

Render unto Caesar

An inquiry into Pascalian Justice

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“La justice est ce qui est établi ; et ainsi toutes nos lois établies seront nécessairement tenues pour justes sans être examinées, puisqu’elles sont établies.”¹ (Pensée 312)²

When reading this Pensée for the first time, I was perplexed and confused. For, it looks as if the definition is devoid of faith in the moral improvement of humankind and civilization which felt to me, at first, quite horrifying. I intuitively asked myself: “If justice turns out to be an arbitrary illusion, why is a society built upon false justice still better than the void of it? And how should we behave politically if this is the case?” With these questions in mind, I feel compelled to get a better understanding of Pascal’s ‘justice.’ And hopefully I will be able to find answers to my quandaries.

So, let us start with justifying his claim, ‘justice is that which is established.’ The problem with this definition is that if justice is only based on what the established customs and laws are then universal justice cannot exist. However, Pascal is well aware of this fact, and the following words sarcastically illustrate the consequences: “Trois degrés d’élévation du pôle renversent toute la jurisprudence ; un méridien décide de la vérité ; en peu d’années de possession, les lois fondamentales changent ; le droit a ses époques, l’entrée de Saturne au Lion nous marque l’origine d’un tel crime. Plaisante justice qu’une rivière borne ! Vérité au-deçà des Pyrénées, erreur au-delà.”³ (Pensée 294) The mockery employed in the sentence illustrates that ‘real justice’ cannot be established by following a country. So, Pascal knows that his understanding of justice is very arbitrary.

¹ “Justice is that which is established, and thus all our established laws will necessarily be held for just without being examined, since they are established.” (The translations are my own.)

² I use the Flammarion edition (French text), for the numeration of the Pensées.

³ “Three degrees of elevation to the pole reverses the jurisprudence completely; a meridian decides the truth; a few years of possession, changes the fundamental laws; the law has its times, the entry of Saturn in Leo signs to us the origin of such-and-such crime. Funny justice that a river marks off! Truth below the Pyrenees, error beyond them.”

But why is Pascal content with such an arbitrary understanding of justice? Is there not a universal natural law shared among human beings which our reason can attain?⁴ For if there is such a natural law, we could conform our jurisprudence with it so that the established human laws could be *truly* just. However, if natural law exists, you would expect for basic moral principles that everyone agrees as moral to exist. And although I want to say, “yes there are such natural moral principles,”⁵ I have a hard time accounting for Pascal’s claim that “Le larcin, l’inceste, le meurtre des enfants et de pères, tout a eu sa place entre les actions vertueuses.”⁶ (Pensée 294)

Nevertheless, I might reply: “Those mishaps are caused by erroneous reasoning, which is the consultor of the natural law, and not by the absence of natural law.”⁷ However, on what basis are we allowed to claim that our reasoning can consult the natural law? Locke, one of the most important advocates of the power of reason, argues that the sons have a natural right to inherit their father’s goods before any other man.⁸ However, to me, this claim rather seems to be based on arbitrary customs than on natural law through deductive reasoning. I certainly understand the *feeling* why many people consider it as just, but I do not see how they will claim that it is *truly* just. For, why does a man have a will after his death, and why do we even care? Claims such as “he still lives on” or “his children are spiritually connected with him” can only be believed and not be proven. Furthermore, does not this only prevent children from becoming industrious (something the same illustrious Locke encourages)? Thus, I challenge someone to show me that this is a natural

⁴ See, for example, chapter 2 §6 in Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government*: “The State of Nature has a Law of Nature to govern it, which obliges every one: And Reason, which is that Law, teaches all Mankind, who will but consult it, and being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his Life, Health, Liberty, or Possessions.”

⁵ For example: “*The like natural inducement, hath brought Men to know that it is no less their Duty, to love others than themselves...*” (Chapter 2 §5 in Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government*) (The underline is added.)

⁶ “Larceny, incest, the murder of children and parents, all have had their place among the virtuous actions.”

⁷ See note 4.

⁸ See chapter 16 §190 in Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government*.

right through reason. Such obscurities in Locke's appeal to natural law through reason make me lose faith in the possibility of it.

Furthermore, for Pascal there is also a theological argument and justification for the assertion that reason cannot be a consultor of natural law, namely: "Il y a sans doute des lois naturelles ; mais cette belle raison corrompte a tout corrompu..."⁹ (Pensée 294) So, for Pascal a corruption of our reason brought us to this miserable state that prevents the attainment of true justice. This claim originates in Pascal's belief in man's *original sin* (see Pensées 338 and 430¹⁰), which causes *total depravity of reason*.¹¹ Thus, interestingly Pascal seems to have a Calvinist¹² point of view here rather than a Roman Catholic one (the faith Pascal claims to belong to).¹³

Even if we agree that there is no way of attaining *true* justice, we need to validate the disconcerting claim that justice is that which is established. Pascal says that humanity, when unable to find justice, came up with force (pensée 297). Therefore, we need to know what the nature of force is and its relationship to justice and see if we can justify Pascal's puzzling claim.

First, Pascal says that we have to put together force and justice because "La justice sans la force est impuissante : la force sans la justice est tyrannique. La justice sans force est contredite, parce qu'il y a toujours des méchants ; la force sans la justice est accusée."¹⁴ (Pensée 298) The

⁹ "There are without doubt some natural laws, but this beautiful corrupted reason has corrupted all..."

¹⁰ Pensée 430 is quite long, but in the sixth "N'attendez pas...et plus impérieuse," Pascal tells the story of the fall through "la Sagesse de Dieu" ("the wisdom of God").

¹¹ I mean by total depravity of reason that reason cannot make any claim to natural law, not that reason is useless.

¹² He is a so-called Jansenist: Jansenism was a movement within the Roman Catholic Church and condemned by that same church as a heresy. I referred to Calvinism because it is more renowned.

¹³ My notes previously referred to Locke, but they could refer to St. Thomas Aquinas as well: "Now among all others, the *rational creature* is subject to divine providence in a more excellent way, in so far as it partakes of a share of providence, by being provident both for itself and for others. Therefore, *it has a share of the eternal reason*, whereby it has a *natural inclination* to its proper act and end; and *this participation of the eternal law in the rational creature is called the natural law*." (*Summa Theologica*, First Part of the Second Part, Question 91, Second Article) (The italics are added.)

¹⁴ "Justice without force is unpowerful; force without justice is tyrannical. Justice without force is contradicted because there are always wicked people; force without justice stands accused."

reason why justice is powerless is shown above; being unable to attain the natural law with reason, I have no way to prove that my understanding of justice is more just than someone else's. Justice being arbitrary, there will always be dispute. And even if some people have opinions that are truly just, i.e., perfect Christians for Pascal,¹⁵ there will always be wicked nonperfect Christians. And to the wicked, the opinions of the perfect Christians are arbitrary, because true opinions cannot be shown to be truly just by reason.¹⁶ Nevertheless, as his words declare, force cannot exist without justice either; otherwise, people will oppose the force. Thus, we need to show how a union between force and justice can exist.

As shown above, justice is without power, which means that we cannot generate power, or force, out of justice; however, we can create a union of force and justice in which force attains 'justice.' (See *Pensées* 298, 299) Pascal believes that this union is possible, because "la force est très reconnaissable et sans dispute."¹⁷ Force is recognizable because it manifests through concrete objects, i.e., in an army, one's lackeys, weapons, etc. It also exerts power without dispute: you are a fool if you dispute with a king who has sovereignty over you, and a king only needs to declare someone as right or wrong and the quarrel between two equal men ends. However, the absence of dispute does not guarantee immunity from opposition; you might refrain from spitting in a king's face but still oppose him in mind. Thus, force can prevent disputations on what is just or not, but it does not prevent opposition. Tyranny can exist with considerable force, but it cannot obtain true peace ("le souverain bien")¹⁸ due to a continual fear of potential opposition. It is thus necessary

¹⁵ "Nul n'est heureux comme un vrai chrétien, ni raisonnable, ni vertueux, ni aimable." ("No one is so happy as a true Christian, neither so reasonable, nor so virtuous, nor so lovable.") (*Pensée* 541)

¹⁶ "Nous connaissons la vérité, non seulement par la raison, mais encore par le cœur ; c'est de cette dernière sorte que nous connaissons les premiers principes, et c'est en vain que le raisonnement qui n'y a point de part essaye de les combattre." ("We know the truth, not only by reason but also by the heart. It is by this last sort that we know the first principles, and it is in vain that reason, who has nothing to do with it, tries to combat it.") (*Pensée* 282) Faith in God, being a first principle, is thus an act of the heart and cannot be attained by reason.

¹⁷ "Force is very recognizable and without dispute." (*Pensée* 298)

¹⁸ "the sovereign good" (*Pensée* 299)

that force becomes just so that this sovereign good---peace---can be obtained.¹⁹ So, we need to examine how such a union can be actualized.

Let us begin with the fact that Pascal believes in the state of ‘the war of all against all’ in an uncivilized society, just like Hobbes. In *Pensée* 304, Pascal claims that the egocentric nature of humans is inevitable since “tous les hommes voulant dominer.”²⁰ However, not everyone is able to dominate; to dominate there must be the dominated. Hence, Pascal says that in the beginning before a society is formed, men fought each other until the strongest party oppressed the weakest party and became dominant. Nevertheless, as long as they are merely oppressors, the state of war continues because force without justice is tyrannical and will be opposed. However, desiring peace (“le souverain bien”), the strongest party will bequeath their power to the inheritors: “les uns la remettent à l’élection des peuples, les autres à la succession de naissance, etc.”²¹

However, it is not hereby explained why the oppressed people will not consider it a tyranny when the power is in the hands of, for example, elected representatives or a king. Thus, we need to ask ourselves how an elected person or a king can affirm their force such that he or she does not appear tyrannical to the people. For Pascal the answer lies in the imagination; without imagination a king²² is merely a man. Being merely a man, his justice is quite as arbitrary as ours so that he will be considered a tyrant (see *Pensée* 304). Hence, in order to gain his respect from the people, a king must create an imagination in the people that his will is just and not tyrannical.

¹⁹ It is not my task yet to justify the validity of claiming that peace is the sovereign good. I will do that later after I have shown how this convention of justice is established.

²⁰ “All men desire to dominate” (*Pensée* 304)

²¹ “Some hand it over to the election of people, others to the succession of birth, etc.”

²² I focus on the example of a king because it is, I think, most intelligible to show what he can do to create an imagination that makes him just. But it does not mean that other forms of government do not need to create an imagination that makes them just, for no government forms a remedy to the arbitrariness of human justice. Only a government where God rules himself would be just.

There are plenty of methods for a king to create an imagination of his sovereignty for his people. He could adorn himself with an army and drummers while sitting atop a golden carriage. He could build wondrous palaces with luxuries that would mesmerize the people. And he could force people to bow to him when he passes by. According to Pascal, such policies imprint respect and terror of the king in his subjects. With the continual exposure to such signs of power, the imprint of his majesty will be solidified within the people. People will start to believe that he is not one of them, but that “le caractère de la Divinité est empreint sur son visage.”²³ (Pensée 308) Such conditioning will lead to a successful establishment of a theocracy---divine-kingship---which will naturally authorize his justice.

However, this imagination could suffer in the face of misfortunes such as natural disasters, famine, plague, etc. If even the basic needs of people are not gratified, would it not be inevitable that the people will question the sacredness of their king? Thus, to prevent mutiny, a king must strengthen the people’s imagination by a device that consists as a ‘natural law’ within the people--customs. The power of custom is remarkable; a single anointing by the pope can ascribe the famine to the perversity of the people and can deify a family to the extent that an infant of that family yields more power than a wise old man. The violation of custom also holds considerable consequences; give a Dutch woman only two kisses on her cheek²⁴ and she will be offended. Thus, custom is powerful because its power of persuasion consists in the moral beliefs of the people, which can transcend the physical conditions; a religious person can easily construe a divine justification for his or her sufferings.

Furthermore, the advantage of custom over law is that it does not have the nature of oppression. Law is often perceived as a tyrannical restriction on one’s freedom which will ignite

²³ “The divine character is imprinted on his countenance.”

²⁴ The custom in The Netherlands is to kiss a woman thrice on her cheek.

our rebellious nature. On the other hand, in *Pensée* 309, Pascal claims that custom spawns approval and justice. As justice is based on imagination, it is custom that paves the foundation by giving an impression of freedom; people believe they are following custom out of free will. As a result, people do not perceive custom as tyrannical but as just because it aligns with their natural tendency, even though it is actually a conditioning through time.

Nevertheless, the disadvantage of custom is that it is not binding; you cannot bring people to court because they did not use forks with their left hands. Of course, in a healthy state there needs to be laws of which the violation is punishable. It is thus important that the (principal) laws are also the customs of a nation so that the laws can be both binding and unoppressive; i.e. it needs *νόμοι*.²⁵ There are plenty of examples where the constitutions of countries abide by such rules, countries where the law is claimed to be in conformity with religion, etc.²⁶

So, the people's imagination is formidable to the extent that it leads them to believe that arbitrary laws are just. Pascal is right when he says: "Il est donc vrai de dire que tout le monde est dans l'illusion."²⁷ (*Pensée* 335) The corruption of our reason makes us incapable of attaining true justice; if people claim to live in a truly just society, the chimeras of justice have successfully fooled their imagination. Thus, justice is indeed 'that which is established.'

The question that needs to be answered now is why this state of society constituted upon the illusion of justice is still better than no society at all. For Pascal 'justice' is clearly a noble lie,

²⁵ *Νόμοι* (*nómoi*, singular: *νόμος*, *nomos*) is normally translated into English by customs or laws. I think that the Greeks do a great job of making the distinction obscure, for it shows the importance of their union: precisely when you can call something both custom and law it is able to create the illusion of justice. I understand a *νόμος* thus to be a law which the people subjected under that law perceive as just.

²⁶ One of the most remarkable things that I observed in the United States of America is that there exists a convention to see their Constitution as a sort of holy document. It binds them so freely and passionately to their Constitution that they get very upset when others start to question its validity and want to 'improve' it.

²⁷ "It is thus true to say that everyone is in illusion."

for the illusion of justice prevents people from tumbling into a state of war and secures peace. And for Pascal peace is “le souverain bien”²⁸ and civil war is “le plus grand des maux.”²⁹

However, why should we see peace as the sovereign good, and what is the basis of this claim? Reason, being corrupted, cannot deductively prove that peace is the sovereign good and civil war the greatest evil; we would regress into the same enigma as Locke who failed to persuade that we have access to natural law by reason (see page 3). Pascal realizes this problem and resorts to calling the claim about civil war an “opinion of the sane people” (Pensée 313). For him, empires are not merely formed by imaginations, as shown above, but also on opinions (Pensée 311). Hence, the opinion that peace is the sovereign good and civil war the greatest evil is also the fundamental foundation of a society, i.e., the formation of society rests upon this opinion. Therefore, we need to show the soundness of the opinion about peace and civil war and why society needs to maintain this good, even to the extent of using a noble lie.

However, let me first articulate the method that is going to be used to show that it is a ‘sane’ opinion. According to Pascal, different categories of knowledge and the respective methods to obtain them exist. These categories of knowledge are either obtained by reason or felt by the heart (see note 16). The truth of the opinion about peace and civil war is felt by the heart, for deductive reasoning cannot validate any opinion. However, since a heart cannot be moved to faith without the interference of God,³⁰ does that also mean that this sane opinion about peace and civil war also requires such an interference? To me, the answer is no, because knowledge of this sane opinion is far inferior to faith in God. Hence, I believe in the possibility of arguments to move the heart of

²⁸ “The sovereign good” (Pensée 299), furthermore he calls it “le plus grands des biens” (“the greatest of goods”) in Pensée 319.

²⁹ “The greatest of evils” (Pensée 313 or 320)

³⁰ “On ne croira jamais d’une créance utile et de foi, si Dieu n’incline le cœur ; et on croira dès qu’il l’inclinera.” (“One will never believe with a useful debt and faith, if God does not incline the heart, and one will believe as soon as he inclines it.”) (Pensée 284)

humans so that they can obtain the knowledge about peace and civil war. Thus, let us try to concoct such arguments.

Let us imagine ourselves to be in a state of civil war. Hobbes' words³¹ illustrate the terrible conditions accompanying such state:

“In such condition, there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is the worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.” (*Leviathan*, Ch. 13, 9)

And he tells us a little bit later:

“To this warre of every man against every man, this also is consequent; that nothing can be Unjust. The notions of Right and Wrong, Justice and Injustice have there no place. Where there is no common Power, there is no Law: where no Law, no Injustice. Force, and Fraud, are in warre, the two Cardinall vertues.” (*Leviathan*, Ch. 13, 13)

After I read such descriptions of civil war, the thought of civil war evokes such immense terror that I wish to avoid it. However, if you think that it is desirable to have a solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short life, I could only hope that your heart might be inclined in some miraculous way.

Furthermore, there is also a theological argument. For, neither philosophical nor spiritual activity is possible during a civil war. This state of ‘ultimate diversion’ forces a man to be so preoccupied with self-preservation that there is no leisure for self-reflection. For Pascal, this self-reflection is necessary to come to the realization of our wretchedness. According to Pascal, our greatness comes from realizing our own wretchedness (see *Pensée* 416). The realization of our wretchedness leads us to search for remedies to our state which further leads us into playing the

³¹ Selections from Hobbes' *Leviathan* are relevant because Pascal's claims about peace and civil war contain great conformity with Hobbes' cautions for civil war, the biggest evil of all.

‘game of the wager.’ All these activities put us in the right disposition in which God can move our hearts (see *Pensée* 233). Playing the wager also requires peace; how can you act on what you believe, go to masses, and become more docile if you are threatened by death? Thus, being in a state of peace is a prerequisite for a Christian who wants to focus on his ultimate goal to be united with God.

However, I have hereby not sufficiently explained why society needs to exist to maintain a state of peace between humans. For, to say that man is in a state of war without society is also an opinion³² which requires clarification with the same kind technique as we just used. As stated above, Pascal says that all men desire to dominate others to create distinction. This desire exists because of their equality in the natural state. When people are equally wretched but want the distinction of superiority, conflict emerges from the desire of the same object. Even if you would assume that the earth’s abundant resources prevent the desiring of the same thing, a man still wants to secure his abundance by storing more goods, perfect his estate, and preserve himself. These considerations make me convinced of Pascal’s claim that a ‘state of war’ between human beings will occur when there is no society. Thus, only a society, being able to create this imaginative justice, is able to keep the people in peace.

Furthermore, for Pascal, the Scriptures also fortify his claim that it is necessary to have a society in order to have peace. He argues that humankind was once in a state where they could live happily and peacefully with each other. But man’s original sin brought us out of that happy state and created a necessity of a society that is able to tame us.³³

³² For, unlike Hobbes and Pascal, Locke believes that there is peace possible in the state of nature (see chapter 2 § 14-15 in Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government*).

³³ “...and he shall rule over thee.” (*Genesis*, 3:16, KJV)

Now that it is shown that the good of peace is worth fighting for and that society---although founded on force, opinion, and imagination and preserved by illusory justice---is the only securer of the sovereign good, we should think of the different behaviors of men in relation to society and the implications they hold in sustaining that society. The evaluation will rely on the criteria of the justness of man that we established; a man is just when he tries to preserve peace and unjust when he incites civil war. And since peace is preserved by illusory justice, it follows that one has to partake in this illusion.

There are two possibilities of how one can partake in this illusion, i.e., one truly believes the illusion or one follows the illusion because he knows that it preserves the peace. For Pascal, the men that truly believes in this illusory justice are *the people* (le peuple), and the men that follow it for the sake of peace are *the skilled* (les habiles) and/or *the perfect Christians* (les chrétiens parfaits) (see Pensée 337). So, it is our task now to describe ‘the nature’ of these three types of people.

Let us begin with *the people*, who believe in the justness of their actions and preserve peace. Within these people, there exists a contradiction. Although the people have sane opinions, they are not sane in their heads (see Pensée 335). For example, three very sane opinions are: 1) following the customs of a country, 2) honoring the nobility, 3) equate wealth with virtue, for their obedience to these things preserves the peace (which is the end of society). However, whilst their motivation is correct---follow what is established to be just---the reality of the results are in discrepancy with reason: 1) follow the customs of a country, because they believe it to be an emblem of justice although they are only illusions, 2) honor the nobility, for they believe them to have noble blood although they are merely human beings, 3) equate wealth with virtue, because they truly believe

that virtuous activity (such as hard work, and creativity) is a prerequisite to being wealthy. So, the people act justly only because of their beliefs.

However, unlike the people, *the skilled* act just with the right reasons. So, they follow and honor the same things as the people but not because they truly honor them. They are aware that the customs are merely social constructs, but that does not abstain them from observing them. Pascal claims that the skilled do honor all these unreasonable things with a so-called ‘pensée de derrière’ (secret thought³⁴) (see Pensée 337). So, the skilled secretly judge the arbitrary nature of ‘justice’ but, nevertheless, follow the follies because the illusion preserves the tranquility of society.

It should be emphasized that the skilled conceal this pensée de derrière, and that you cannot distinguish them from the other people. (see Pensée 336). Interestingly, the skilled are the most likely to oppose revolution, because they know that humankind is unable to build a society on true justice; thus, if you try to single them out, you would probably have the most success if you pick out the ones that act like the most ardent supporters of the customs. You will never see them telling the people that the laws of their country are not truly just because they do not want to incite confusion and chaos (see Pensée 326).

It remains now to look at the nature of the *perfect Christians*. Pascal claims that perfect Christians honor what is established by a ‘superior light’ (lumière supérieure) (see Pensée 337). But this superior light reveals for them that the people follow vain follies. The reason why they nevertheless follow it is that they honor and believe in ‘the order of God,’ who has enslaved them to the follies for the punishment of man and will deliver them after they die (Pensée 338).³⁵ So,

³⁴ A literal translation would be: “thought from behind.”

³⁵ Pascal fortifies his claim in this Pensée by referring to Paul’s *Letter to the Romans* 8:20-21: “(20) For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, (21) Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” (KJV)

for Pascal true Christians are very obedient to the established society; they will not be the source of political activism.

Thus, let us imagine a society with only these three types of people. Once the imagination is established, peace flourishes their lands. Let us assume that the νόμοι³⁶ of the society will prevent civil war even in times of famine, plague, and war, and no one will question the validity of the society: the people will not question it because they feel blessed to live in a just society and will ascribe the misfortunes to transcendent causes; the skilled because they deter from inciting civil war; the perfect Christians because they believe that they are justly subjected to the miseries of life by God. Consequently, a society with those three types of men will never fail unless by an invasion of external forces or the weakening of the imagination of the masses through a *long continuous array* of terrible misfortunes.

However, it is very unlikely that there could exist such a society where only people of these three natures live. In reality, civil war could occur from numerous other reasons which are hard for humans to predict or prevent. For, even in the absence of terrible misfortunes many societies still have a hard time maintaining the imagination of justice in the people. But the destruction of the illusion does not stem from the people, the skilled, and the perfect Christians; rather, there exist other groups of people that destroy the illusion of justice and bring about thereby the greatest of all miseries, i.e., civil war.

For, Pascal there are two kinds of groups of people that oppose the established order: the *half-skilled*³⁷ (les demi-habiles) and *the devout* (les dévots) (see Pensée 337). We must thus examine the natures of these people to understand why they act unjustly. Let us start with the *half-skilled*, who act unjustly because they are neither as foolish as the people nor as wise as the skilled.

³⁶ See note 25, page 8.

³⁷ This is a literal translation; I think you can also read it as ‘sophists.’

In Pensée 327, Pascal claims that the two extremities of human knowledge touch themselves. The first is ‘pure natural ignorance’ (pure ignorance naturelle) which all men have when born. The second is the ‘learned ignorance’ (ignorance savante) which all men who are aware of their ignorance have. For Pascal, the people never leave the first extremity, and the skilled belong to the other extremity comprised of people who after examining what men can know concluded that men can know nothing. However, he claims that there are also those who fall between these two extremities, i.e., the half-skilled. These people, having left the state of natural ignorance, think that they have sufficient knowledge to claim that they know. That is why Pascal says: “Ceux-là troublent le monde, et jugent mal de tout.”³⁸ Being not in this state of natural ignorance, they realize that many of their countries’ customs and laws are arbitrary, and also think that they know what true justice is. Believing that the world could be a better place if the people listen to them, they start telling the people that their society is unjust. But this will eventually cripple society. In times of misfortune, the people will be susceptible to the skillfully crafted slanders of the admirably appearing half- skilled, who tell them that these misfortunes are caused by the bad νόμοι. So, when the illusion of justice is destroyed and civil war rages over the country, you are probably right to blame it on this group.

Then how can society protect itself from the half-skilled and prevent their uproar? Preventing the formation of the half-skilled is not possible because of the natural curiosity of humankind. For, this curiosity implants in many men a desire to depart from their natural ignorance to seek for truth. The alternative then is to silence them. To see how a society could accomplish that let us take a look at Pensée 331, a Pensée about Plato and Aristotle. Pascal says that: “quand

³⁸ “Those ones trouble the world and judge everything wrong.” (Pensée 327)

ils se sont divertis à faire leur *Lois* et leur *Politique*, ils l'ont fait en se jouant.”³⁹ So, when reading Plato's *Laws* and Aristotle's *Politics*, one should be aware that the philosophers did not truly believe in what they wrote there. However, if they wrote it for only self-joy, they would not have published it. For Pascal, the philosophers publicized their books for propaganda. They shared it in order to set up an ‘insane asylum.’⁴⁰ Plato and Aristotle, discerning that the half-skilled, who believe themselves to be worthy kings and emperors (because they think that they truly know and are smarter than everyone else), pose a great threat to the maintenance of peace, sought a way to subdue them. Hence: “Ils entrent dans leurs principes pour modérer leur folie au moins mal qu’il se peut.”⁴¹ To do that, Plato and Aristotle used charming rhetoric, beguiling deductions, etc. to make their political work ‘worthy of their esteem.’ Furthermore, they made their works conform to the justice system of the society so that the books can be used to uphold the peace of society and to align the half-skilled with the established norms and values. If you ask now: “why would the half-skilled that consider themselves as kings, follow the teaching of the works of these philosophers?” Realize that they will not only be compelled to follow the books by its seemingly well-founded irrefutable reasoning but also relish in the flatteries of being well-read, being acquainted with sophisticated and famed works, and the pride they feel to believe that they know what true justice is. Therefore, if we understand these insane kings and emperors to be the half-skilled, we found a way to silence them and further on to fortify their illusions. Therefore, to check the half-skilled and preserve peace, society needs to encourage man like Aristotle and Plato, to write works as the *Laws* and *Politics*.

³⁹ “when they have entertained themselves to make their *Laws* and their *Politics*, they have done it while playing with themselves.”

⁴⁰ “pour régler un hôpital de fous”

⁴¹ “They enter into their principles in order to moderate their madness to the least evil as they are able to.”

Now that we have shown how we can bring the unjust half-skilled to justice, it remains to do the same for *the devout*. To do that let us first start with examining their nature. Pascal says that the devout despises the people's opinions because they judge them by the light of piety (see *Pensée* 337). This piety makes them feel as if they have an obligation to educate the people by preaching and forcing their religious teachings on them. Like the half-skilled, they might truly believe that they are helping the people, but the results are otherwise; they create religious intolerance or aversion towards religion, division inside their church, and incite religious (civil) wars. Not knowing that their actions are useless and that only God can induce a man's heart with faith, they only destroy the society's illusion of justice and threaten the peace. So, their wrong interpretation of religion could form a serious threat to the preservation of society if society does not find a way that brings them to civil obedience.

Thus, let us investigate if society can defend itself from the people with this devout nature. Unlike the half-skilled, they are not prone to be fooled by political works written by sane men. For, this light of piety gives them low esteem for works that claim that the activity of the mind could bring them to happiness. On the contrary, for devout Christians, spiritual texts like *The Bible*, Augustine's *Confessions*, and Thomas à Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ* are works that deserve their esteem. It is imperative that the men that they esteem, i.e., the pope, priests, religious commentators, etc. persuade them against forcing their beliefs on others, that a just Christian follows the laws of the country, and that religion is a thing that should stand as much as possible apart from the affairs of temporal politics. By doing that, these well-esteemed men are doing their duty because Jesus himself says: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."⁴² (*Mark* 12:17, KJV) And since it is the church's obligation to put their

⁴² See page 13: what is stated about the nature of perfect Christians confirms this, of course, as well.

followers in the right disposition to receive God's grace, it should dissuade the devout from being 'religious justice warriors.'

So, let us now bring this essay to an end, by summarizing what has been established. We showed that *force must become 'just.'* Hence, society must create an *imagination of justice* in people in order to make this union possible. It can do that in various ways, but most importantly the laws need to be perceived as customs, i.e., *νόμοι*, that are free from tyrannical nature. We asked ourselves if it is actually desirable to partake in such a noble lie and confirmed that it is; we showed that *peace is the sovereign good* and that *only society* can preserve this sovereign good for the people. Thus, knowing that it is just to partake in this illusion of justice and unjust to destroy it, we examined the different natures of people and how they partake in this illusion. There are three types of people that endorse the society and its system, whether intentionally or not: *the people*, *the skilled*, and *the perfect Christians*. However, there are also those who *do not uphold* the societal system and pose a potential threat to the integrity and peace of the society: neither honor nor pretend to honor the society's illusion, i.e., the *half-skilled* and *the devout*. However, we also examined how these people can be *tamed*. Therefore, it is possible that society maintains peace for ages. So, this being stated, let us all observe, with reason and/or faith, the words of Paul: "(1) I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for all people --- (2) for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." (*1 Timothy 2:1-2, NIV*)