Philippe de Champaigne,
Christ on the Cross (Paris, Louvre).

Hyacinthe Rigaud,
Portrait of Louis XIV in His Majesty (Paris, Louvre).
The Body-of-Power and Incarnation
at Port Royal and in Pascal

or

Of the Figurability of the Political Absolute

Louis Marin

What is formulated as a rejection of the body or the world, an ascetic struggle or a prophetic break, is only the necessary and preliminary elucidation of a state of things where the work of offering a body to mind, of incarnating discourse and of giving place to a truth, begins. Contrary to appearances, lack is situated not on the side of what makes a break — the text — but rather on the side of what “makes flesh,” the body…. Those who take this discourse seriously are those who experience the pain of an absent body. The birth they all await in one way or another must invent in the word a body of love.

— Michel de Certeau, La fable mystique

Compare two figures of the body in order to link them to each other indissolubly: the royal body and the divine body.

Exhibit the King’s representation, the fundamental principle of political authority and legitimacy in its relationship to the religious, theological and spiritual spheres, which are given as the foundation of this foundation. Convoke this relationship with a singular, horrendous image, the image of the suffering Christ, Christ incarnate, God humiliated in agony, God in the state of death.

Give as its example and paradigm the portrait of Louis XIV in his majesty by Hyacinthe Rigaut, and as in a diptych — placed side by side — Christ on the Cross by Philippe de Champaigne. Two kingly figures, the King of Earth and the King of Heaven in a binary relationship of opposition, contrariety and contradiction.

These two images, the two volets of the diptych, when put back to back become the front and back sides of the same painting — indeterminably hidden or revealed,
front or back. Ask yourself when you make this paradoxical gesture of closing the diptych onto itself on the outside, not face to face, but back to back — who is its spectator if not a split, cloven spectator who stands at once in front of and behind it? Ask yourself if this gesture is not Pascal's among his Port Royal friends.

The 1701 portrait of Louis XIV by Rigaut. (I cannot help thinking that the painter was the one who, at the invitation of the Duc de Saint-Simon, "stole" the portrait from M. de Rancé, abbé de La Trappe.) The crucified Christ by Philippe de Champaigne. (It predates the Rigaut by more than forty years, painted in the years when the God-given Louis Dieudonné seized power, and was for a long time at the convent of the Grande Chartreuse before it was moved to the Musée de Grenoble.)

This relationship of opposition, contrariety and contradiction is here produced, reproduced and depicted by two figures. Think of it as the intimate relationship of an indissoluble union of two represented bodies, one in the throne room, the other on the Cross: the King divine and the divine King. Attempt to see the crucified Christ through the King in his majesty in order to try to recognize an essential theologico-political moment in the history of power, and in the body-of-power. This movement, perceived through the spiritual religious thought of Port Royal, is Pascal's: his method, his epistemology, his ethics, his spiritual asceticism, in short, his politics as theology (or the reverse).

Place the figure and the body as closely together as possible, putting at a distance representation and image, or try to understand them differently: assume that the body-of-power, the royal body, is representation, is only representation, and, by the same movement, but reversed, that the saintly image of the Crucified Man is — quodam modo — the divine body, the true God incarnate. Through that double movement, signify the passage, in a moment of reversal — or catastrophe — between the political and the religious. The king (with a small k, the real individual with knees swollen by gout — the organic body), is changed entirely into his "image," and becomes "representation" — the King (capital K, dignity, Majesty and the political body). Inversely, it is by obliterating himself as a human creature that God has some chance of making himself seen. To obliter himself is to incarnate himself, to become a body, a real individual, with his feet and hands pierced by nails, his side opened by the lance, a dead body, immobile and immobilized, presented alone on a twilit background. Here is the chance for an image to be divine presence, secret
epiphany, sacred apophasis, dazzling. In both "cases," think of the figure as this process that moves from the real to the image, from representation to presence — a passage that in history sometimes verges on magic or miracle.

Or (it comes down to the same thing) think of the figure at Port Royal and in Pascal as a three- or four-way knot, whose four strands (sens) in turn mimic in modern times — the period of Galileo, Bacon and Descartes — the four medieval "senses" (sens) of the Holy Scriptures, and treat these senses as the starting points for new meanings.

How did Port Royal (the Jansenist party, the "cabal") represent the principle of political power that pursued it up until its final persecution? What images were invested in the representation of the Prince? What positions and functions did these images receive in the discourses and images produced at Port Royal, around it and against it? Thus the figure of the body-of-power, the figure of the king, would initially name the processes — metaphors, synecdoches, antonomasias and personifications — tirelessly animating the rhetorical field of language and of image — through condensations, displacements and overdeterminations — and the delicate political strategies that these processes imply.

"Figure of the king" and "figure of the body-of-power" would next name the "imaginary" of the King — that portion of imagination that the Prince’s representation contains for these moralists and theologians — and the work of the "imaginary" in representation (its force, violence and fatal potential) in the effects of the authority and legitimacy of his representation. "Figure," that is to say, the processes of the image’s construction that, because they have become explicit through pedagogical or ethical discourse, deconstruct it by exhibiting the psychological and sociological mechanisms — imagination and custom — that create values and essences.

The third "sense" is really a question: is the King figure? And if he is figure, of what, of whom is he the figure? Figure here understood as a process of meaning, interpretation and exegesis. If the King is figure, if the body-of-power is available only in figure, toward what meaning and toward what truth does this figure lead, providing one has eyes to see and ears to hear? And can one ever follow to its end the process of this last figure where meaning shows itself by withdrawing, exhibits itself by hiding? Is the King figure in this sense? Therefore, this third "sense" is a question. Does meaning perhaps exist at the limit of this process of figure-question
in question? An indeterminability wherein recognition of the front and back sides of Rigaut-Champagne’s painting is made possible, for finally God’s body is the disfigured body of the Crucified Man of Golgotha and not the transfigured body of the Son on Thabor. How can you recognize in it this last “sense” of the figure of the political body in its majesty?

The figure of the royal body—a knot of three starting points of meanings, a scenario that produces a rhetoric of the image, an anthropology of the imaginary, a hermeneutics of the symbolic—is a crossing and intersecting of pathways, or rather it is the entire structure of all these potential trajectories.

If the royal body is a triple figure in the three senses pointed out here, ask yourself if this complex figurability does not therefore interrogate the autonomy and independence of political theory in general, of the political and its hard kernel—State power.

* * *

Figures. Jesus opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.
The following are two great revelations: 1. Everything happened to them in figures—An Israelite indeed, free indeed, “true bread from heaven.”

2. A God humiliated even unto the Cross. Christ had to suffer to enter into his glory, “that through death he might destroy death.” Two comings. (487[253]-679)

Figures. The letter kills—Everything happened figuratively—Christ had to suffer—A humiliated God—This is the cipher St Paul gives us. (502[268]-683)

Figures…

…It is written…that they will be without a king, without princes and without sacrifices.…

It is written on the other hand that the law will last for ever, that this covenant will be eternal, that the sacrifice will be eternal, that the sceptre will never leave their midst, since it is not to go until the coming of the everlasting king. (493[259]-685)

With an immobile movement, examine the figurative relationship between a King and the Other, between one image and another, between His Majesty in the radiance of his represented body-of-power and the divine body humiliated even unto the Cross. With Pascal, understand that this perusal not only concerns the mystical exegesis of the Scriptures, but describes a universal principle of intelligibility.
“Everything conceals some mystery; everything is a veil that conceals God. Christians must recognize Him in everything.” Through a hermeneutic generalization, could not the represented body of the King be posed as figure, as the power of figurability, that is to say, as a local principle of the intelligibility of the political in rhetoric and anthropology? Like everything, the body-of-power conceals some mystery; its portrait’s canvas in its majesty is a veil that conceals God. A figure. The body-of-power? A figure. The absolute Monarch? A stupifying paradox and a slanderous contrariety, the absolutum of political power – that is to say in its literal sense of “the letter that kills,” power unfettered from all relationships that would qualify, determine or constrain it in order to “compose” it or enter it into a relationship with alterity – absolute power would thus exhaust itself in the process of the figure, a process that “includes absence and presence, pleasant and unpleasant” (499[265]-677). In the movement of alterity, would the absolute be allegory?

And what allegory? What alterity? Not the one that in the end is reduced by analogies of resemblance and the mimetics of proportion. But, rather, the one that is intensified by dissimilarity and insisted upon by the forces of disproportion: the allegory of absolute difference. The God who is humiliated unto the Cross and who can only be so because the body, flesh and blood in a state of mortal agony, the absolute body-of-power (no doubt because it is posed in this way) conceals the following mystery: God’s Incarnation, God obliterated unto death in his redemptive union with the fallen creature. If there is a figurability of absolute power – a capacity of figure and meaning, a signifying potential – it must be found, with Pascal, in the absolute differentiation of the figurative process, at its end, where this process is immobilized in the mystery of the contradiction of God’s body in the state of death, in mortal instance.

Champaigne’s great Crucifixion on the other side of Rigaut’s great ceremonial portrait is in this sense strange: it is its secret, and puts the royal representation in a state of figurability, as potential figure.

Ask yourself, then, in what way the portrait of the King, in its figurative potential, reveals or rather insinuates, communicates by “secretions” in the confines of political rhetoric and anthropology, in its desire for the absolute, the secret sense of the political at its highest power.

Then ask yourself about the reversal to difference, a difference itself absolute, of
the body-of-power into divine body in a state of death. Understand or attempt to understand that for Pascal the “secret” meaning of the political would be God’s death, because God “became flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1.14).

Notice that these questions not only concern seventeenth-century theological and political relationships, but that a certain spirituality — a mysticism — of the Incarnation, of the divine body as a body of suffering, constitutes one of the strongest problematizations of the theologico-political forms of power, that is, of its very essence.

* * *

The King of France is in his reign, just like, in fact, a God in bodily form. For what the King does, it is not as if he did it himself, but as if God did it. Through the mouth of the prince, God speaks; and what he does, is done under God’s inspiration. And he is the spirit of the law on earth. Likewise, he is the Minister of God on earth. So therefore, the King is the Delegate of God. [Rex Franciae est in regno suo, tanquam quidem corporalis Deus.... Nam quod Rex facit, non tanquam ipse, sed ut Deus facit.... Per Principis os, Deus loquitur; et quae facit, Deo inspirante facit.... Et est lex animata in terris.... Item Minister Dei in terris.... Item Rex, est Delegatus Dei....]3

Finally to conclude the present discourse on the Prince, who is the Christ and the anointed one of God, it would be very useful to him to have always before his eyes Isaiah’s description of the hallowed, perfect, and immaculate Christ, which cannot be wrongly attributed to Kings, of whom it is written “You are the Gods and the Sons of the Highest.... All earthly Kings are Gods.”4

The portrait of the King in his majesty: it is not Christ on the Cross that Nicole mounts in the diptych’s second volet of the profane and sacred, the worldly and supernatural, the political and religious in chapter thirteen of the third book of his Traité des quatre fins dernières, that we find in volume four of his Essais de morale;5 it is the Christ of a republic of Kings, the Kingdom of the Blessed. A picture of contrast, of antithesis between the here-below and the beyond that denies the sign of that contrast, the articulation of that hinge which pushes the link between the opposition and the relationship of difference to its extreme, to scandal. This articulation is a link, a relationship in the form of a cross that is God’s dead body; a denial, as often happens with Jansenist theologians and moralists, that promotes processes, pathways and trajectories that benefit limits, poles and relata.
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pathways and trajectories that benefit limits, poles and relata.
We notice it in the first characteristic of royalty in Earth’s kings: “Their power ends with their deaths.... It is attached to their lives, therefore it is as little solid and as vain as the lives of men.” Simple equations and equivalences, whose evidence is initially one of Port Royal before one of faith. They are oppositions without shadow. A king’s power is identified with the life of a body. The death of the body is the death of power. Death is an end, the end of power, the limit of its definition, its end in the double sense of that term: its fulfillment in finitude. In a word, power is life; life is death. A king has the same lot as all other men. Let there be no mistake: that is how the medieval theologico-political doctrine of the King’s two bodies crumbles in the Christian moralist’s calm assurances. The immortal body of dignity and majesty, always adult, forever removed from nature’s misery, is identified with the physical, individual and singular body of the Prince. It is a man on the throne. The act of representation that Louis XIV achieves and that Rigaut stages with known success is thereby inverted: it is not the physical body that disappears in the representation of his majesty to which it is appropriated, but on the contrary, it is the body-of-power that finds its power only in the limits of the physical body that supports it, and attains its ends only with its mortal “term.” Nicole outlines this movement of great ideological and theoretical magnitude only to clearly circumscribe its term:

Sirs, the authority of Kings is sacrosanct, ordained by divinity, the principal work of His Providence, the masterpiece of His hands, the image of His sublime Majesty, proportionate to His immense greatness to the extent that a comparison can be made between the creature and the Creator, as between each Kingdom and State and the Universe, whose admirable harmony is represented by the order established here-below; for as God is by nature the first King and Prince, the King is, through creation and imitation, God in everything, and the King on earth consists of God, him alone and by himself alone, dependent on God alone who fashioned him on the pattern of his omnipotence.6

The second trait is as insistent as the first: after the body is the name; after the “organic” life of the individual is the sign that designates him. After the “real” is the “symbolic.” If the power of the King does not transcend the mortal life of his own body, what does he identify with his title of King — that name that a crown of courtiers repeats? For as Hegel writes, he alone has a proper name, Louis, not the fourteenth of that name, King of France and of Navarre, but Louis the Great, unique
by his surname in the line, with no predecessor or successor. No, for “What is the royalty of a King who sleeps?... A king is effectively King only when he enjoys his royalty and acts as King.... Now how much time in his life does a King spend not thinking of his royalty but fulfilling only base and animal functions?” When read closely, Nicole’s reasoning surprises: does a king lose his title of king when he sleeps, when he thinks or acts as a man, when he suffers as an organic body? Does not the Court’s as well as all of Europe’s epideictic utterance of the King’s name, a name that is equivalent to a title – the name of the “world’s greatest King”7 – enact the King’s objective “cogito” – “that is the King” (not id, but ille) – by installing its substance through the community of speakers in an abstract and immutable transcendence? Nicole sets aside this curial, national and international utterance to return to the subjective, solipsistic cogito of the empirical individual: “I think (as) King, therefore I am King.” This is the first moment of the cogito at which Descartes arrives, at the end of a hyperbolic doubt, a fragile, lacunary cogito, whose ontological assurance is reduced at the moment of its expression. The King’s title, his name that condenses this utterance to a term and a simple, descriptive, “concrete” constant of a king’s day and the life of the prince’s organic body in its moments and spaces, empties this term of all objective validity.

“Sneezingabsorbs all the functions of the soul just as much as the [sexual] act [la besogne], but we do not draw from it the same conclusions against the greatness of man, because it is involuntary....” (940[795]-160). A king sleeps; he also sneezes and satisfies (besogner) the queen or his mistress. “Whence then,” continues Pascal, there is no shame in man giving in to pain, but it is shameful for him to give in to pleasure.... It is because it is not pain that tempts and attracts us; it is we ourselves who voluntarily choose it and allow it to get the better of us, so that we are masters of the occasion, and in this it is man giving in to himself. But in pleasure it is man who gives in to pleasure. Now, glory only comes from mastery and control, shame only from subjection. (940[795]-160)

Pain, pleasure; mastery, subjection; glory, shame; greatness, the misery of man; greatness, the misery of kings. Nicole inscribes these oppositional pairs that Pascal discovered in his distinction between sneezing and the sexual act in the very function of Kingship: “Even when kings enjoy their royalty and act as Kings, they are not
exempt from life’s miseries and Nature’s infirmities.” Boredom and sorrow pursue them even to the throne. That is where those “little amusements” that their Court gives them “to help them carry the weight of that crown and prevent them from thinking of themselves” come from. The body-of-power, the glory that mastery and empire guarantee it, is subject to the same analyses as the body proper, since in the end it is the same, but otherwise arrayed, differently situated or localized, placed on another stage: “Great and small are liable to the same accidents, the same annoyance, the same passion, but one is at the top of the wheel and the other near its centre, and thus less shaken by the same movements” (258[705]-180). Is the body-of-power the very center, the hub of virtù on the great wheel of fortune? Not at all: the center is itself in movement, everywhere, like the World of which it is the sun.

It is at this high place that Nicole describes the fourth characteristic of the profane body-of-power – in its very power: “To maintain authority and power, how much help and support do they need? How many people are they dependent on?... Their domination is bought only at the price of an infinity of subjection.” The description shifts, resulting in the paradoxical conclusion that all domination is dependence, and all power is infinite subjection. Through retrospective anticipation, the Christian moralist replays the Hegelian dialectic of Master and slave, not in the ahistorical moment of civil society’s origin and the departure from a state of nature as in Hobbes, but in the (fulfilled) moment of monarchy. Even if it is produced by the theoretical fiction of a duel to the death, the analysis does not construct a foundation for political legitimation. It is a simple phenomenology of the monarch in situ who, descriptively, reverses the absolute and the relative, and disseminates it in its particularities: in effect it incarnates the absolute body-of-power in an existing singular body. Reread Pascal:

*Diversion. Is not the dignity of kingship sufficiently great in itself to make its possessor happy by simply seeing what he is? Does he need to be diverted from such thoughts like ordinary people?... Will it be the same with a king, and will he be happier absorbed in such vain amusements than in contemplating his own greatness?... Would it not therefore be spoiling his delight to occupy his mind with thoughts of how to fit his steps to the rhythm of a tune or how to place a bar skillfully, instead of leaving him in peace to enjoy the contemplation of the majestic glory surrounding him? (270[137]-142)*

But whatever the principles and means of this analysis of the royalty of profane
kings are, it only really takes on meaning and value when integrated with the dip-
tych for which it has been made when it becomes a function of the opposite volet: 
the Royalty of the Blessed whose characteristics permitted the selection of those 
of kings here-below. In the end, they are the same. Once a change of sign has 
occurred that converts them to their contrary — an operation so perfectly revers-
able that any question about its direction would be impertinent. Nicole deduces 
the other Kingdom “structurally”: “We need only take the exact opposite of all these 
defects and miseries to conceive what the divine Kingdom is.” It is this conversion 
by reversion that nullifies, erases or denies the passage or threshold, crossing or trial, 
that creates a conversion or figure through the disfiguration or transfiguration of the 
different terms. And through this transformation or transubstantiation, in which 
each of the “terms” is at play in their being and their reality, even their body is 
created. The passage that is, as we have said, that of the death of God in the — abso-
lute — body-of-power; an operation of another scope — or depth — than the alge-
braic operation of a change in the “signs” that leaves intact, formally or substantially, 
the greatnesses that they determine, a simple “exact opposite,” as the moralist 
writes, to construct the concept of the Kingdom. By doing this, he forgets that 
the Kingdom is a mystery: “unless one is be born anew, he cannot see the King-
dom of God” (John 3.3).

It is thus a “Kingdom that is eternal and that makes eternal those who possess 
it”; a “Kingdom that cannot be lost since there is no difficulty in keeping it”; a King-
dom that “is not enjoyed at intervals and with various interruptions”; a Kingdom 
that entails “neither boredom, nor sorrow, nor weariness,” that is “exempt from mis-
er and subjection of all kinds.” It is a Kingdom, finally, that is possessed by an infini-
ity of Kings, all equal, having the same mind and the same heart, because they are 
all together one King, Jesus Christ. All are his coheirs and brothers associated with 
his heritage, members of his glorious body. This last trait, the only really “positive” 
one, on which the echoes of I Corinthians resonate, expresses the identification 
of the Kingdom with the glorious mystical Body of Jesus Christ. The blessed, the kings 
that are fully kings, forever and completely kings with no temporal, material or psy-
chic limitation on their power, are the only truly absolute body-of-power: they real-
ize what the imperial canonists had described and built as the Emperor’s majestic 
body, and what, following them, the jurists of the kings of England and France elabo-
rated as their Prince's body of dignity. And yet from the paradoxical rules of the
current mathematics of infinity, each of these truly absolute bodies of power in itself
and for itself is only one member of the mystical totality, itself absolute, of the glori-
ous body of Jesus Christ. "Members. Begin there. In order to control the love we owe to
ourselves, we must imagine a body full of thinking members," writes Pascal, "[for
we are members of the whole], and see how each member ought to love itself, etc." (684[368]-474). "Imagine a body of thinking members" (687[371]-473), he insists.
Understand that this imagination is a universal figure whose perfect, exemplary and
incomprehensible realization is the Kingdom of the Blessed: this Kingdom is a
Republic of Kings; it is a body full of members that think and think of themselves in
their own individuality, but that are only constituted as such because they belong
to the whole. The plenitude of empire and domination is identified with total sub-
jection: the paradox of the absolute. "We love ourselves because we are members
of Christ...because he is the body of which we are members. All are one. One is in
the other" (688[372]-483; emphasis added). Pascal, like Paul, discovers in the analogy
of the body and its organs that which permits us to think about the foundation of
morality, that is, to articulate a doctrine of mores and of civil society, even if this
foundation forever transcends all individual and social morality and is beyond our
grasp. However, with the same analogy, Nicole builds the concept of the divine King-
dom, directly contrary to the profane Kingdom — its negative image — in which,
through a critique as radical as it is implicit, the theologico-political theory of the
King's two bodies is exhausted. However, since, as we have suggested, in Nicole the
earth's kingdoms and the Kingdom of the Blessed are caught in a structure of static
equivalence through the inversion of signs, a projection of the "mystical body of
Jesus Christ" in the profane political sphere — but without its negative inversion — would
make two potential images of the political body appear. To be sure, they are not
easily conceivable at that moment: either the image of a society of Nations where
each one, equal to all the others, is a member of a totality whose "admirable intel-
ligence" is obtained through "submitting this individual...to the primal will gov-
erning the whole body" (688 [374]-475); or a "democratic" society where each
citizen is a thinking and deciding member of the sovereign because he is entitled
to the totality of rights that all the others will have given him by a reciprocal and
simultaneous contract. This is the image of a political body whose theory Rousseau
will propose in the *Social Contract* through the mutation of the Unique to the Totality, from the Leviathan to the community of rights and the general will.

***

Let the prince, therefore, question who he is: he will find himself to be by nature a man like others and his subjects equal to him.... So, consequently, when a prince begins to admire his crown, diadem, purple and royal regalia, and to flatter himself because of them, then he should promptly be reminded that his head and body, which these things pertain to outwardly, are mortal and human, and subject to the vagaries, adversities and ridicule of fortune; for those externals are not proper [to his state] but mere accidentals; so he should not harm himself by professing himself to be inferior to something external [*Querat ergo princeps quis ipse sit: inveniet se hominem similem aliis natura, et pares in ea sibi esse subditos.... Proinde si quando princeps coronam, diademam, purpuram, ornementaque regia admirari et in his sibi complacere coeperit: statim quoque reminisci debet, quod caput et corpus, cui haec exterius accedunt mortalitas, humana, morbis, lapsibus et ludibrio fortunae obnoxia sunt: quod illa extranea non propria sed accidentalia sunt: et ne injuriam sibi faciat, si se extraneo inferiorem profiteatur).*

Neither in the case of princes do we look for or should we consider what they are in themselves or as men, but rather how much is conceded or allowed to them by God. Nor do we reverence princes so much as individual persons as much as we do the majesty of God and the reflection of His power, and consider how they are reassigned from the role of citizen and carry out vicarious roles on earth [*Neque in principibus, tam inspicious vel considerare debemus quid ipsi per se et tanquam homines sunt: sed quantum illis concessum aut permissum a Deo sit. Neque in principibus tam personam singularem reveremur quantum majestatem Dei et imaginem potestatemque consideramus ex parte illus civis delegati sunt et vicarias in terra partes gerunt].

With Pascal, let us substitute for this diptych and its statics of contrasted tabular representations, the movement of the figure of the body-of-power, a matrix of simulation, on which he “experiments” through the structural variation of a characteristic trait.

In this figural model, discover, as in the shroud’s weave or Veronica’s cloth, the uncertain apparition of another body, the indeterminable potential of the other’s face – of God at the height of His Incarnation, that is, in His suffering body, in agony,
in the instance of death: the ultimate, sublime end of the royal figure’s path, of the absolute body-of-power through the movement of differences, toward difference itself as absolute.

Imagine [se figurer] any situation you [on] like, add up all the blessings [biens] with which you [nous] could be endowed, to be king is still the finest thing [poste] in the world; yet if you [on] imagine one with all the advantages of his rank, but no means of diversion, left to ponder and reflect on what he is, this limp felicity will not keep him going; he is bound to start thinking of all the threats facing him, of possible revolts, finally of inescapable death and disease, with the result that if he is deprived of so-called diversion he is unhappy, indeed more unhappy than the humblest of his subjects who can enjoy sport and diversion. (269[136]-139; emphasis added)

Pascal constructs the figure of the body-of-power like a model or matrix that produces effects of meaning. An epistemological subject, a pure methodological operator (marked in the text of the Pensée by the indefinite on) fashions or fictionalizes from the royal body according to a singularly determined operation, a theoretical artifact, one of its possible figures or “figurables”: the “accumulation” onto one single person of “all the blessings with which you [us, nous] could be endowed,” us, that is to say, men in general, whatever their social condition. This operation makes a figure of the body-of-power appear, a totality of appropriation and possession: “to be king is still the finest thing in the world.” A second operation, just as fictitious, consists of adding to this objective, and even quantifiable construction (quantifiable because the actual royal appropriation of goods can be counted), the subjective, qualitative totality of the royal body’s possible gratifications. This, then, is a double operation of filling the body-of-power until it is full.

As for what Isocrates says regarding this subject, that the people’s possessions [biens] are the prince’s, it is understood to refer to custom, and because of the communion between the King and his subjects, who, because they are considered to form a political body, are also in charge of possessions. And just as those of the King are reputed to be public, so are those of the royal Private persons, the Prince represents the public and is able to make use of them as would a good family man [père]…. It is true that the Prince is the dispenser of public wealth and can take it from private persons so long as necessity requires it.10
There are those who hold that Kings or Monarchs, having acquired the right to levy these great sums on their subjects, cannot arrogate or allocate the continuance of possession and tax collection, notwithstanding and regardless of how many long years it has gone on, even if it be four or five hundred years. And they endeavor to prove it with written reasons, adding that this immemorial tax collection and possession was taken and demanded by a King from his subjects, either by force or by fear if not otherwise.... Therefore concluding by this means that a King can neither usurp nor prescribe against his subjects what stands against common and natural rights, which is a freedom and immunity from all subsidies and taxes. But these or similar allegations have no place in the Kingdom of France, where Kings have been forced by the malice of the times... to continue the levy of taille, loans and other subsidies; nonetheless, with certain resolutions to moderate the aforesaid tailles and taxes as soon as God (by his grace) will sometime give respite to their wars and other affairs.... Where our Sovereign Prince... declares himself to be the pitiable father of the country, vigilant pastor of his people... true minister or rather true image of God, the unique protector of justice, if not the living law itself; and finally the Republic's loyal guardian and defender, which is none other than a mystical body of which the Prince is the head, who seeing in himself those two fine senses, hearing and sight, which together with his intelligence govern the entire body, and which, in recompense, according to all divine and human right, gives him all right to honor and obedience, to tributes and subsidies.  

The simple variation of a trait of the figure thus constructed will put it in motion, into a state of action, that is to say, into the process of figurability: a variation in this case negative, achieved by removal, with "no means of diversion." But this variation is itself the negation of a negation, because diversion is defined as that which prevents the king "from ponder[ing] and reflect[ing] on what he is." This variation, or rather the process that it brings about, will have the effect of producing his unhappiness at being the "finest thing in the world," a figural artifact fictively constructed by the totality of all the "having" possible, both objective and subjective: "he is unhappy, indeed more unhappy than the humblest of his subjects." Note that the production of this effect of unhappiness is not aleatory; it is itself graduated and finalized in a series of structurally necessary potentialities or possibilities within the conditions of the experimentation on the model of the royal body: languor, threat, agony, death. A precise analysis of this series would permit us to examine the effec-
tive edges and constitutive limits of the representation of state power like a mechanism of the legitimate monopoly of violence, but reflected onto the subject of representation, the body-of-power itself. Indeed, the potential or real threat of death, itself possible or real, gives coercive credibility to signs that place “natural” violence in social and political representation and, moreover, indirectly operates the legitimating reinforcement of their authority on the surface or within the circumstances of the body-of-power:

That is why our kings...have not only dressed up [mascarás] in extraordinary clothes to show what they are, but they also have guards and scarred veterans escort them. These armed troops whose hands and strength are theirs alone, the drums and trumpets that march before them, and these legions which surround them make the most resolute tremble. (81[44]-82)

Men of war, whose role is more essential since they establish themselves by force, are in some sense the disguise of the royal body; the death that they potentially hold due to their power, their reserved force, “death is the King’s mask.” The legions that surround him, the Great Lord’s forty thousand janissaries, are his sublime diversion. To imagine the body-of-power through the fictionalization of their disappearance is in some sense to turn over his Mask, to gorgonize omnipotence by the negative presentation of the originary violence on which it is founded; it is to reflect onto the body-of-power his own external essence, “like children taking fright at a face they have daubed themselves” (269[136]-139).

Read again:

Diversion. Is not the dignity of kingship sufficiently great in itself to make its possessor happy by simply seeing what he is?... Would it not therefore be spoiling his delight to occupy his mind with thoughts of how to fit his steps to the rhythm of a tune or how to place a bar skillfully, instead of leaving him in peace to enjoy the contemplation of the majestic glory surrounding him? (270[137]-142)

This second kingly figure is similar to Rigaut’s portrait in the face-to-face created by Louis XIV hanging his own picture in front of him in the throne room. The king is happy at just the sight of what he is, is happy to possess royal dignity; to contemplate himself, and to contemplate his own body as the support and mannequin of this accumulation of signs and insignia, from the red heels to the wig, that designate and signify the (absolute) body-of-power. The king’s happiness is not to enjoy
glory, but to enjoy the contemplation of the glory that is, in its species, less a quality determining the royal being than the circumstantial place of his represented body. To give himself to the Court, to offer himself to the world and the universe as a being to be contemplated, to exhaust himself, to deplete his being in this oblation: a sublime enjoyment that is ruined in the vacuity of infinite self-reflection; to enjoy is to see himself being seen. The essential being, the proper body (of power) is disseminated in a multitude of objects for the eyes that gaze upon him, a multitude of aspects and of simulacra, before being recaptured, to regain control of himself, in an eyeless gaze, the gaze that looks at all those eyes that gaze upon the body dispersed in dazzling fragments, the sight of the Monarch that cannot be situated, where his body of dignity is no longer anything but the field of a vision: the void of “seeing himself be seen.”

Here is the Pascalian experimentation on this new model; here is the fictional gesture that puts it in the process of figurability:

Put it to the test; leave a king entirely alone, with nothing to satisfy his senses, no care to occupy his mind, with no one to keep him company and no diversion, with complete leisure to think about himself, and you will see that a king without diversion is a very wretched man. (270[137]-142)

In the end, the proof, the test, is none other than a king whose unique function is to contemplate himself as King, as Monarch, as Absolute; a king reduced to his representation or completely taken over by it; a king entirely, his body and his gaze, become his own portrait; or perhaps, as courtly discourse would characterize it, in the end a king comparable only to himself. It is then, at that moment, at the height of representation, that the figure is absolute and the body-of-power sublime, that the “figurability” of the grandiose figure – a subliminal figure – appears in filigree, the secret mark that is its difference: “a very wretched man.” A difference not yet absolute, but from which the absolute other begins to appear: “All these examples of wretchedness prove his greatness. It is the wretchedness of a great lord, the wretchedness of a dispossessed King” (220 [116]-398).

Third figure in counterpoint:

The fact that kings are habitually seen in the company of guards, drums, officers and all the things which prompt automatic responses of respect and fear has the result that, when they are sometimes alone and unaccompanied, their features are enough to strike
respect and fear into their subjects, because we make no mental distinction between their person and the retinue with which they are normally seen to be associated. And the world, which does not know that this is the effect of habit, believes it to derive from some natural force, hence such sayings as: “The character of divinity is stamped on his features.” ([25]-308)

This is the figure of counter-proof, because to build a model of the body-of-power, constructed according to the same principles as the ones above, produces a contrary effect, an effect of discourse and gaze that is a part of the world’s gaze and discourse. Because through an ignorance of “cause and effect,” the world reads the God of War’s imprint on the monarch’s face. Just as above, death is indeed the King’s mask. Guards, scarred veterans, drums, trumpets, officers, legions and all the other disguises of circumstance and representation, those instruments of power put on reserve in the signs that show force at rest – that is on parade. They display the potential threat of death, the virtue to declare, in a simple exposition, the legitimate power of he who has a monopoly on force: “These armed troops whose hands and strength are theirs alone” (81[44]-82) – exhibition, show and ostentatious exposition whose effect is one of both terror and respect indissolubly bound together.

Remove them and what is the result? The king’s face has acquired the effect of these external accompaniments of force. Because he is not caught in the annihilating vertigo of self-reflection, because he remains turned toward the outside, toward his court, his people, the King’s face has itself become a death mask. Pascal gives an associationistic and mechanistic explanation for this political Medusa-effect: custom creates this astonishing surface incorporation; the circumstances, surroundings and accompaniments external to the king’s physical body are “envisaged” on his face; they are on his body-for-others, not for the king himself, but for all those who gaze upon him. “It would take reason at its most refined to see the Grand Turk... as a man like any other” (81[44]-82), even when he is no longer surrounded, in his superb seraglio, by forty thousand janissaries. Two secondary effects follow from this effect of the gaze: one of belief, the other of discourse. The Prince’s sociopolitical distinction, that he is first in the State and the nation, is believed to be a difference of nature and force, an ontological difference that makes him a man like others, but also a king, a superman endowed, by nature and heredity, with the might whose signs he pos-
sesses, those signs that show in him the potential threat of death. “Hence such sayings as: ‘The character of divinity is stamped on his features’” ([25]-308), sayings that displace the signs’ ontological natural difference in a distinction that is no longer sociopolitical, but theologico-political. This transcendent distinction not only allows the character of Divinity to be transparent on the King’s face, the seal that marks his sacred election, but also incarnates God in the Monarch. Is it not indeed this expression that, in the prologue of the Epistle to the Hebrews, designates the Son of God incarnate: “He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power” (1.3)? But those are the words of the “world, which does not know that this is the effect of habit” ([25]-308), an ignorance of cause and effect, an ignorance of the proud profane knowledge that in its discourse claims to incarnate God in the Monarch in the name of analogies of resemblance and mimetic proportions as if guards and scarred veterans, drums and trumpets, officers and legions could be proportionate to the Divine Word incarnate.…. Whereas only the absolute disproportion of absolute dissimilarity can attempt to let this nonrelation be understood, “the infinitely more infinite distance” ([308]-793) between the kings of concupiscence and the king of charity: a divine body humiliated all the way to the Cross, a suffering Christ — the Anointed One of the Lord, the King — in a state of agony in the portrait of the Monarch.

* * *

In truth, the methodological movement, the epistemological process of the “figure” disclosed in Pascal’s fragments, is a characteristic of the ethical thought of the Port Royal moralists. It is a question of the (baroque?) proposition that only through surroundings, circumstances, frame, exteriority and the other is there identity as the term of a process of identification, property as the term of appropriation, face or portrait as the term of a process of incorporation. Identification of the I or of the King (“the King is me,” “the State is me”) exists only through a play that is ruled by gazes and discourses within the mechanism of representation.

That is why in Pascal’s construction of the “figure” of the body-of-power, and especially in its functioning and the process of figurability that it exposes, the simulation of the king’s solitude becomes a decisive moment — his neglect, abandonment, dereliction — for it fictitiously (methodologically), and through a mental
experiment, cancels or neutralizes all the processes of identification and incorporation by "extraneation," as Hegel would say. At the same time, it performs on the I, just as it does on the King, one of the most radical problematizations of the (Cartesian) "metaphysical" subject, the "political" subject, the body itself — "A man is a substance, but if you dissect him, what is he? Head, heart, stomach, veins, each vein, each bit of vein, blood, each humor of blood?" ([113][65]-115) — and finally, the monarchical body-of-power.

One of the finest and most effective examples of this movement of the "figure" in Pascal is found in the second volume of Nicole's Essais de morale; in the opening of the first of the three discourses on the Condition des Grands that the moralist probably drafted from notes taken when they were delivered. In a way, the "figure," model or matrix of simulation espouses its own fictionalization and the very process of figurability by becoming a narrative — a parable "like" those that Christianity reads in evangelical texts. "To enter into a true knowledge of your condition," Pascal says to the young duc Charles Honoré de Chevreuse, son of the duc de Luynes, consider it in this image: a man is thrown by a storm onto an unknown island, whose inhabitants were at pains to find their king who had been lost; and, greatly resembling the king in body and face, he was taken for him, and recognized in that quality by the people. At first he did know what part to take; but he resolved at last to lend himself to his good fortune. He received all the respects that they wanted to pay him and let himself be treated as king....

The conversion of the "figure" in the narrative-parable inverts its successive moments and the effects of simulation. The narrative opens with the image of the shipwrecked man "thrown by a storm onto an unknown island," a man alone, wretched, in a state of total dereliction.

When I see the blind and wretched state of man, when I survey the whole universe in its dumbness and man left to himself with no light, as though lost in this corner of the universe, without knowing who put him there, what he has come to do, what will become of him when he dies, incapable of knowing anything, I am moved to terror, like a man transported in his sleep to some terrifying desert island, who wakes up quite lost and with no means of escape. ([389][198]-693)

Nonetheless, in the parable's remarkable variation, the island is not deserted but inhabited: it is deserted by its King, a king who is lost and cannot be found. This
loss is, in the precise meaning of the term, *fundamental* (*fondamental*): it is a loss at the State’s foundations (*fondement*), or rather it manifests the State’s collapse (*effondrement*). The political loses its foundations. This island’s king, “who had been lost,” is, upon consulting the dictionaries of the time, “out of reach of the senses” of his people, is invisible — whether he has gone astray, has drowned, or has been engulfed (*abysmé*). On the one hand, there is a man alone and wretched, “thrown by the storm” and, on the other, there is a King, the King *en abysme*, invisible, *lost*: the front and back sides of a single mechanism that is referred to in one narrative structure. Front and back sides: the shipwrecked man on the front side and the king on the back side, between the two, the island’s people are placed in a state of destitution.

Experimentation on the parabolic narrative figure can then begin: a new and strange element is introduced into the narrative from the outside, a fluke that is a “coincidence,” as we say, but that focuses on the mimetic structure, on the relationship of resemblance: “greatly resembling the king in body and face, he was taken for him....” The physical body, the singular face of the shipwrecked man; and the King’s body, his majestic face. The first is the whole portrait of the other, its identical figure, the portrait identified *by chance*, in the fluke of the narrative, the accident of fiction, the chance of the figure, not by metaphysical necessity or ethico-political obligation. In the system of variety and variation, in the field of diversity and difference, in bodies ready for infinite differentiation, it could well be that analogies of mimesis and proportions of resemblance, far from being manifestations of the *law* of the world and of being, are only flukes, erratic “coincidences.” But the necessity of the effects clings to this “fluke” and, retroactively, makes it destiny. Through the effects of recognition and belief, through political effects, the people recognize in him the quality of King and he receives their respects. He “let himself be treated as king.” Instantly, through the simple fortuitous “play” of resemblance, the dignity of a King ceases to be a transcendent essence and becomes a pure quality adrift and in search of a body that suits it. And the chain of respects and subjections that cling to it exposes — after the fact — that the foundation of the political is a “semblance,” a “lure.”

However, in a new and surprising effect, the situation of the initial loss, shipwreck and deviation is renewed, this time in the body-of-power itself thus reconstituted,
and in the subject of political representation thus reinstated, *in the form of that body’s fission — a split in that subject:*

as he could not forget his natural condition, he reflected at the same time as he received those respects that he was not the king that the people sought, and that that kingdom did not belong to him. He had therefore a double thought: one by which he acted as king; the other by which he recognized his true state…. He hid the latter thought and exposed the other. It is by the first that he dealt with the people, and by the latter that he dealt with himself.

A fission of the body-of-power in public and in private; a split in the subject of representation into an exposed side and a hidden side, into an external mask and an internal face.

This new figure of the King that Pascal constructs at the beginning of his discourse on the condition of the Greats, new in its parabolic form, but new also in the virtual processes of figurability that it opens up, unleashes — we might say — a sort of crisis in the body-of-power: the split between the King who is of representation and in representation and the “real-true” man is such that the former only finds his legitimacy through a *transcendent* principle of authorization that has no natural foundation: it is perfectly arbitrary. “I do not want to say that [all those goods that you possess],” says Pascal to the young duc de Chevreuse,

do not legitimately belong to you and that another is permitted to strip them from you; for God who is their Master has permitted societies to make laws to share them; and once these laws are established it is unjust to violate them. This is what distinguishes you a little from the man who would possess his kingdom only by the error of the people…. But what you have *entirely* in common with him is that the right that you have to them is not *founded*, no more than his, *on some quality and on some merit that be in you*…. *Your soul and your body are* of themselves indifferent to the estate of a boatman or of a duke; and there is *no natural tie* that attaches them to one condition rather than to another…. (emphasis added)

Besides, the figure of the King thus drawn and set in motion covers a secret: the King is a man like the others; his royalty is not real greatness founded in nature. Like his secret, the figure of the King hides the split that that very figure (such as Pascal has constructed it) reveals by uncovering its secret. However, the figurative narrative, because it is narrative and parable, and through the very secret that it
reveals in the figure of the body-of-power, conceals another secret, the secret of the secret, which is not and cannot be the object of a revelation, but that Pascal’s text lets escape by insinuation. This narrative, like the evangelical parable or biblical text, is a “cipher with a double meaning” (494[260]-678): the second meaning or secret is the one that hides the legitimate King of the island “who had been lost.”

The loss that is named and figured in this narrative fiction, the deviation, the abyss, is none other than “the strange secrecy into which God has withdrawn, impenetrable to the sight of men”; a strange secrecy that is “a great lesson for bringing us to solitude, far away from the sight of men,”13 the solitude that all of Port Royal will describe as the place antithetical to the Court.

But this loss is equally man fallen from his primal state: “‘I have created man holy, innocent, perfect,’” cries God’s wisdom, through Pascal’s pen, “‘I filled him with light and understanding, I showed him my glory and my wondrous works. Man’s eye then beheld the majesty of God.’” King of creation, “‘he could not bear such great glory without falling into presumption’” (309[149]-430). “Who cannot see from all this that man is lost, that he has fallen from his place, that he anxiously seeks it, and cannot find it again?” (394[430]-431). The man, a king who is lost, a king “dispossessed” of his kingdom, “obviously gone astray; he has fallen from his true place” (312[400]-427) by his original sin.

Therefore, the figure of the King thus constructed insinuates a double figurability of the body-of-power: according to the first, it is a body-of-power but in retreat, God’s impenetrability far away from the sight of men; and second, it is “figurable” man, the king of creation fallen from his place, astray in a corner of the universe... God, man: the first, unfathomable in his transcendence; the second, an abyss of “impenetrable darkness” (312[400]-427). Here again, there is a body-of-power but in a loss and a fall. It is the truly legitimate and founded body – the engulfed body of foundation. God has withdrawn and man is engulfed; and in the locus and place of the first the latter returns, its representative by fortuitous mimesis and recognized as such by others, in “extraneation.” A man wretched and alone, returns to his place, to his true locus where he had once resembled and been the image of the King and now, by chance, because he, in his exteriority re-sembles that King, he becomes its semblance, its double, its replica. He is the usurper of the Kingdom, no longer its legitimate proprietor. To be sure, he is a “truthful” usurper, but this authen-
ticity is very singular, for it is truthfulness for himself alone, existing in the interior of a subject that denies itself the body and the face that it has received from the people, all while acting externally and publicly as a foreign body-of-power: “Just as Jesus remained unknown among men, so the truth remains among popular opinions with no outward difference. Thus the Eucharist and ordinary bread” (432[225]-789). The infinite difference, the “without-rapport” is thus “mysteriously” what is “with no outward difference.”

In other words, the figurative place that the double figurability of the wretched shipwrecked man whom the inhabitants “falsely” recognized as their King draws in relief, is, through dissimilarity and difference in the identification of the same, at once that of God who “has withdrawn, impenetrable to the sight of men,” and a God who “when it was necessary for him to appear, he hid himself all the more by covering himself with humanity,” so that “he was much more recognizable when he was invisible than when he made himself visible.”14 But it is also that of sinning man in the abyss of his wretchedness: God incarnate. The Incarnation – which I understand in the theological and spiritual sense of the term – the mystery of the Incarnation, of a God become flesh, insinuates, within the ambiguous figurability of the body-of-power, by an infinitely more infinite difference, the secret-of-the-political, of a presence and an absence, of a disappearance and a return, of a loss and a gain, precisely what Pascal calls a figure or a portrait:

A picture includes absence and presence, pleasant and unpleasant. Reality excludes absence and unpleasantness.

Figures. . . .

...They [Jesus and the apostles] have taught us... that the redeemer will be spiritual and his kingdom of the spirit, that there will be two comings, one in wretchedness to humble the proud, the other in glory to exalt the humble, that Jesus is God and man. (494[260]-678)

The secret of the political is that the King, the body-of-power, is a portrait, but a portrait in which the true convert will discern in the King, in the exposition of his majesty, the dying Christ hung on the Cross.

The secret meaning of the political – this “theologeme” like the infinite difference between the absolute and the body-of-power – is the divine body in his mortal and redemptive humiliation. When Nicole opposed the kingdoms of the here-below
with the Kingdom of the Blessed, the glory of his diptych anticipated the Second Coming. The Christ of suffering, God incarnate, the divine body is the necessary and invisible hinge between the two volets of “earth” and “heaven,” their “mystical” articulation, like the mechanism of a spiritual and theological dialectic, an itinerarium mentis in Deum (to speak like the Seraphic Doctor), which, in the political field, is the place of conversion, the passage of reversal from the king of concupiscence to the King of charity. The “spring” of this “dialectic” of the suffering Christ, the dynamic that the pious call the “sufferings” of Jesus, is a movement of retreat, withdrawal, a movement that is, in a way, the difference of the social bond, the paradoxical bond of a community’s nonrelation, a movement that we will have to think of and grasp in the “infinitive” of its neutral status, between active and passive, at once the gesture of God withdrawing into his secrecy or the saint retreating into the desert or the just going into solitude, and the movement of Adam falling from his true place, the original model of the others, of almost all the others who pull away from only one, the Unique, and who leave, desert and abandon him, separating themselves from him: “And so Jesus was abandoned to face the wrath of God alone” (739[919]-553); “I have cut myself off from him, shunned him, denied him, crucified him.... Sweet and total renunciation” (737[913]). “What makes solitude boring to most of the world is that being separated from the sight of men, they are also separated from their judgment and their thoughts. Thus, their hearts remain empty and starving, being deprived of that ordinary food”: a double tearing away that is inscribed as wounds and humiliation, as mortifying instance on the body-of-power as on the divine body.

A God abandoned, whose bodily wounds and tortures even unto execution are the “historical” manifestations and “spiritual” signs of that abandonment, dissipates the illusions of the “finest thing of the world,” that of the King as paradigm of each I: it is inscribed in it as the invisible “figurable” of desfiguration.

A God deserted, torn from a society of friends and disciples, demonstrates figuratively the essential ordeal of the soul, a prey to self-love, loving itself in all things, making itself the center and wanting to subjugate all others. Read about this desertion within a state of concupiscence as Nicole has “imaged” it:

Imagine then a universal scourge or rather a mass of wounds, plagues and carbuncles with which the body of a man is covered.... That is the image of the state in which we are
born and that we are by nature. Our love of ourselves which is the center and course of all our ills...  

But if the divine body abandoned in its tortures and agony can be negatively inscribed in the King’s portrait and the soul of the I, it is because it retains and exposes through its humiliations the wickedness that makes of each “I” a king of concupiscence, that is to say, a tyrant, an illegitimate, unjust king, an executioner of the King of charity. The motive is one of “mystical” meditation as much as it is of a theologico-political character, but it is one in which the theological and the political are put at an infinitely more infinite distance. The convert of the Mystère de Jésus writes:

I see the depths of my pride, curiosity, concupiscence. There is no link between me and God or Jesus Christ the righteous. But he was made sin for me. All your scourges fell upon him. He is more abominable than I, and, far from loathing me, feels honored that I go to him and help him... I must add my wounds to his, and join myself to him... (739[919]-553; emphasis added)

The union is made through the wounds of two bodies, the body-of-sin and the body-of-God, between which the relationship is nonetheless abysmal. Here the end is declared – in the two senses of the term – in the great theme of the King’s two bodies: proportionate indeed to his divinity, the body of suffering of the Christ is the end of the body of dignity of the profane and profanatory King because it is his secret: the body of a man full of misery. But it indicates just as mysteriously the passage through conversion, that is to say through annihilation, infinite difference, toward the Kingdom.

That is what the end of the third discourse on the Condition des Grands signals, where Pascal again picks up the contradiction between concupiscence and Charity: “To be King is to be the Master of many objects of the concupiscence of men, and thus to be able to satisfy the needs and desires of many. It is these needs and desires that attract them to your side.” Such is the essential social bond. Pascal continues:

It is concupiscence that provides the force of the earth’s greatest kings, that is to say the possession of things that men’s cupidity desires.... It is not your natural force or power that subjects all these people to you. Do not claim to dominate them by force.... For, if we may comment, that would be tyranny: do not claim to reign by a path other than that which makes you king, but maintain yourself in the essential injustice
of the body-of-power, to be central to the desires of others, because you are master of the wealth that they covet. "If you remain there," adds Pascal,
you will not fail to ruin yourself, but as honnête homme. But it is always great folly to damn oneself. You must despise concupiscence and its kingdom and aspire to that kingdom where God is king and where all subjects breathe only charity and desire only the blessings of charity. Others than myself will tell you the way.

One of these paths is the process of figurability of the body-of-power: contemplate the divine body of suffering that, by its very dereliction, is the infinite body of love; contemplate it in the profane body of represented royal majesty, its portrait; contemplate, that is, examine on the spot the infinite distance of the difference of the one in the other.

NOTES

1. Blaise Pascal's Pensées are cited from Louis Lafuma's edition (Paris: Delmas, 1967); the second number is from Léon Brunschvicg’s edition. Translator's note: I have used A.J. Krailsheimer's excellent translation of the Pensées (New York: Penguin Books, 1966), occasionally adding the original French in brackets to clarify Louis Marin's textual argument; the alternative Lafuma numbers Krailsheimer uses are in brackets.


3. Charles de Grassaile, Regalium Franciae, libri duo: Jura omnia et dignitates christianissimi Galliae regis continentés (Lyon, 1538), pp. 63-64. Translator's note: All translations from the Latin are by George Greenia.


8. Pierre Grégoire, De Republica, libri sex et viginti (Lyon, 1609), bk. 6, ch. 3, no. 7.

9. Ibid., bk. 6, ch. 2, no. 9.

10. François de Gravelles, Politiques royales (Lyon, 1596), pp. 202-03.


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