilious temperament and illness.[81]

Bright inaugurated the early modern boom in treatises on melancholy.[82] Like Ficino, he considers "study," "contemplation," or "meditation"—"especially of difficult matters, and high misteries"—a potentially harmful separation of the mind from its embodiment in the world. Melancholic mental activity should be "above all" remedied by "recreation," which releases vital "spirit" from its overinvestment in intellection.[83]

Burton's *Anatomy*, the summa of medico-philosophical discourse on melancholy,[84] remains the best source for the range of traditional therapeutic

78 See Patrick Dandrey, *Molière et la maladie imaginaire, ou: De la mélancolie hypochondriaque* (Paris, 1998), 156–8, 170–71; Jean Starobinski, "Histoire du traitement de la mélancolie," in Starobinski, *L'encre de la mélancolie* (Paris, 2012), 36–7, 39, 46, 48, 76, 109–30. On the archaic sources of this therapy see Jackie Pigeaud, *Melancholia* (Paris: 2008), 102; E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley, 1951), 76–9; Philippe Pinel, "Mélancolie," in *Encyclopédie méthodique*, series Médecine, vol. 9 (Paris, 1816), 591–2. Pinel arguably traces the treatment back to ancient Egyptian mass cures. Diversion's social character is thus inscribed into its genealogy.

79 Starobinski, "Histoire du traitement de la mélancolie," 39 ("la méthode de *diversion*").

80 Jean Starobinski, "L'utopie de Robert Burton," in Starobinski, *L'encre de la mélancolie*, 183–219.

81 Galenism was the French medical episteme, both vernacular and institutionalized: see Brockliss and Jones, *The Medical World*, part 1, esp. 85–169. Only around 1690 did Galenism begin to recede in French medical institutions, though not from the vocabulary of the iatromechanism that then reigned until about 1750, when Newtonian science encouraged a pluralist empiricism in medicine. Ibid., 411–32. See also Andrew Wear, "Aspects of Seventeenth-Century French Medicine," *Seventeenth-Century French Studies* 4 (1982), 118–32.

82 Radden, "Introduction," 8; Jean Starobinski, "Les sciences psychologiques à la Renaissance," in Starobinski, *L'encre de la mélancolie*, 231–44, at 239.

83 Timothy Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholy* (London, 1586), 236–8.

84 See Gowland, "Burton's *Anatomy*," *passim*.

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divertissements. "Many and sundry are the means which philosophers and physicians have prescribed to exhilarate a sorrowful heart, to divert those fixed and intent cares and meditations, which in this malady so much offend," writes Burton, in a section on a famed anti-melancholy remedy: music.[85] He cites numerous authorities on distracting activities to be undertaken by, even imposed upon, the melancholic:[86] "Let them use hunting, sports, playes, jests, merry company, which will not let the minde be molested, a cup of good drinke now and then, hear musick, and have such companions with whom they are especially delighted; merry tales or toyes, drinking, singing, dancing, and whatsoever else may procure mirth."[87]

The melancholic should "never be left alone or idle," Burton writes; "set him about some business, exercise, or recreation, which may divert his thoughts ... [If not] in perpetual action, ever employed, [his phantasy] will work upon it self, melancholize." Friends must "alienate his mind by some artificial invention or some contrary passion ... humor him, please him, divert him."[88] His wayward mind should be engulfed in active, social life. When Pascal's doctors advised him to avoid serious intellectual pursuits and to seek relief in the *divertissements* of social conversation, they were simply following custom.[89] Pascal's "worldly period" was partly a medical affair.

Years before Burton, in a famous 1594 text on melancholy, André du Laurens (1558–1609) made the obligatory mention of the social therapeutics of *divertissement*, designed to oppose the melancholic's proverbial tendency to solitude:

> Melancholics should never be left alone; they should always be surrounded by pleasant company. At times they should be flattered and granted some part of what they desire ... [One must] entertain them with pleasant tales: one should not expose them to any cause of fear, or any unpleasant news. In short: one must divert [*divertir*] them as much as possible, and drive from their understanding all passions of the soul, especially anger, fear, and sadness.[90]

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85 Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 16th edn (London, 1838; first published 1621), 370.

86 See Starobinski, "L'utopie de Robert Burton," 181–219; Feld, *Melancholy and the Otherness of God*, 64.

87 Burton, *Anatomy*, 374.

88 Ibid., 366–7.

89 Périer, "La vie de Monsieur Pascal," 21. Descartes was likewise following custom in his letter to Princess Elizabeth from May–June 1645 (AT, 4: 218–22). On this therapeutic correspondence see Stephen Gaukroger, *Descartes: An Intellectual Biography* (Oxford, 1995), 18–20, 384–405. George Eliot modeled Causabon, who is also prescribed therapeutic diversion, on Pascal: George Eliot, *Middlemarch* (London, 1871), part III, chap. 30.

90 André du Laurens, "Second discours auquel est traicté des maladies melancholiques & du moyen de les guarir," in du Laurens, *Discours sur la conservation de la vue ...* (Paris, 1597; first published 1594), 145r–v (55–6). Pages in parentheses refer to du Laurens, *Discours des maladies mélancoliques (1594)*, ed. R. Suciu (Paris, 2012).

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This notion was common: melancholics should be drowned in positive feelings, their egos stroked and protected from sadness, anger, or fear—passions long associated with melancholy.[91]

Another influential treatise, *De la maladie d'amour, ou mélancholie érotique* (1610–23) by Jacques Ferrand (*c.*1575–*c.*1630), sought to cure lovesick melancholics of their fixations.[92] Ferrand prescribes typical "recreational exercises" for curative "mental *divertissement*": travel, socializing, exercise, games, conversations, music, and hunting.[93] His more ingenious techniques also draw their potency from diversion. They undo the dolorous attachment to the One via diversions into the Many: focus the lover's mind on other women, or, "by artifice," transform him through beautifying procedures, fashionable clothing, eloquence, dancing, singing, and, especially if he is ugly, "intellectual beauty."[94] The melancholic becomes a social actor, donning diverse roles and costumes. A spectacle, *divertissement*, for others, he sheds his unseemly melancholic self. In each technique, healing requires diversion: from (only) her or from (only) him.

Other popular vernacular medical texts, like those by Louis Guyon (*c.*1527–*c.*1617), Nicolas Abraham de La Framboisière (1560–1636), and Lazare Rivière (1589–1655), reedited across Pascal's century, corroborate the prevalence of distractions as privileged means for treating melancholics.[95] The idea was deeply ingrained: it reappears in the *Encyclopédie* (1765),[96] and later, hardly changed, in Freud's *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930).[97]

Literary and philological evidence confirms the enduring conceptual connection between *divertir* or *divertissement* and melancholy. In Molière's

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91 See Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholy*, 248; Lazare Rivière, *Les observations de médecine* (Lyon, 1680), 809. For this idea in ancient medicine see Starobinski, "Histoire du traitement de la mélancolie," 34, 37–8.

92 Jacques Ferrand, *De la maladie d'amour ou Melancholie erotique* (Paris, 1623). Ferrand's text first appeared in 1610 and 1612 as *Traicté de l'essence et guérison de l'Amour, ou De la Melancholie erotique* (Colomiez, 1612). Condemned by the Inquisition in 1620, a reworked version appeared in 1623.

93 Jacques Ferrand, *De la maladie d'amour ou mélancolie érotique*, ed. Donald Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella (Paris, 2010), 355–8.

94 Ibid., 307–22, 337; Jacques Ferrand, *Traité de l'essence et guérison de l'amour*, ed. Gérard Jacquin and Éric Foulon (Paris, 2001), 139, 141–2.

95 Louis Guyon, *Cours de medicine théorique et pratique* (Lyon, 1678), 75–6; Nicolas Abraham de La Framboisière, "Comme les melancholics se doivent gouverner," in La Framboisière, *Oeuvres*, vol. 2 (Lyon, 1669), Part 2, chap. 2, 101–3; Rivière, *Les observations de médecine*, 812. On the increase of vernacular texts and "popularization of medical knowledge" after 1600, see Brockliss and Jones, *The Medical World*, 281–3.

96 Anon., "Melancholie," in Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert, eds., *Encyclopédie*, vol. 10 (Neuchâtel, 1765), 310. See Pinel, "Mélancolie," 591, 595–7.

97 Sigmund Freud, *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur*, in Freud, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 14 (London, 1948), 419–506, at 431–2.

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Monsieur de Pouceaugnac (1669), the first doctor, specialist in Galenic medicine, ends a list of remedies for his bewildered patient by prescribing, "above all" (*à la* Bright) "to delight him by pleasant conversations, songs, and musical instruments," and dance, to "rouse his deadened spirits from their indolence, which causes the thickness of his blood, whence arises the malady."[98] We can also return to Furetière. In the sense of "to cheer up, delight," *divertir* is defined over against melancholy: "Nothing diverts more than theater. It *diverts* even those who are the most melancholic."[99] Theater, a dreadfully powerful *divertissement* for Pascal (764/630), works "even" on melancholics. They are, we infer, hardest to *divert*.

This reciprocal dependence between *divertissement* and melancholy is also manifest across an entire seventeenth-century genre: collections of facetious tales, their function proclaimed by their titles:[100] *Le facétieux Réveille-matin des esprits melancholiques . . . conten[ant] les Meilleures Rencontres . . . capables de réjoüir toutes sortes de personnes, & de divertir les bonnes compagnies* (1656); *Recueil des pieces . . . ou, Divertissement curieux: pour chasser la mélancolie* (1685); *Les récréations françoises . . . Pour servir de divertissement aux Melancholiques, & de joyeux entretiens dans les Cours . . .* (1681), and so on. We might also recall the subtitle of Molière's *Pourceaugnac*, as published in 1670: *Comédie faite . . . pour le Divertissement du Roy*—as if the spectator king, like Pourceaugnac in the play, were being treated for melancholy by *divertissement*.[101]

As in this play, in Montaigne's essay, or in Furetière's definition of *diversion*, split between *diversion* of humors and *diversion* from negative passions, prescriptions for recreations often appeared alongside more somatic remedies.[102] But they were not *merely* "psychological." Just as melancholic moods or temperaments, like pathological melancholia, were linked to an underlying morbid entity (excessive or corrupt black bile), the "psychological" effects of *diversions* could be explained physiologically by hypostatizing their qualities: their levity enlivened the blood and vital spirit, their mobile diversity brought

98 Molière, *Monsieur de Pouceaugnac* (Paris, 1670), I, viii, 53. See Dandrey, *Molière et la maladie imaginaire*, 156–8, 170–71. Brockliss and Jones, *The Medical World*, 336–44, offer a corrective to Molière's medical parodies.

99 Furetière, "divertir," in Furetière, *Dictionnaire*.

100 See Alain Mercier, *Le tombeau de la mélancolie: Littérature et facétie sous Louis XIII* (Paris, 2005).

101 See Fumaroli, "La mélancolie et ses remèdes," 223. On royal *divertissements* see Élisabeth Caude, Jérôme de La Gorce, and Béatrix Saule, eds., *Fêtes et divertissements à la cour* (Paris, 2016).

102 Such seems to have been true of Pascal's own treatment: Périer, "La vie de Monsieur Pascal," 21. Compare Descartes's letter to Princess Elizabeth from May or June 1645 (AT, 4: 220).

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diverse, salutary movements to bodily fluids, and so on.[103] Thus—following "the Golden rule of Galenic therapeutics: curing by opposites"[104]—recreations countered the atrabilious humor, with its heaviness reflected in a lethargic mood, its darkness mirrored in the melancholic's sardonic mien, its obstructing thickness corresponding to the obsessive fixations it occasioned, and so on.

This logic, which, across and beyond the Galenic humoral paradigm, governed discourse on melancholy and its cures, was one of qualitative causality or "symbolic unity."[105] One detects its presence in Pascal's *divertissement* fragments too, which display a split between sets of contrary qualities resembling those that structured the discourse of humoralism: qualities associated with *ennui* and solitary self-contemplation—single, solitary, stagnant, fixed, inward, deep, empty (form)—and those predicated on *divertissement*—multiple, social, light, mobile, agitated, outward, superficial, full (content). Pascal even imagines a *noirceur* (622/515) leaking into the unoccupied mind, pervading the self's self-relation: "blackness," melancholy's quality par excellence, which doctor Jourdain Guibelet studied in another important text on melancholy.[106]

ENNUI

Pascal's *divertissement* expands a category of treatments for melancholy to include all occupations, encompassing the entirety of civil and courtly life. This implied that worldly people—courtiers and *honnêtes gens*—were unwittingly medicating themselves for an ailment they did not know.[107] The Jesuits, by condoning worldly life and *divertissements*, exacerbated such ignorance.

In turn, there are grounds for seeing in *divertissement*'s contrary, *ennui*, the disorder or moods for which medical texts prescribed remedial diversions. Melancholy can be found in (1) Pascal's depiction of deep *ennui*, the affect of the solitary, unoccupied mind, as without apparent cause; (2) his Augustinian anthropology, which explains man's "misery" and true cause of mournfulness;

[103] See Foucault, *Histoire de la folie*, 402–12, 427.

[104] Brockliss and Jones, *The Medical World*, 114.

[105] Foucault, *Histoire de la folie*, 333–41, 383–4; Starobinski, "Histoire du traitement de la mélancolie," 70–71; Wear, "Popularized Ideas of Health and Illness," 231.

[106] Jourdain Guibelet, *Trois discours philosophiques* (Évreux, 1603), 223–9.

[107] Some of them did know it, in fact. See Saint-Évremond, "Sur les plaisirs, à Monsieur le comte d'Olonne," in Charles de Saint-Évremond, *Oeuvres choisies*, ed. Jacques Prévot (Paris, 2016), 34–40; H. T. Barnwell, "Saint-Évremond and Pascal: A Note on the Question of 'Le divertissement,'" *Studies in Philology* 53/1 (1956), 35–50; D. C Potts, "Pascal's Contemporaries and 'Le divertissement,'" *Modern Language Review* 57/1 (1962), 31–40.

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and (3) the dichotomy or "contrariety" he finds in the self between solitary doldrums and social ecstasies, creaturely misery and kingly pride. The oscillation between default misery and instinctual strivings for happiness via *divertissement* describes a melancholy dualism.

Groundless *ennui*

The *Pensées* depict solitary self-perception as a default activity, which occurs when one is alone and unoccupied. When bereft of things, the mind tends to turn on itself, or, as Burton said, to "work upon it self, [to] melancholize":

> Nothing is more unbearable to man than being entirely at rest, without passions, without business, without diversion, without application for himself. He then feels his nothingness, his abandonment, his insufficiency, his dependence, his powerlessness, his emptiness. Immediately there wells up, from the depths of his soul, *ennui*, black gloom [*noirceur*], sadness, chagrin, rancor, despair. (622/515)

The nature of *ennui*, with its attendant negative affects, is complex. While it can be caused by the thought of discernible "miseries," mysteriously, *ennui* can be a misery without cause:

> rest becomes unbearable by the *ennui* it engenders. We have to get away, and plead for commotion. For we either think of miseries we have now or of those threatening us. And even if we could find ourselves utterly protected, *ennui*, of its own authority, would still emerge from the depths of the heart, where it has natural roots, to fill the mind with its venom … Thus man is so wretched, that he would feel *ennui* even without any cause for *ennui*, by the very nature of his complexion. And he is so vain that, though full of thousands of essential causes for *ennui*, the most frivolous thing, like a billiard cue and a ball to push with it, suffices to divert him. (136/168)

Acting on its "own authority," *ennui* is a sovereign affect. Not only a familiar feeling, it can be a mysterious mood whose cause is unknown:[108] "But remove their diversion: you will see them wither with *ennui*. Then they feel their nothingness without knowing it. For this is truly unhappiness: to be unbearably sad the moment one is forced to consider oneself instead of being distracted from doing so" (36/70).

The omnipresent notion of "cause" in these fragments confirms that Pascalian *ennui* is not mere *boredom*, but carries the strong seventeenth-century sense of affliction, suffering, deep sadness.[109] *Ennui*, that is, *should* have a cause. But, while it often does ("essential causes"), a deeper, mysterious *ennui* arises in the absence of things, without apparent cause ("without any cause"). The latter

[108] For emotion versus mood see Radden, "Introduction," 37–8.

[109] Mesnard, *Les Pensées de Pascal*, 191, 213; Furetière, "Ennui," in Furetière, *Dictionnaire*.

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is the mood of the self that faces or feels its essence, absent of all worldly content, as "emptiness" or "nothingness" with a negative affective hue. While a long iconographic tradition gave a set posture to melancholy's empty inward-turnedness,[110] Western medicine saw fathomless affects as its indubitable signs.

Beginning with Greek medicine, despondency and anxiety or fear, without "cause" or "occasion," were signatures of melancholy.[111] In making groundless *ennui*—"a misery without cause, and, in that, deeper than those miseries whose origin is discernible"[112]—the default state of human nature, Pascal universalized melancholy, making it the essence of selfhood understood as an empty, despondent self-relation. Suggestive in this respect is the term "complexion" (136/168), which still connoted humoralism in Pascal's time.[113] No longer one alongside three others (*sanguine*, *choleric*, *phlegmatic*), melancholy becomes *the* "complexion," the synonym, of "man."[114]

Augustinian anthropology

This universal pathologization is less surprising given Pascal's postlapsarian, Augustinian anthropology. The same anthropology allowed medieval and early modern thinkers—like Hildegard von Bingen and Burton—to explain human vulnerability to bodily and mental disorders, the corruption of prelapsarian healthy humor into postlapsarian black bile, and to hold a common early modern belief: that the era faced an unprecedented melancholy epidemic.[115] Theorizing the Fall often entailed considering the origin and power of passions and illnesses, melancholy especially.

Du Laurens, for example, began his discourse on melancholy with a humanist hymn to "man," abruptly silenced, in chapter 2, with a fall into different illnesses. Like sin, illnesses lower man, "the most perfect of all animals," to "the most frail and miserable animal in the world."[116] The marginal title du Laurens gave these lines would resound throughout the *Pensées*: "Misery of Man." So too would

[110] See Pigeaud, *Melancholia*, 11; Klibansky, Panofsky, and Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy*, *passim*; Clair, *Mélancolie*, *passim*.

[111] Radden, "Introduction," 10–12, 37–8; Dandrey, *Molière et la maladie imaginaire*, 138; Guibelet, *Trois discours philosophiques*, 245v; du Laurens, "Second discours," 117r (23–4).

[112] Mesnard, *Les Pensées de Pascal*, 213.

[113] See Furetière, "Complexion," in Furetière, *Dictionnaire*.

[114] On "complexion" see Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression*, 43; Nancy G. Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine* (Chicago, 1990), 79–85, 101–6.

[115] Gowland "The Problem of Early Modern Melancholy," 80, 105–6. Starobinski, "Histoire du traitement de la mélancolie," 57–8; Pormann, "Melancholy in the Medieval World," 183–5.

[116] Du Laurens, "Second discours," 108r–v (15).

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the theme of melancholy *creatureliness*, the flip side of humanity's prelapsarian kingly grandeur, which Benjamin detected in fragment 137/169. Combining Augustinianism and thematics of lost kingliness, Burton is even closer to Pascal. The *Anatomy* begins with man as "soveragn lord of the earth," and his Fall: he "forfeited his estate ... [is] now miserable and accursed." No postlapsarian being is immune to melancholic tendencies: they belong to "mortality" itself.[117] For Pascal, too, original sin is the cause of man's "wretched condition," the ground of *ennui* and *divertissement*. Universal melancholy follows from the Fall.

But Pascal is more extreme than his predecessors (like Montaigne) and implicit interlocutors (like du Laurens or Burton). For him, melancholy is no tendency, but a state, whereas *divertissement* names a tendency, which rises from and falls back into melancholy. Further, Pascal used postlapsarian anthropology to excavate the causes of apparently groundless melancholic feelings. This was to provide self-knowledge for readers who were unreflected given their "instinct" to flee, in *divertissement*, the feelings of undistracted self-presence, and reflection on them.[118]

Ennui's obscure causes are, first, revulsion at postlapsarian mortality (133/166): *ennui* is implicit mourning of all things and persons, including oneself, before their loss or death (122/166),[119] displaying the "paradox" of melancholy that Giorgio Agamben identified: "an intention to mourn that precedes and anticipates the loss of the object."[120] But *ennui*'s ultimate cause is deeper, more paradoxical. Groundless *ennui* or melancholy is unconscious mourning of something never possessed: a kingly, immortal self.

This prelapsarian ego is accessible to most only as a "secret instinct that remains from the grandeur of our original nature" (136/168); as an infinitely desirous lack: "the mark and trace, which is entirely empty, and that [one] vainly tries to fill with everything around" (148/181); and as groundless *ennui*, infinite desire's negative counterpart. What was lost remains, then, as unreflected *affects*, which only the Fall's lens clarifies and names. The Fall provides a hermeneutics for *ennui*, a *technology of the self* that transforms readers in their self-relation.[121] Through it, they might read the murky melancholy welling up in the lonely idle

[117] Burton, *Anatomy*, 81, 90. See Gowland "The Problem of Early Modern Melancholy," 97–8; Starobinski, "L'utopie de Robert Burton," 188.

[118] See Éric Dubreucq, "L'intériorité désertée et le fond du coeur: Le rapport à soi dans la liasse de Pascal sur le divertissement," *Méthodos* 5 (2005), at http://methodos.revues.org/381.

[119] Compare Blaise Pascal, "Sur la conversion," in Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Sellier, 717.

[120] Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Phantasm and Word in Western Culture*, trans. R. L. Martinez (Minneapolis, 1993), 20. See also Foucault, *Histoire de la folie*, 31. Morbid obsessions were proverbial symptoms of melancholy.

[121] Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité*, vol. 2, *L'usage des plaisirs* (Paris, 1984), 18–19.

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hours. Unveiling the mystery of their torment, they might recast their subjectivity in the Fall's claire-obscure light.[122]

Read with this hermeneutics, feelings and moods take on meaning. Fathomless melancholy now *signifies* lost sovereignty; the enormity of our "miseries" *means* the enormity our loss: "They are miseries of a great lord, miseries of a dispossessed king" (116/148). *Ennui*'s depth betokens the height of the fall: "for we are the more miserable the greater the height from which we fell" (122/155). Our disgust with our creaturely mortality and vulnerability discloses royal aspirations, the negative trace of an original kingly state: "For who but a dispossessed king is unhappy about not being king?" (117/149).[123]

Pascal reveals, then, unconscious loss at the heart of the melancholic condition. Though stripped of our sovereign selves long before birth, it befalls all to carry out the indefinite task of mourning a paradisal ego. Freud theorized *melancholia* as mourning for an unconscious loss from the ego itself, now impoverished and incapable of the work of mourning.[124] His perspective, which also strives to provide self-knowledge where none is available, is consonant with Pascal's, who attributed melancholic *ennui* to man's being a "dispossessed king," only instinctually or affectively aware of his loss.

A melancholy dualism

As an escape into the social sphere away from the *ennui* in which a true but lost kingliness might be glimpsed, *divertissement* provides an ersatz kingliness of vain pride. Like diversions in medical treatises, *divertissement* is fundamentally social, naming what is done with or in reference to others and their esteem. Not merely distraction from a wounded self, *divertissement* piques our desire for imaginary objects, whose possession we anticipate, exalting an imaginary ego (136/168).[125] Avoiding solitude and indulging the imagination, we form an imaginary, kingly *moi*, forged from the idea that others have of us: "We are unsatisfied with the life that we have in ourselves and in our own being: we want to lead an imaginary life in the idea of others, and for that we work on our appearance. Tirelessly we

[122] Augustinian discourse is a *mode de subjectivation* in Foucault's two senses: it entails emergence of a certain *type of subject* via *subjection* to a certain moral discourse. Ibid., 40–45.

[123] Compare "Mélancolie," in Diderot and d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie*, 307.

[124] Sigmund Freud, "Trauer und Melancholie", in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 10 (London, 1946), 428–46.

[125] See Ferreyrolles, *Les reines du monde: L'imagination et la coutume chez Pascal* (Paris, 1995), 260.

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labor to embellish and maintain our imaginary being, neglecting the real one" (806/653).[126]

But *divertissement*'s flight is Icarian: *ennui* always ensues (136/168). Within this oscillation between imaginary exaltation and real despondency, which, for Pascal, describes the rhythm of secular existence and often structures fragments on *divertissement*, another signature aspect of melancholy surfaces.

Across and beyond the humoral paradigm, *melancholia* was often seen as an erratic wandering between extremes, sometimes explained by its proximity to *mania*.[127] The humor subsumes diverse contraries—a notion of manifest significance to Pascal, who brooded on the *contrariétés* of human experience (131/168)—apparently challenging all logic, as Guibelet noted.[128] Though it is an escape from *ennui*, *divertissement*, as social ecstasy and self-delusion, remains within the binary economy of the human melancholic "complexion," just as ecstatic exuberance, imaginary delusions, and raving madness remained within melancholia. *Divertissement* and *ennui* are opposites in a melancholy dualism, the "cure" a moment of the sickness itself.

Following du Laurens, melancholics should be protected from negative passions. For Pascal, all social life, *divertissement*'s sphere, is conventionalized swaddling. Society ensures the delusions of universal melancholy:

> human life is nothing but a perpetual illusion; we do nothing but deceive and flatter each other . . . The union that exists between men is based only on this mutual deception . . . Man is hence nothing but disguise, lies, and hypocrisy, both within himself and for others. He does not want to hear the truth. He avoids telling it to others. (978/743)

Divertissement is self-alienation as distraction and *as the social contract*, binding people to distract each other from the thought of death and to mutually entertain delusions of grandeur.[129] Acculturated from birth as society's ideological basis (139/171), *divertissement* is the rival *technology of the self* to the Augustinian doctrine of the Fall. An *ideology* pervading society and selfhood, present only as an obscure "instinct," its rule is passively endured, its rationale invisible. *Ennui*'s sovereignty over the heart is grounded in unconscious loss; *divertissement*, the social king, reigns as cure for universal melancholy. This unquestioned social

[126] Compare Pierre Nicole, "De la connaissance de soi-même," in Nicole , *Essais de morale*, in Nicole, *Oeuvres*, ed. Charles Jourdain (Paris, 1845), 11–69.

[127] Radden, "Introduction," 15–16; Jackson, *Melancholia and Depression*, 249–73; Pormann, "Melancholy in the Medieval World," 187; Freud, "Trauer und Melancholie," 440–42; Benjamin, *Origin*, 128–51; Starobinski, "Les sciences psychologiques à la Renaissance," 238.

[128] Guibelet, *Trois discours philosophiques*, 223r–v.

[129] See Ferreyrolles, *Pascal*, 126–30.

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prestige and occult volitional power, in Pascal, corresponded to its conventional medical status as treatment.

KINGLINESS

Divertissement provides an ersatz kingliness. Only a fallen, melancholy king strives after a kingdom, be it mere illusion. The concepts of *divertissement*, *ennui*, and *kingliness* are clearly related in the *Pensées*, and understanding their link is essential to grasping Pascal's implicit dialogue with medical discourse on melancholic delusions. Multiple fragments display this conceptual constellation, for example, the famous "king without *divertissement*" (137/169), which Benjamin cited:

> Leave a king entirely alone, without any satisfaction for his senses, without a care in his mind, without company, with leisure to think about himself, and you will see that a king without diversion is a man full of miseries. So that is carefully avoided: never is there a moment when kings are not accompanied by a large number of people who make sure that diversion ensues upon business, and who survey every moment of the kings' leisure time, to procure them pleasures and games, so that there is never any emptiness [*vide*]. That is, kings are surrounded by people who take incredible care that the king should never be alone and in a state where he might think about himself, knowing that he will be miserable, king though he is, if he thinks about that. (137/169)

Pascal's concept of *kingliness* is dual, subsuming the extremes of fallen selfhood. While, negatively, each person is a "dispossessed king" and, "without *divertissement*," is subject to creaturely misery, positively, kingliness denotes total absorption in ecstatic *divertissement*. Since "the foremost cause of the bliss of the kingly condition [is] that one continually strives to divert them" (136/168), the king should be constantly distracted from his fallen "condition." While his "misery" is common, so is his life the common goal: enjoying an imaginary grandiosity and great social esteem, he coincides remainderlessly with his "imaginary being."[130] On the world's stage, the actor playing the king becomes what acts, identifying with what others play at taking him to be.[131]

This depiction of kingliness was obviously subversive against the backdrop of "the leisured society of the French court, [where] being entertained was one of the highest privileges, and the ability to produce entertainment was one of the highest signifiers of power."[132] The king of Pascal's youth, Louis XIII,

[130] See Nicole, "De la connaissance de soi-même," 17.

[131] On *theatrum mundi* see Vuillemin, *Épistémè baroque*, 263–336.

[132] Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure*, xvi.

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had a notoriously saturnine temperament and, for diversion, often binged on hunting—a signature royal recreation analyzed by Pascal (136/168).[133] But Louis XIII was no king of courtly entertainments, and paled in comparison to the sixteenth-century Valois courts and their largesse: he was frugal, socially awkward, and liked to eat alone. When he died in 1643, the court sighed in relief and more freely indulged in *divertissements*.[134] Whereas the first Fronde (1648–9) stymied this renewal of aristocratic entertainment under the regent Anne of Austria, the second Fronde (1650–53), though dispersing the courtiers, was less disruptive to courtly pleasures.[135] After all, Louis XIV first showed the court his dancing talents in ballets performed in 1651, while he and Anne were more or less imprisoned at the Palais-Royal.[136] Following the Fronde, the gallant and lively king became even more the center of the renewed culture of entertainments that brought together, and symbolically subjugated, a once fractious court.[137] The summer stay at Fontainebleau in 1661, during which Louis XIV offered his courtiers a suite of impressive *divertissements*, signaled that a new era of courtly life, structured around the king, had definitively begun.[138] Pascal died the following year.

Arguably, then, the glistening court of this young monarch is most relevant to Pascal's critique: "At the court of Louis XIV, leisure and pleasure informed a way of life including activities such as promenades, the hunt, boating, feasting, gambling, and the arts of dance and music making. In addition, a constant round of festive entertainments regularly punctuated the life of the court."[139] Pascal thought he had uncovered the empty center of this whirl of courtiers and *divertissements*. By leveling the king and his court to an all too common affliction, he flipped the hierarchy, making the most entertained the most miserable and furthest from real grandeur.

Kingliness appears in another Pascal text, the *First Discourse on the Condition of the Great*, under the same guise, as the "dispossessed king" of despondency

133 A. Lloyd Moote, *Louis XIII, The Just* (Berkeley, 1989), 105–7; Georges Pagès, *Les institutions monarchiques sous Louis XIII et Louis XIV* (Paris, 1961), 26–7. On hunting see Philippe Dulac, "La vénerie royale au temps de Versailles," in Caude, La Gorce, and Saule, *Fêtes et divertissements à la cour*, 27–38; Frédérique Leferme-Falguières, *Les courtisans: Une société du spectacle sous l'Ancien Régime* (Paris, 2007), 254.

134 Jean-François Solnon, *La cour de France* (Paris, 1987), 165–6, 178–83.

135 Ibid., 183–4.

136 Ibid., 184; Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure*, 1–5.

137 See Marie-Christine Moine, *Les fêtes à la cour du Roi Soleil: 1653–1715* (Paris: 1984), esp. 128–9.

138 Solnon, *La cour de France*, 184–5, 254–5. See Madame de Motteville, *Mémoires*, ed. M. F. Riaux, vol. 4 (Paris, 1911), 257–61.

139 Cowart, *The Triumph of Pleasure*, 6.

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and, its obverse, as the risk and privilege of coinciding with an imaginary ego. The *Discourse* equates royalty with an arbitrary usurpation of power that forgets its contingency and, from masquerading as authentic, deludes itself into believing it is so. The text calls this "madness," a diagnosis that falls on all, like the rich and powerful, who believe in the reality of their exalted "imaginary being."[140]

When denoting delusions of grandeur, the regal trope thus performed a major function in Pascal's critique of pride or self-love, *the* vice of postlapsarian nature. For Pascal, like Spinoza or Luther, pride is a sort of delirium:[141] people fancy themselves monarchs, twiddling away their lives in *divertissement*, "the pleasure even of kings" (39/73):

> The order of thought is to begin with oneself and with one's author and one's end. Yet what does the world think about? Never that! But about dancing, playing the lute, singing, writing verse, tilting at the ring, etc., about fighting, about being king [*se faire roi*], without thinking about what it is to be king, or to be human. (920/513)

Given this general condition, politics is the art of governing a society of prideful madmen, of running institutions for the insane:

> If [Plato and Aristotle] wrote on politics, they did so as if drafting rules for a madhouse [*hôpital de fous*]. And if they pretended to speak about this as though it were hugely important, it was because they knew that the madmen they were addressing fancy themselves kings and emperors. They entertained these whims so as to moderate the madness to the least pernicious possible. (533/457)[142]

Pascal tacitly drew upon the melancholy tradition here, too. At least from Avicenna (980–1037) on, the delusion of being king was one of the set types of derangement—carrying the world on one's shoulders; being an animal, dead, or made of glass; fearing that urinating will drown the town, and so on—listed in texts on melancholy.[143] As if it were the literal correlate of Pascal's metaphor of pride as usurped regal self-estimation, this delusion was said to afflict people

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[140] Blaise Pascal, "Ier discours de la condition des grands," in Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Sellier, 747–50, at 749.

[141] Gérard Bras, "Divertissement et servitude: Deux pensées de l'aliénation," in L. Bove, G. Bras, and E. Méchoulan, eds., *Pascal et Spinoza* (Paris, 2007), 229–41, at 237; H. C. Erik Midelfort, *A History of Madness in Sixteenth-Century Germany* (Stanford, 1999), 98–9.

[142] The fragment recalls Charles Beys's tragicomedy, *L'hospital des fous* (1635) (Lyon, 1653), whose melancholics are "fous, en ce qu'ils s'estiment plus qu'ils ne sont" (ibid., 3–4). On institutions see Foucault, *Histoire de la folie*; Brockliss and Jones, *The Medical* World, 709–11.

[143] Avicenna, "On the Signs of Melancholy's Appearance," in Radden, *Nature of Melancholy*, 77–8. Avicenna's *Canon* was the centerpiece of French medical theory in the late Middle Ages. Brockliss and Jones, *The Medical World*, 90–93.

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"ambitious by nature" especially.[144] Ardent desires for greatness could become literal delusions of grandeur.

Among the numerous sources for the regal delusion,[145] the most intriguing are two "stories of melancholics" transmitted by Guibelet in 1603:

> There is a story of another man from the town of Dieppe, who firmly believed himself King: all day he remained sitting at the port near the ocean shore, where those passing by, aware of his humor and his madness, greeted him and, mockingly, paid him as much respect as if he had really been King, taking pleasure in encouraging him and maintaining him in his madness. He considered all the ships that approached as his own, and enjoyed a rare pleasure in their arriving safely at port. When some flooded, he, with Royal constancy, showed himself capable of patiently enduring their loss. The story of Thrasilaüs in Athenaeus is just the same: for, being at Port of Piraeus in Athens, he found great contentment in watching the vessels he esteemed his own arrive from all directions, and in the taxes levied on the peoples he considered his lowly tributaries. But a great misfortune befell him: his brother had him cured by Doctors. For he insisted they had done him a horrible wrong in stripping him of his delusion, in which he had been the happiest man on earth. The recovery of his health caused the loss of his Kingdom.[146]

These delusional melancholics strikingly anticipate Pascal's society as *un hôpital de fous*: the social as a space for entertaining delusions of grandeur, the split between imaginary and real "conditions," and the preference of mental alienation to sanity's humbling clarity.

Before the *Pensées*, the same regal delusion had been crucial to a famous passage from René Descartes's *Meditations* (1641):

> how could it be denied that these hands or this whole body are mine? Unless perhaps I were to liken myself to madmen, whose brains are so damaged by the persistent vapor of black bile that they firmly maintain they are kings when they are paupers, or say that they are dressed in purple when they are naked, or that their heads are made of earthenware,

144 Guibelet, *Trois discours philosophiques*, 239v; du Laurens, "Second discours," 132v (40).

145 Ambroise Paré, *Oeuvres*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1585), 51; du Laurens, "Second discours," 132v, 140v–141r (40, 49); Noël Taillepied, *Psichologie* (Rouen, 1588), 30; Guyon, *Cours de medicine théorique et pratique*, 74; Marc Duncan, *Discours de la possession des Religieuses Ursulines de Lodun* (Saumur, 1634), 49–50; Burton, *Anatomy*, 168; Lazare Meyssonnier, *Traité des maladies extraordinaires* (Lyon, 1643), 54–5; Furetière, "Mélancolie," in Furetière, *Dictionnaire*; "Melancholie," in Diderot and d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie*, 308r. See also Pinel, "Mélancolie," 592; Foucault, *Histoire de la folie*, 617–18; Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'imaginaire* (Paris, 1940), 189.

146 Guibelet, *Trois discours philosophiques*, 240r–v. Thrasilaüs appears in Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, *Essais*, II, xii, 495–6; and, unnamed, in "Melancholie," in Diderot and d'Alembert, *Encyclopédie*, 309r.

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or that they are pumpkins, or made of glass. But such people are insane, and I would be thought equally mad if I took anything from them as a model for myself.[147]

These lines, which Foucault and Derrida quarreled over,[148] clearly riff on the medical tradition. What Foucault and Derrida called "madness" was, more accurately, a condition caused by deranging *vapor ex atrâ bile*.[149] The regal delusion appears as the paradigm of melancholy and madness, the first and lengthiest of the melancholic delusions that Descartes invokes.

And the most extreme: Descartes portrays the delusion as a move between contraries, echoing the bipolar conception of melancholy. In the passage, "when" (*cùm*) pivots between real and imaginary conditions, underlining their absurd simultaneity. The melancholic madmen are not delusional noblemen, but *pauperrimi*—not "paupers," as translated above, but "the poorest," the furthest from kingly riches; and they are not poorly dressed, but *nudi*, "naked."[150] They are almost animal in their lack of possessions and clothing, in their *bare life*.[151] Their melancholic delusion is a conjunction of creaturely indigence and imaginary sovereignty.

Pascal considered this tension, an absurdity for Descartes, to be the core of fallen selfhood. In *divertissement*, people flee their dejected animality (117/149) and believe themselves kings, reversing in imagination the movement of the Fall. Still, when denuded of *divertissement*'s phantasmagoria, even kings tumble back down to creaturely *misère*. Omnipresent in the *Pensées*, Jansenists used this term to render *paupertatem* from the Vulgate's Lamentations 3:1: "I am the man that sees my poverty [*paupertatem*]" (cf. 437/689).[152] Thus preserving some sense of the utter miserliness from the *Mediations*, Pascal's *misère* is utmost *poverty* of being, dignity, and sovereignty.

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147 René Descartes, *Meditations*, trans. J. Cottingham (Cambridge, 1996), 13 (modified); AT, 8: 18–19.

148 See Kambouchner, "Descartes," *passim*.

149 See *Meditationes*, AT, 7: 19. See Jacques Darriulat, "Descartes et la mélancolie," *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 186/4 (1996), 465–86; Dominique Weber, *Hobbes et le désir des fous: Rationalité, prévision et politique* (Paris, 2007), 153. See also René Descartes, *La recherche de la vérité* (AT, 10: 511) and Descartes, *Regulae ad directionem ingenii* (AT, 10: 423). Every delusion Descartes mentions figures in the lists of melancholic "reveries" from the medical literature.

150 Meyssonnier, who corresponded with Descartes, depicted the atrabilious delusion under the same guise: Lazare Meyssonnier, *Traité des maladies extraordinaires et nouvelles* (Lyon, 1643), 54.

151 See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. D. Heller-Roazen (Stanford, 1998).

152 See Dubreucq, "L'intériorité désertée," 75–7.

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CURE

Like Guibelet's Thrasilaüs, who contemplated his royal fleet until doctors brought him the misfortune of a cure, people abhor treatment for their delusions. The reasonable envy the deranged: imagination "makes madmen happy, rivaling reason, which makes her friends only miserable; the first envelops men in glory, the second, in shame" (44/78). Conscious aversion to cure and desire for madness display the *akrasia* that Augustine placed at the center of moral experience.[153] It became an anthropological principle for Augustinians like Pascal, Nicole, and La Rochefoucauld.

Pascal thus seeks to cure the impulse to *divertissement*, using a critical dialectics to reveal it as an inauthentic cure.[154] While *divertissement* is rational insofar as the banal worries that it produces are less negative than the existential *ennui* of self-contemplation (139/171), *divertissement* is irrational, for the "happiness" that it procures is inauthentic, fleeting, and would be unnecessary if the self knew true happiness (132/165). Despite its failure, we are subjects to Lord *Divertissement*, libidinally bound by its "instinct" and ideology, its lure of imaginary joy. Striving to grab it, we reap only sadness.

Pascal's resolution to this dialectical dilemma was to privilege the melancholy of self-contemplation contra the remedial protocol of the traditional and humanist medico-philosophical tradition, and the Jesuits.[155] Not that one can find happiness *in oneself*, as some ancient philosophers and their modern epigones thought (407/26). Rather, only by resisting the *divertissement* "instinct" and facing the deep "emptiness" of *ennui* can a true cure present itself (414/33). There, in a melancholy relation to nothing but oneself, where the social and sensible world disappears and the imagination's theater drops its curtain, in the black abyss of *ennui* one might intuit the infinity of lack and desire, an "infinite pit" that can be filled by no-thing but "an infinite and immutable object; that is, by God" (148/181).[156] Cure begins by recognizing and naming the infinity of loss.

Pascalian *ennui* is hence extraordinarily potent, and politically subversive. *Ennui* is implicit brooding on the ephemerality and inauthenticity of all things.

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153 Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge, 1989), 138.

154 Périer, "Vie de Monsieur Pascal," 21, uses similar rhetoric to describe Pascal's decision to renounce worldly life after having engaged in *divertissements* at the behest of his doctors.

155 Compare Pascal's valorization of physical illness: Blaise Pascal, *Prière pour demander à Dieu le bon usage des maladies*, in Pascal, *Oeuvres*, ed., Lafuma, 362–5. On this typically Christian attitude see Lebrun, *Se soigner autrefois*, 8–13.

156 On Pascal and the mystical tradition in which desolation (*siccitas*) was the last step in the ascent to God see Reinhard Kuhn, "Le roi dépossédé: Pascal et l'ennui," *French Review* 42/5 (1969), 657–64, at 662; Dubreucq, "L'intériorité désertée," 70; Pălăşan, *L'ennui chez Pascal*, 160.

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The arbitrary, empty core of worldly values and roles is disclosed *as a negative feeling of emptiness*, to which the Augustinian discourse of vanity gives critical, discursive form.[157] Insofar as it contains the potential for a rejection of worldly society, *ennui* is the affective counterpart to Jansenist "ideology," which posited "the radical impossibility of living a justified life in secular society," prompting suspicion from those, like Richelieu and Louis XIV, eager to protect the values that ensured a society ultimately subservient to the monarchy.[158] For if one can bear and interpret *ennui*, there is a cure, pointing beyond the "world." As a cycle of maniacal exaltation and unfathomable debasement, melancholy comes to rest only by going so deep into its banal depths that they become otherworldly heights. Our "emptiness," if only we let it become infinite, becomes infinite plenitude, and *ennui* flips over into "Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy," as Pascal scrawled in his night of illumination, November 1654 (913/72). The authentic cure is neither outside nor within, but "in God, both outside and within us" (407/26).

CONCLUSION: THE NAMELESS AFTERLIFE OF MELANCHOLY

Melancholy pervades the *Pensées*. This is likely why it has proved imperceptible to commentators: it saturates Pascal's discourse on fallen selfhood, to the point of invisibility. His social critique took an affective epiphenomenon and medical pathology and, through the lens of Augustinian anthropology, made it the substance of selfhood.

The transposition of a literal delusion—believing oneself king—into a more figural sort—prideful delusion of grandeur—is thus exemplary of the melancholy episteme's latent presence in the *Pensées*. The qualities and forms, shapes and characteristics, of melancholy endure, along with the "symbolic unity" or qualitative "causal system," which governed discourse on melancholy, its etiologies, and its therapeutic protocols, into the nineteenth century.[159] But the ontological commitments, and etiological analyses, of this discourse are suspended in Pascal, and replaced by a descriptive analysis of human nature not epiphenomenally but constitutively melancholic.[160] Pascal is thus at the forefront of his age—in offering a more metaphorical than ontological depiction

157 See Pascal, "Sur la conversion," 717–18; Foucault, *Histoire de la folie*, 31–2.

158 Goldmann, *Le dieu caché*, 117.

159 Pascal forebodes a transformation in discourses on melancholy and mania across the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: though certain substances, like humors, are abandoned as theories change, the qualitative logic remains. Foucault, *Histoire de la folie*, 243, 340, 345, 383–4; Starobinski, "Histoire du traitement de la mélancolie," 70; Patrick Dandrey, "L'amour est un mal; Le guérir est un bien," *Littératures classiques* 17 (1992), 275–94, at 276–8, 284.

160 For etiological versus non-etiological see Radden, "Introduction," 36.

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of melancholy[161]—while being deeply opposed to certain constitutive ideals of his day—in privileging melancholic *ennui* in an era that increasingly found it unseemly and suspicious, and, above all, in transposing melancholy from passing tendency into the human *condition*, origin and end of all states and actions.

Thus might we understand the absence of the term *mélancolie* in the *Pensées*: melancholy lost its name as it became a normalized pathology, a mysterious sadness whose origin lies in no discernible cause, but beyond this world and secular time. Changes in medical theory perhaps helped render this shift possible. While Harvey's anti-Galenic discovery (1628) was known, and slowly becoming accepted, in France "melancholy" connoted Galenic humoralism and its etiological, ontological commitments.[162] But although—or because—the medical paradigm was shifting, a now nameless, mysterious melancholy remained. Puncturing the new mechanist view promulgated by Harvey and Descartes, which made the human body into a body among others in a seamless fabric of causality, and which saw madness as some functional mishap of the corporeal machine,[163] Pascal removed melancholic *ennui* from the network of natural causes.[164] Showing it recalcitrant to worldly remedies and medical etiologies, he sought to provoke his readers, likely *honnêtes gens*, to believe in its supernatural cause and cure.

This is more provocative when seen against the history of medicine after Pascal. With the Galenic paradigm slowly giving way to mechanism and, around 1750, to the model of Newtonian science, the Enlightenment was a time of great medical optimism. Having long been the science whose meager results offered a constant reminder of human submission to nature and to God,[165] medicine began to embody human potential to lord over the world, even over death itself. The new models of observation and experimentation promised to exhaustively disclose the causes of illnesses, mental and physical, a cheery horizon already

[161] On this shift towards metaphorical depictions see Dandrey, "L'amour est un mal," 276–8, 284.

[162] Pascal knew of Harvey (*Pensées* 736/617), whose 1628 *De motu cordis* undermined the Galenic view of sanguification underpinning traditional understandings of melancholy. The circulation debate was settled in France by 1673, but "traditionalist doctors" predominated, since circulation immediately entailed no new therapeutic program. Claire Crignon, "La découverte de la circulation sanguine: Révolution ou refonte?" *Gesnerus* 68/1 (2011), 5–25, at 10, 20; Brockliss and Jones, *The Medical World*, 138–50, 338. On the disjunction of medical thought and practice see Foucault, *Histoire de la folie*, 375.

[163] See Courtine and Haroche, *Histoire du visage*, 89; and Thiher, *Revels in Madness*, 92–130.

[164] See Goldmann, *Le dieu caché*. 42–3. Jones, *The Good life*, 152–3, similarly argues that Pascal called the human a *monster* to counter rational explanations of human experience.

[165] See Brockliss and Jones, *The Medical World*, 37–83.

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delineated by Descartes's *Discourse on the Method* (1637).[166] It was precisely this sort of optimism that Pascal found delusional, even symptomatic. Groundless *ennui* would continue to cast a shadow over such humanism, which Pascal saw as one side of a Janus-faced selfhood.

Benjamin was right: the "king without *divertissement*" (136/169) is a paradigm of melancholy. But the person who, though sovereign, is the poorest creature when deprived of the pomp of diversion, represents just one side of the melancholy "complexion" that Pascal universalized. Fragment 136/169 portrays the other one, too: always with *divertissement*, the king is the most delusional of men. Pascal's "king" is an allegory of fallen selfhood and its melancholic extremes or *contrariétés*, its intestinal war of heart and mind, imagination and reason.

Fragment 136/169 "gives voice to the feeling of [Pascal's] age." Benjamin's phrase now evokes the inscrutability of nameless melancholic moods and drives, which the *Pensées* interpreted and expressed. Melancholy's voicelessness suggests that it was too prevalent to be seen, reflected on, or named; or that melancholy needed a voice, because it had been silenced.

On some accounts, it had been. In the enterprises of Reason and of an increasingly modern science, from Descartes through the Enlightenment, and in seventeenth-century France's attack on potentially unruly "negative passions" in the spheres of politics and society, melancholy was silenced, even repressed. This was Foucault's argument, implicitly at least, since what he called "madness" in the *Meditations* was actually melancholic delusion. Descartes silences and excludes this, thereby circumscribing Reason's domain, Foucault said,[167] just as, for Fumaroli, the culture of *classicisme* emerged from the "war on negative passions." In turn, medical science began to offer the prospect of a world free of maladies, mental and somatic.

Against these trends, Pascal's universalization of melancholy reintroduces the exiled "Other" into the very form of the Same. The culture and ideology of *classicisme* excludes melancholy's violent heights and depths, Quixote's madness and Hamlet's despair. Yet melancholy remains as selfhood itself at its most banal: pervading unoccupied hours, driving occupations, fueling petty delusions of grandeur. The opposition that Fumaroli saw in seventeenth-century French culture—(baroque) melancholy versus (classical) health of the soul—is superficial: not expunged, melancholy shifts from epiphenomenon to essence, tendency to default "complexion," figure to ground. The culture of *classicisme*

166 Peter Gay, "The Enlightenment as Medicine and as Cure," in W. H. Barber, J. H. Brumfitt, R. A. Leigh, R. Shackleton, and S. S. B. Taylor, eds., *The Age of Enlightenment* (London, 1967), 375–86; Brockliss and Jones, *The Medical World*, chap. 7; Peter A. Schouls, *Descartes and the Enlightenment* (Montreal, 1989).

167 Foucault, *Histoire de la folie*, 67–70.

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itself—its civility and urbanity, and the scientific, rationalist spirit that it passed on to the Enlightenment—becomes, at best, *divertissement*; at worst, melancholic delusion.

This might enrich our view of Pascal's anti-Cartesianism.[168] Constitutive melancholy opposed Descartes's image of sovereign selfhood, its joyous solitude and confidence in Reason to see through delusions and passions in its march towards self-understanding and advances in the sciences. With melancholy fundamental to selfhood, Reason's task is carried out only in vain, as a fiction in books: Reason becomes another of Imagination's grandiose reveries. Adopting a postlapsarian epistemology prominent in the early modern period, one might say that only Adam in Eden could philosophize *à la* Descartes.[169] For fallen creatures, there is little hope of seeing clearly and distinctly: melancholic vapor clouds our minds, and we instinctually abhor the solitary, reflective scene of philosophy. As a scientist, Pascal countered Descartes by proving "the vacuum" in Nature. He later found "emptiness" in the heart, a discovery equally anti-Cartesian.[170]

But tracing the Pascalian figure of melancholy has implications beyond his century. First, it encourages exploration of how the image of melancholic selfhood, with its infinite lack or desire—this mixture of theological anthropology and medicine—once secularized and de-medicalized, endured in modern notions of subjectivity.[171] Pascal removed *ennui* from the sphere of natural causes. For him, this referred it to God; for us, the metaphysical ante amounted to a shift from a medical or biological to a psychological and anthropological frame for melancholy, announcing modern philosophical and psychological understandings of the subject, progressively shorn of theology.

Second, viewed through the *ennui–divertissement* dichotomy, melancholy's tension with the ideals of *classicisme* discloses a melancholic oscillation of historical scale.[172] *Divertissement* fights *Ennui* in a Pascalian "Dialectic of

168 See Vincent Carraud, *Pascal et la philosophie* (Paris, 1992), 217–86.

169 On the Augustinian view of Adam's intellect see Peter Harrison, *The Fall of Man and the Foundations of Science* (Cambridge, 2007).

170 See Geneviève Rodis-Lewis, "La rencontre de Descartes et Pascal: Réalité et fiction," *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 75/1 (1991), 6–18; Matthew Jones, "Writing and Sentiment: Blaise Pascal, the Vacuum, and the *Pensées*," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 32/1 (2001), 139–81; Giancarlo Nonnoi, "Against Emptiness: Descartes's Physics and Metaphysics of Plenitude," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 25/1 (1994), 81–96.

171 For one take on the afterlife of Pascal's understanding of the self see Dubreucq, "L'intériorité désertée," *passim*.

172 Dandrey, *Sganarelle et la médecine*, lxxii, approaches similar speculations, without reference to Pascal.

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Enlightenment":[173] secular History becomes a circuit between self-reflexive doldrums and delusional exaltations, between melancholy and diversions against its unseemly political criticism and social uselessness. This ideological movement is clear in Pascal's reception history: the cheery Voltaire and the saturnine Chateaubriand, Enlightenment and Romanticism, were at loggerheads about the value of his personal melancholy, its ethical and epistemic significance.[174] But this movement is arguably also palpable in Heidegger's antihumanism, which granted an existentially *essential* status to boredom and anxiety.[175]

Do histories of attitudes towards affects and illnesses disclose deep cultural changes? Do shifts in the *value* and *intelligibility* of affects—melancholy, *ennui*, anxiety—across epochs, cultures, and authors, express fundamental divides: between optimism and pessimism, humanism and antihumanism, idealism and critique? In any case, the *Pensées* suggest that such contraries belong to a single "complexion." Reason's cure is superficial. The wheel turns, the bile cools, and Melancholy reappears: Dürer's fallen angel, the crown of Pascal's king on her head.

[173] See Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. E. Jephcott (Stanford, 2002).

[174] See Gheeraert, "'Les accidents de la vie,'" 295–302.

[175] See Espen Hammer, "Being Bored: Heidegger on Patience and Melancholy," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 12/2 (2004), 277–295. One could also invoke Lacan's theory of desire here. See Joan Copjec, *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists* (New York, 2015).

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