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PAUL VALÉRY: THE FORMATION OF HIS AESTHETIC IDEAS

by

EVA-MARIA GERSTEL

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

[Signature]
Thesis Director's Signature

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### TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Paul Valéry: The Formation of his Aesthetic Ideas**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Age of Idols 1871-1891</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. &quot;Préhistoire&quot;</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Valéry's Mediterranean Surroundings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. First Literary &quot;Masters&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Hugo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gautier</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Parnassian Poets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Baudelaire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Valéry and Poe</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. The little black Notebook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. &quot;La Technique Littéraire&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Eureka</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Valéry and the &quot;influence&quot; of the French Masters</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Neo-Catholicism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Decadent-Symbolist Poets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Rimbaud</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Wagner as seen by the French</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Architecture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. Mallarmé</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Age of Possibilities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. &quot;Que peut un Homme?&quot;</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. The Crisis of 1892</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Refusal of Literature and Language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Search for a Rigorous Method</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Interest in the Scientific Thought as seen in the first Cahier 1894-1900</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Application of the Scientific Method to:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Functioning of the Mind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V. The Drama of the Mind. .................................................. 159
   A. Leonard
   B. Descartes
   C. Teste
   D. Conclusion

Appendix to Chapter II. .................................................. 188

Notes. ................................................................. 196

Bibliography.......................................................... 221
Introduction

It has often been pointed out that Paul Valéry's thought ceased to develop in 1896 and continued to revolve around the same central themes. Valéry himself stated this fact in a letter written in 1927 to the Père Gillet on the subject of the latter's book: Paul Valéry et la Métaphysique. "Mes idées se sont faites entre 1892 et 95. 1
J'entends ma manière de juger." Influence had then ceased to play a role in Valéry's intellectual drama during his twenty-fifth year, for his thought had fully developed.

The author of M. Teste never forgot the importance of that period 1892-1896, "la belle époque," during which he fully realized his intellectual faculties. In his Cahier of 1943 the following note substantiates this fact: "Un aiguillon constant de ma pensée et le plus sensible peut-être, dans ma période critique 91-96, fut sans doute le désir intense de me faire mon trésor d'idées tout personnel, mes problèmes véritables et mes moyens." 2

The work of serious critics has justified the point of view that Valéry's thought no longer evolved after 1896. Bémol writes: "...M. Teste, acte par lequel Valéry se cree definitivement lui-même et regle les grands problèmes de sa vie intellectuelle. Des ce moment, divers elements de doctrine se forment dans son
esprit, auxquels il restera toujours fidele. Ce sont la les premières branches de l'arbre qui s'élève, les premières superstructures de l'édifice qui se construit." Valéry's mature work has been examined in great detail in the light of this knowledge, yet there exists no detailed study of the formation of this unique thought. What influences did he undergo during his childhood? What masters did he choose as a young man in Montpellier? What led up to the crisis of 1892? It is the purpose of this thesis to elucidate and to follow the evolvement of Valéry's thought between the years 1871 and 1896.

It has only recently become possible to complete a precise study of the intellectual unfolding of the young Valéry. In the last eight or ten years essential material has been made available due to the publication of Valéry's correspondence with Fourment, Gide, Louÿs, and others; the completion of Mondor's book, La Précocité de Valéry, which includes a number of important documents concerning Valéry's very early life; and finally the publication of the Cahiers which make Valéry's own interpretations of his youth available. With the help of these documents a study of this type can be accurately completed.

Although Valéry considered the word influence vague and nebulous, he had necessarily undergone the influence of his friends, Gide, Louÿs, and Fourment, and of the ideas, both aesthetic and
scientific, current in France during his youth. I have therefore
defined influence in Valéry's own words as the "modification
progressive d'un esprit" and have used it with that meaning through-
out the thesis. This definition necessarily includes two implications:
1) an absence of direct imitation for that has only temporary value
and does not leave its mark on the mind; and 2) an active choice on
the part of the young author whose intellectual faculties have not yet
fully developed. In this light I have examined the various influences
which played their part in Valéry's intellectual maturation.

I have given special attention to the years 1888-1896 because
the former was the year of the Petit Carnet Noir, Valéry's first
notebook, as well as the year which demonstrated his interest in
poetry to be other than mere adolescent diversion; the latter was
the year of La Soirée avec M. Teste which revealed his thought to
be firmly established.

I have divided the thesis into two main sections, one called
the age of idols, or the years during which Valéry searched for his
direction and underwent the influences examined in the first three
chapters: the exterior influence of his native Sète, the sun, the
sea and the light, which endowed him with an acute sense of form;
the influence of Edgar Allan Poe, his first master, who revealed to
young Valéry the great interest of the functioning of the human mind;
and finally the influence of the ideas current in France between 1888 and 1891, as seen in his poetry of that period.

The second section, entitled the age of possibilities, corresponds to his liberation from the idols, as he came to call his former ideals, and to the creation of the new idol, the intellect. "J'essayai, sans grand succès immédiat, d'opposer la conscience de mon état à cet état lumineux, et l'observateur au patient... Tout ceci me conduisit à décréter les Idoles hors la loi. Je les immolai toutes à celles qu'il fallut bien créer pour lui soumettre les autres, l'Idole de l'Intelect; de laquelle mon Monsieur Teste fut le grand-prêtre." Henceforth Valéry chose his own masters from among his thoughts, they became imaginary masters in the form of Léonard, Teste, and his Cahiers. The supreme creator and the supreme thinker brought to a close his youth and thereby his search for direction. At twenty-five Valéry reached maturity, whatever was to follow would be but a variation on the themes established during the formative years.

Under the title Mémoires d'un Moi he wrote in 1943: "Mes découvertes de 189... Je maintiens qu'elles étaient bonnes. On ne les avait pas faites. Elles tendaient à rabattre vers l'observation les notions de connaissance, pensée de lesquelles [sic]--nota bene--ont été grossièrement formées des résultats de besoinsdistincts..." Valéry spent the rest of his life meditating on and developing the discoveries of his youth.
"Préhistoire"

Paul Valéry strongly disapproved of biographical criticism. "...l'auteur n'étant heureusement jamais l'homme. La vie de celui-ci n'est pas la vie de celui-là: accumulez tous les détails que vous pourrez sur la vie de Racine, vous n'en tirerez pas l'art de faire ses vers." Yet he did not fail to give an important place to the physical surroundings of his early childhood, his "préhistoire" as he called it. It is from these early surroundings that a child receives its first impressions which form a permanent background for future thought. These first impressions, spontaneous and immediate, become encrusted onto his being and part of the future man.

Southern France with its bright light reflected a hundredfold by the Sea left its permanent mark on Valéry. "Ce que je vous dirai ne concerne que les rapports de ma vie ou de ma sensibilité dans sa période de formation avec cette mer Méditerranée qui n'a cessé, depuis mon enfance de m'être présente soit aux yeux, soit à l'esprit."

Paul Ambroise Valéry, born in 1871, spent the first thirteen years of his life in Sète, a medium sized port in the south of France, for which his affection never diminished. In 1933 he still was able to say: "...je suis né dans un de ces lieux où j'aurais aimé de naître. Je me félicite d'être né en un point tel que mes premières
impressions aient été celles que l'on reçoit face à la mer et au milieu de l'activité des hommes." The well-defined forms, made more precise in the bright sunlight, formed the background of his intellectual life.

In 1876 Valéry entered the school of the Dominican fathers, where he remained for only two years, since in 1878 he was enrolled in the public school of Sète. There exists no record of any lasting friendship formed during those first years of his life. His capacities as a pupil can hardly be judged, since there were only four boys in his class, with whom he alternately shared the honor of being first. Quickly he became aware of the double standard as it existed among masters and pupils, the former recognizing the intellectual superiority of the classroom, the latter respecting the muscular superiority of the schoolyard. Valéry, sensitive and rather frail, felt a natural repugnance for those violent games. Madame Rouart-Valéry reports that "un éloignement marqué pour les amusements violents et les exercices de force..." characterized the young Valéry as a school boy.

Yet he was by no means an always well-behaved pupil. Years later, in 1935 before another class at Sète, he recalls the punishments inflicted upon him "à cause de quelque bavardage, d'une grimace ou d'un complot comique, pour des cigarettes prematurées ou des lectures clandestines." These punishments did not embitter him but played their role in the intellectual development of the young boy.
Même, la vie intérieure s'introduit (ou du moins s'in-
troduisait alors), dans l'âme de l'écolier par certaine
penalité que l'adoucissement des moeurs a pu être fait
rayer de vos codes. Je ne vous cacherai pas qu'il m'est
arrivé de passer ici quelques heures, le nez au mur et
les bras croisés. Cette cure de silence et d'immobilité
en station verticale, n'est sans doute plus à la mode...
Se taire, quelle leçon!... Contenir les mouvements et
les bonds qui naissent d'une jeune énergie et qu'il faut
que l'esprit obligé à se résorber, quelle notion plus
immédiate de la durée... Et la contemplation des acci-
dents du badigeon de la muraille, quelle occasion de
rêverie!....

To be put into a corner gives him his first notion of durée, but it also
imposes a certain discipline on his rebellious body and forces the
mind to occupy itself elsewhere—for instance, with the contemplation
of the wall's irregularities. Valéry as a child applied his mind rather
quickly to diverse circumstances. Instead of reacting emotionally to
an unpleasant event, he preferred to reflect upon that event itself.

Madame Rouart-Valéry states that from 1880 on "la plupart de ses
jeux se passent dans sa tête."

The school wall was, however, not the only object inciting his
contemplation. The physical surroundings in which he grew up were
the real source of his dominant impressions. The sun, the water, the
sky, and the port formed the background of his future thought. "Cer-
tainement, rien ne m'a plus formé, plus imprégné, mieux instruit—ou
construit—que ces heures dérobées à l'étude, distraites en apparence,
mais vouées dans le fond au culte inconscient de trois ou quatre déités
incontestables: la Mer, le Ciel, le Soleil." This first influence was of a sensual nature—that is to say, perceived through the faculties of his body. These sensations, due to the contact with the world around him, set up a permanent store of images for the future poet. "Je m'accuse devant vous d'avoir connu une véritable folie de lumière, combinée avec la folie de l'eau. Mon jeu, mon seul jeu, était le jeu le plus pur: la nage. J'en ai fait une manière de poème, un poème que j'appelle involontaire, car il n'a pas été jusqu'à se former et à s'achever en vers. Mon intention, quand je l'ai fait, n'était pas de chanter l'état de nage, mais de le décrire, --ce qui est fort différent, --et il n'a effleuré la forme poétique que parce que le sujet par lui-même, la nage toute seule, se soutient et se meut en pleine poésie." In this same speech delivered in 1933, Valéry describes the role of the Mediterranean in European thought and history, but it is evident from his words that the function which the sea assumed in the formation of the European thought is identical to his own "expérience méditerranéenne."

J'en viens, maintenant, à l'idée dominante, qui résumera tout ce que je vous ai dit, qui me représente à moi-même la conclusion de ce que j'appellerai "mon expérience méditerranéenne"... Ce sont des Méditerranéens qui ont fait les premiers pas certains dans la voie de la précision des méthodes, dans la recherche de la nécessité des phénomènes par l'usage délibéré des puissances de l'esprit, et qui ont engagé le genre humain dans cette manière d'aventure extraordinaire que nous vivons, dont nul ne peut prévoir les développements, et dont le trait le plus remarquable--le plus inquiétant, peut-être--consiste dans un éloignement
toujours plus marqué des conditions initiales ou naturelles de la vie...

Nulle part ailleurs, la puissance de la parole, consciemment discipline et dirigée, n'a été plus pleinement et utilement développée: la parole ordonnée à la logique, et employée à la découverte de vérités abstraites, construisant l'univers de la géométrie ou celui des relations qui permettent la justice; ou bien maîtresse du forum, moyen politique essentiel, instrument régulier de l'acquisition ou de la conservation du pouvoir.

Living in immediate contact with the sea and the sun, he conceived his love of form not from reading the Classics, but from "les purs éléments du jour." His whole body participated in this first experience with ordered form. "L'onde est forme. Immobile et sa matière mobile; ou mobile et sa matière 'stationnaire'."

It would certainly be presumptuous to claim at this point that Valéry before the age of thirteen conceived the notion of his Moi-Pur, but I do not believe it unjust to maintain that from his contact with the sea and the sun, he received his earliest notion of the Moi-Pur. Speaking about his "inspirations méditerranéennes," he states that the contact with the pure and simple elements makes us aware of our human nature and opposes the variety and mobility of our impressions with a Moi which sums up and dominates all the varieties of our impressions. Nadal reports that "tout enfant il (Valéry) voulut être un 'point géométrique', fixer l'instant d'éclair ou fulgurent tous les temps." Even though Valéry as a child could not formulate the
concept of the Moi-Pur that he defined later, it may be assumed 
that he received the impression of it in those early days of his child-
hood.

The young boy, as far as we know without any close friends, 
began to discipline his mind. "J'ai dû commencer vers l'âge de neuf 
ou dix ans à me faire une sorte d'île de mon esprit, et quoique d'un 
naturel assez sociable et communicatif, je me réservais de plus en
plus un jardin très secret ou je cultivais les images qui me semblaient 
tout à fait miennes, ne pouvaient être que miennes..." His contact 
with the sea and light formed in him certain states of mind and habits 
of contemplation, so that in 1933 he still located the birthplace of 
philosophic thought on the sea shore: "... C'est un regard sur la mer, 
c'est un regard sur le possible.... Mais un regard sur le possible, 
si ce n'est pas encore de la philosophie, c'est sans doute un germe 
de philosophie, de la philosophie à l'état naissant." These pure 
and simple elements reflect precisely "tous les attributs de la con-
naisance: clarté, profondeur, vastitude, mesure... Ce qu'il voit 
lui représente ce qu'il est dans son essence de posséder ou de désirer. 
Il lui arrive que son regard sur la mer engendre un plus vaste désir 
que tout désir qu'une chose particulière obtenue puisse satisfaire."

Young Valéry's love of the sea unconsciously formed the basis 
of his future thought, but consciously it inspired in him the ambition 
to become a naval officer. The events of the port interested him
greatly. He spent many hours watching the boats coming in; the big mysterious boats from faraway places and the small fishingboats bringing in their daily load of tuna. "Parfois, au crépuscule, je regardais rentrer ces fortes barques de pêche, lourdes des cadavres des thons, et une étrange impression m'obsédait l'esprit. Le ciel absolument pur, mais pénétre d'un feu rose à sa base, et dont l'azur verdissait vers le zenith; la mer très sombre déjà avec des brisants et des éclats d'une blancheur extraordinaire;..." His eyes admired the forms outlined against the horizon, and his sense of smell took pleasure in this "symphonie olfactive." But a serious obstacle was placed between him and a naval career--his early insufficiency in mathematics. "...les figures incorruptibles de la géométrie, les pièges et les énigmes systematiques de l'algebre, les tristes logarithmes, les sinus et leurs cosinus fraternels décourageaient plus d'un qui voyait avec désespoir, entre la mer et soi, entre la marine rêvée et la marine vécue, s'abaisser... l'inexorable plan d'un tableau noir. Il fallait bien, alors, se contenter de tristes regards sur le large, ne jouir que des yeux et l'imagination..." He was thus condemned to be satis-

died with the "impressions que prodigue la mer si riche en evenements, la mer generatrice de formes et de projets extraordinaires, mer Aphrodite et donnant l'âme à tant d'aventures."

While his early childhood and boyhood were spent in the company of the sea and the sun, his adolescence was occupied with a great in-
terest in books. There is general agreement among Madame Rouart-Valéry, Mondor, Walzer, and Valéry himself, that his first literary enthusiasms were for Victor Hugo. There exists, however, much disagreement as to the exact date of his first reading of Victor Hugo.  
In a letter written in 1890 to Pierre Louÿs, Valéry claims to have read Hugo at twelve and maybe even before: "A douze ans, peut-être avant! il (Valéry) se pénétrait déjà de N.-D. de Paris et des obscurités dénommées Han d'Islande ou Bug-Jargal. Puis vinrent les vers. Il n'a jamais lu Lamartine! ni Musset, c'étaient les Feuilles d'automne, les Voix intérieures, etc." Yet in another letter written to Pierre Louÿs three months earlier, he cites other titles of Hugo and a different age: "J'ai commencé à 14 ans par les Orientales. J'ai continué par Notre-Dame qui m'a plongé dans l'extase gothique, dont je ne suis pas encore sorti." According to Mondor, Valéry read Hugo in 1883-1884 or in his thirteenth year. This latter affirmation appears justified, for it places the reading of Hugo prior to that of Gautier, the Parnassians, and Baudelaire, all of whom Madame Rouart-Valéry states he discovered in 1884. According to her statement, the young Valéry would have read Hugo after Baudelaire, which seems hardly credible. It would be my contention that Valéry read Hugo in the first part of 1884, if not already in the last months of 1883, for according to Madame Rouart-Valéry he had already written his first verses in January 1884 and had asked for a rime dictionary in March 1884.
Thanks to Mondor we also know that these first verses, written between January and June 1884, depended almost entirely upon Hugo for their inspiration. Ten of these early poems have been found in a little black notebook. Here are their titles: "Le Cosaque de l'Ukraine," "Le Vallon," "Parodie de quelques vers de M. Victor Hugo," "La Fortune," "Avant, pendant, après," "Le Gouffre," "Sortie du bal," "Prométhée," "La Mort du juste," and "Plainte et Demande." In addition to these poems, the first notebook already contains a number of drawings, all either sneering or melo-dramatic: the face of Fortune with her eyes bandaged, the head of a dying man with a crucifix on his chest, Mephisto, and the head of a skeleton.

The poem "Le Cosaque de l'Ukraine" opens the collection. The following lines are those cited by Mondor:

O beau cosaque de l'Ukraine!
Vole à travers les forêts
Traverse les champs et les prés
Va! Egorge, pille,
Qu'un Baskir doit semer la haine
O beau cosaque de l'Ukraine!
Au galop! au galop! cours vite
Car tous les hommes que tu quittes
Après les avoir outragés
Se retourneraient peut-être
Et frémissant dans tout leur être
Te tuaient et seraient vengés. 32

Is this poem perhaps inspired by Hugo's Mazeppa? It is easy enough to see the romantic influence in the setting of a faraway place, in the story of a wild and solitary hero, and in the separate set of values im-
posed on the hero. I shall quote one more poem of that group, in
which the thirteen year old boy has mastered admirably the eight
syllable line:

Parodie de quelques vers de M. Victor Hugo

Non, le bachot n'est à personne,
Le bachot est au vrai bucheur
Et chaque fois que l'heure sonne
L'élève nul frémit de peur.
Le bachot! Le bachot! Mystère!
Toutes les colles de la terre
Licence, école militaire
Agrégation et doctorat
Ambitions réalisées
Ne nous sont jamais accordées
Qu'avec le baccalauréat! 33

These lines, as the title in the list indicates, are a parody on Victor
Hugo according to Valéry.

Valéry's admiration for Hugo was soon to be eclipsed by that
for the Parnassians and Baudelaire. It is, however, necessary to
state that Valéry never really ceased to admire the great poet in
Hugo. Pierre Féline reports that "pour exciter sa verve, je lui dis
un jour que Victor Hugo, en voulant mélanger la métaphysique à ses
vers, les couvrait parfois de ridicule. 'C'est peut-être vrai?' me
dit-il, et il se mit à déclamer:

Que fait Sennacherib Roi plus grand que le sort?
Le roi Sennacherib fait ceci qu'il est mort.

Cela dit, Paul s'appliqua à me traduire longuement son admiration
pour Hugo. Mais comment rapporter ses paroles?" 34

This conver-
sation took place in 1890, a time when Valéry was already well ac-
quainted with the work of Poe, Baudelaire, and Mallarmé, yet he did
not fail to defend Victor Hugo against the attacks of his friend. In
1935 Valéry still wrote: "Hugo nous apparaît aujourd'hui un des plus
grands astres du ciel littéraire, un Saturne, ou un Jupiter du système
du monde de l'esprit." Further on in the same essay he states:
"Hugo pourtant demeure et s'impose toujours. Mon expérience in-
variable me le prouve: toutes les fois qu'il m'arrive--à moi, que fus
tant séduit, il y a bien quarante-cinq ans, aux prestiges des enchanteurs
de cette époque, --toutes les fois qu'il m'arrive d'ouvrir un volume de
Hugo, j'y trouve toujours en quelque pages feuilletées tout ce qu'il faut
pour demeurer saisi d'admiration." It is necessary to mention that
Valéry's admiration for Hugo was of a different nature in 1884 than in
1935. The very young Valéry was literally "seduced" by the romantic
elements in the works of Hugo, as witnessed by his poems or by the
following statement: "Je passais et repassais de l'atroce Bug-Jargal
et de l'épouvantable Han d'Islande au vieux Paris, au Pont-Neuf, neuf
encore." In 1890 and certainly in 1935, he admired above all
Hugo's mastery of the language and his great mastery of form: "Pas
une erreur de forme... la Pensée devient en lui le moyen et non la fin
de l'expression. Souvent le développement d'un poème est visiblement
chez lui la déduction d'un merveilleux accident de langage qui a surgi
dans son esprit."
Nevertheless, Hugo's "influence" on the development of Valéry's thought was, as far as all his testimonies are concerned, very negligible. Hugo constituted what Mondor calls his "stage romantique," and if he continued to admire the great poet, it was the craftsman, the "maître du verbe" rather than the thinker, which he cherished in Hugo.

Valéry's "stage romantique" was constituted entirely of the works of Victor Hugo, for according to his own statements he never read Lamartine or Musset. This early choice already established his future literary preferences. "L'amateur de Musset s'affirme et l'abandonne pour Verlaine. Tel, nourri précocement de Hugo, se dédie tout entier à Mallarmé." Valéry chose the second of these literary roads.

The year 1884 not only marked the beginning of Valéry's poetic activity, but also the move of the family from Sète to Montpellier. In October 1884 Valéry entered the lycée of Montpellier, where he met his first important friend: Gustave Fourment. A letter by Fourment recalls this first meeting in the following words: "C'est donc en troisième que j'eus le bonheur de te rencontrer. Je te vois encore encapuchonné pendant l'hiver, regardant de-ci de-là, vaguement, paresseusement, assistant (peut-être) à la ruine de tes illusions, de
tes esperances, de tes ambitions de lycéen de 13 ans. Tu fus mon camarade, je ne fus que ton camarade et l'année se passa..." It is obvious from this letter that young Valéry preferred to daydream rather than to pay close attention to the masters; the atmosphere of the lycée seemed tedious and boring to him. Much later he described his professors as "des maîtres qui régnaienl par la terreur. Ils avaient des Lettres une conception caporale. La stupidité et l'insensibilité semblaient inscrites au programme." Bored by the program at school, he pursued his reading, perhaps even under the guidance of Fourment, who was two years his senior. Fourment was between 1887 and 1889 the most important critic of Valéry's early poems.

Some uncertainty as to the exact literary preferences of Valéry during the latter part of 1884 and 1885 exists. Madame Rouart-Valéry states that in the last two months of 1884, Valéry discovered Gautier, Baudelaire, Le Dictionnaire d'Architecture by Viollet le Duc, and the Grammaire de l'Ornement by Owen Jones. Mondor on the contrary does not believe Valéry read these works until the latter part of 1885. Valéry himself neither stated the year in which he first discovered Gautier, nor did he mention how he happened to have read his works. "Hugo fut détrôné bientôt par Gautier dont l'astre lui-même pâlit aux chauds rayons du Flaubert d'or et de pourpre." Mondor contends that the fifteen year old Valéry not only admired the above mentioned
works but also the poetry of the Parnasse school. In order to pursue his reading in 1884-1885, Valéry could have had at his disposal in Montpellier: L'Anthologie des Poètes Français du XIX ème Siècle, Le Parnasse Contemporain, and the Revue des Deux Mondes, which published a number of sonnets by Heredia: "Le Réveil d'un Dieu," "Andromède au Monstre," "Persée et Andromède," "Le Ravissement d'Andromède," "Le Cydnus," "Soir de Bataille," "Antoine et Cléopâtre," "L'Exilée," and "Les Conquérants." The sonnets which appeared in the May 15th issue were cut out by Valéry and pasted into the little black notebook dated 1888. Yet these three sonnets, whose common title is "Persée et Andromède" do not appear together in the notebook. The last of the three, "Le Ravissement d'Andromède" appears with a whole group of Heredia's sonnets; none of which are in that issue of La Revue des Deux Mondes, while the first two, "Andromède au Monstre" and "Persée et Andromède," appear much later in the notebook. The question arises: if Valéry in 1885 already had seen a copy of Le Parnasse Contemporain and of the Anthologie, why did he discover Mallarmé only after the Parnassians and Gautier? Did he have to read these authors in order to appreciate Mallarmé? Or did he simply obtain the poems of Gautier and the Parnassian poets from another source? The latter conjecture seems the most reasonable. All we can say with any degree of certainty is that from the latter part of 1884 to the
early part of 1887 Valéry read Gautier, the Parnassians, Flaubert,
one of Hugo's prose works, Viollet le Duc, and Owen Jones.

What works of Gautier did Valéry read? This question can not be answered specifically, for the poems written between the latter part of 1884 and 1886 are not available. Mondor gives a few titles of poems from the same notebook, which contains those first poems of the early part of 1884: "Atticisme," "Hallali," "Le Clavecin," "Bonheur de la vie champêtre," "Antipessimisme," "Danse Macabre," "Cadavres," "La mort de Roland," "La Rose," "Le Ciel est gris je veux mourir," "Les Vieilles," "O rose je te cueille," and "La chanson du soudard."

It is impossible to detect a source or sources from these titles. According to Mondor the dominant images of these poems are those of death, old age, Satan, and cadavres, which would indicate a certain romantic influence, possibly also echoes of Baudelaire. However, in the few lines quoted by Mondor, one could also detect the influence of Gautier's La Comédie de la Mort in the choice of the octosyllabic rhythm and perhaps also in the plastic quality of these lines:

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Et tous ces membres décharnés
Et tous ces crânes dénudés
Tout rongés et déchiquetés
Roulent comme roulent les dés
Quand on retourne les cornets
Et Dieu dans ces tas d'osselets
Reconnaît ses prédestinés
Et Satan prendra ses damnés.
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Yet the only concrete evidence we have of any work by Gautier that
Valéry read is a letter to Fourment, dated September 1887, in which he enumerates the books he kept beside his bed, among which is Mademoiselle de Maupin. In another letter to Fourment dated the 7th of August 1888, he mentioned having read Belle Jenny but did not comment as to its merits. Consequently one can only assume that Valéry read the poetry of Gautier.

As far as Leconte de Lisle is concerned, Valéry never totally admired the author of "Les Poèmes Barbares" although "Les Montreurs" remained one of his favorite poems. In October 1890 he wrote to Pierre Louÿs: "J'ai lu ces temps-ci assez de Leconte de Lisle! et j'ose remarquer, au sujet de ces rutilants volumes que bien des poemès font longueur. Trop de poèmes indiens similaires, ou moyenâgeux ou antiques. Condensées en un seul reliquaire, les meilleures pièces de trois ou quatre recueils parus eussent formé un pur chef-d'oeuvre.... Autre comparaison: le morceau des P. Tragi-ques, la resurrection d'Adonis confronté avec le sonnet de Heredia sur le même sujet. Très beaux tous deux, mais j'aime mieux Heredia-Jugez." It is clear from this letter that Valéry preferred Heredia to Leconte de Lisle. Another letter to Pierre Louÿs dated the first of November 1890 contains the following statements:

Merci encore pour votre très originale théorie sur L. de Lisle. Croyez-vous cependant que celui qui a écrit ces vers ou se combinent si bellement un jeu de syllabes et une évocation de paysage:
Valéry appreciated the craftsman evident in Leconte de Lisle's poems, yet the poetry itself held no lasting interest for him. In 1927 Valéry said: "Comme je vous l'ai dit, je n'ai pas connu Leconte de Lisle en personne. En ce temps-là sa poésie, dont je n'étais pas du tout sans apprécier la valeur, n'était point cependant celle qui m'attirait."

As mentioned above, Valéry pasted a great number of Heredia's sonnets into his little black notebook of 1888. The titles as Mondor lists them are: "Comme un vol de gerfauts", "J'ai vu parfois", "Dans ce vallon sauvage", "Mieux qu'aucun maître...", "D'un vol silencieux le grand cheval ailé...", "Le Huchier de Nazareth", "Le Marbre brisé...", "Le Soleil sous la mer", "Le Réveil d'un Dieu". However, Mondor mentions no information obtained from the notebook concerning Valéry's opinion of Heredia or the date on which he might have discovered the poet's work. Valéry himself hardly mentions Heredia. There exists one letter dated December 21, 1890 and addressed to Pierre Louys in which Valéry writes: "J'ai envie de faire un sonnet
à Heredia dont le sujet serait celui-ci: Retour des conquistadors
de la vraie Poésie, on entend sur la mer les clairons victorieux,
voici les galères dont les voiles se détachent sur le soleil couchant,
voici à la proue le vainqueur J. M. de H. dont le nom sonore termi-
nerait glorieusement la pièce rimant avec irradia ou incendia."

This project was never realized. Both Mondor and Walzer make light
of the influence of the Parnasse on Valéry's early poems. Madame
Rouart-Valéry does not even mention Heredia by name in the list of
works read by Valéry between 1884 and 1886. There exist, neverthe-
less, two true imitations of the Parnasse: La Marche Impériale and
60
César. During the years 1884-1886, Valéry read and admired Hugo,
Gautier, and the Parnassians, but according to the definition of "in-
fluence" given above, these authors did not influence him.

Architecture, on the contrary, formed a definite basis for his
thought. How Valéry happened to become interested in architecture
and in the works of Viollet le Duc and Owen Jones is not known. Was
it his love of form, inspired by his early childhood in Sète? Was it
Notre Dame de Paris, or perhaps the poems of Gautier, or maybe his
visits to the Musée Fabre? According to the letter entitled Moi,
written to Pierre Louÿs in 1890, Valéry, before reading Baudelaire
and after having read Hugo, Gautier, and Flaubert, "dessinait, colorait,
interrogeait les objets, cherchant la multiple lumière. Il étudiait les
arts savants du M. Age, de Byzance et quelque peu de la Grece."

Although Madame Rouart-Valéry names Viollet le Duc and Owen Jones among the authors read by young Valéry in 1884, I agree with Mondor who places the study of architecture in 1885-1886. During his second year in Montpellier, Valéry spent many hours at the Bibliothèque Fabre copying drawings and definitions of laws from the Dictionnaire. "L'architecture a eu une grande place dans les premières amours de mon esprit." Already in Montpellier, notebooks were filled with drawings and architectural motives, a habit which he continued throughout his life as witnessed by his notebooks of the later periods. There will be further occasion to discuss Valéry's ties to architecture, for his first published prose work, Paradoxe sur l'Architecte, deals with the theme of the architect as an artist. Architecture as a discipline never lost its interest for Valéry.

The readings discussed in the previous pages cover the years 1884 to 1886 inclusively. We know that Valéry during those three years read Hugo, Heredia, and even Gautier in 1887. More precise information is available for that year because of two reasons: his correspondence with Fourment begun in the summer of 1887; and two plays, an unfinished melodrama, and several poems preserved from that period.

In January, or possibly in February of 1887, the sixteen year old Valéry wrote two plays, Le Rêve de Morgan and Les Esclaves.
Mondor adds to these two plays the first act of a melodrama entitled 66 
Le Cabaret du Reître borgne and gives also a synopsis of Le 
Rêve de Morgan. This one act comedy has only two characters: an 
old woman and a young man, Morgan. This old woman has the magic 
power to change herself into a beautiful young maiden for one night. 
A young man arrives to seek refuge from the storm. It is Morgan. 
The witch changes herself into an enchanting maiden, and Morgan 
falls in love with her, but the cock crows at the very moment he 
slips the ring onto her finger, and the young maiden is instantaneously 67 
transformed into the ugly woman she really is. The inspiration 
behind this comedy is most likely Hugo. Les Esclaves is an ancient 
fantasy perhaps inspired by Salammbo. The unfinished melodrama, 
according to Mondor, could proceed from La Tour de Nesle, Le 68 
Courrier de Lyon, or even from Le roi s'amuse. Valéry resumed 
this dramatic activity only in 1931 with Amphion. 

On the 28th of July 1887, the sixteen year old Valéry success- 
fully passed the first part of his baccalaureat and was free to leave for 
70 Genoa. From Genoa he wrote his first letter to Fourment, dated 
August 28, 1887. It is evident from this letter, filled with commen- 
taries about the beautiful cathedral of Genoa, monuments, and museums 
which he visited, that he pursued his interest in architecture. The 
letter also discusses Valéry's objection to the Italian clergy whose
theatrical manners he condones not as a Catholic but rather as a man of taste. In the second letter written to Fourment from Genoa, he admits a sudden chauvinism and recalls their days spent in common in Montpellier. But the important matter of this letter is the list of books kept beside his bed: "Sur ma table je vois Mademoiselle de Maupin, Le Ventre de Paris (Zola) La Sorcière de Michelet, Copperfield de Dickens, M. Madame et Bebé, Etudes archeologiques etc."

Not one work of poetry is mentioned here, yet Valéry continued to write poetry.

The poems written in 1887 show a new source of inspiration—Baudelaire. Did he just discover Baudelaire in 1887? Where did he read the poetry of Baudelaire? According to Madame Rouart-Valéry, young Valéry had already read Baudelaire in 1884, that is at the same time as Gautier. Valéry himself is much less specific than that, he merely states that it was after Hugo and Gautier: "Enfin Baudelaire le conquit! Puis les Autres." Mondor neither gives the date at which Valéry could have discovered Baudelaire nor the works he could have read. We know, however, that in the famous little black notebook, under an entry dated 1890, Valéry mentions Les Fleurs du Mal, Poèmes en Prose, and Art Romantique. Yet since the first influence of Baudelaire can be seen in the poems of 1887, it can only be said that Valéry discovered Baudelaire between 1884 and 1887. In my opinion
it was sometime in 1886, after the Parnassians and Gautier and before Huysmans.

Among those poems which have been found from the year 1887 are "Testament Venitien," "La Voix des Choses," and more important Solitude:

Loin du monde, je vis tout seul comme un ermite
Enfermé dans mon coeur mieux que dans un tombeau
Je raffine mon goût du Bizarre et du Beau
Dans la sérénité d'un Rêve sans limite.

Car mon esprit, avec un Art toujours nouveau,
Sait s'illusionner—quand un désir l'irrite.
L'hallucination merveilleuse l'habite,
Et je jouis sans fin de mon propre Cerveau...

Je meprisa les sens, les vices, et la Femme,
Moi qui puis évoquer dans le fond de mon âme
La Lumière...le Son, la Multiple Beauté!

Moi qui puis combiner des Voluptés étranges
Moi dont le Rêve peut fuir dans l'Immensité
Plus haut que les Vautours, les Astres et les Anges!... 78

Under the influence of the Decadents, the "gout du Bizarre et du Beau"
as well as the disdain for "les sens, les vices et la Femme" became more and more evident in the poetry of 1888 and 1889. Later in this work I shall examine several of the early poems of that period in which the women have a strange and otherworldly aspect. In spite of these lines suggesting the decadent movement, there are indications that Baudelaire was the real source for this sonnet. Such phrases as:

"Enfermé dans mon coeur mieux que dans un tombeau," "l'hallucination
merveilleuse," "la Multiple Beauté," as well as "les Voluptés étranges," speak of a direct knowledge of Baudelaire which the young poet combined with the Decadent's disdain for the senses. However, the line, "et je jouis sans fin de mon propre cerveau," foretells the Valéry of 1891-1892.

The sonnet Pessimisme d'une Heure also shows its Baudelairian source:

Il est une douleur, sans nom, sans but, sans cause,
Qui vient je ne sais d'ou, je ne sais trop pourquoi
Aux heures sans travail, sans désir et sans foi
Où le dégoût amer enfielle toute chose.

Rien ne nous fait penser, rien ne nous intéresse,
On a l'esprit fixé sur un maudit point noir,
Tout est sombre: dedans, dehors, le Jour, le Soir
C'est un effondrement dans un puits de tristesse.

C'est surtout vers la nuit, quand s'allume la lampe,
Cet ennui fond sur nous, aussi prompt qu'un vautour;
Le découragement nous guette au coin du Jour
Quand s'élève du sol l'obscurité qui rampe.

Ce n'est pas celui-là qui mène à la rivière!
C'est un mauvais moment à passer, voilà tout;
Il nous fait ressentir la joie, ce dégoût,
Comme l'obscurité fait aimer la lumière... 81

The general atmosphere recalls that of Baudelaire: "douleur sans nom," "le dégoût amer qui enfielle toute chose," "le puits de tristesse," "cet ennui qui fond sur nous," "un vautour." Nevertheless an optimistic note appears in the last stanza, which resumes the theme suggested by the title and assures us that this is but "un mauvais
moment à passer." Valéry, even at that age or when imitating a master, was never a poet of despair and bitterness. The poem thus ends on an optimistic note, typical of the Valéry who loves life, and who knows that life and its forces will win in the end: "Le vent se lève!... Il faut tenter de vivre!"

At this point it is necessary to say a few words about Valéry's family and their attitude toward the rather unconventional approach which the young Valéry displayed toward his studies. His parents and, after the death of his father in 1887, his brother Jules always allowed him to pursue his interests as he saw fit and never plagued him to find a "suitable occupation in life." As evidence of this fact, Mondor quotes a letter written by Jules Valéry in 1933 to Albert Thibaudet.

En effet, mon frère a donné, des sa première enfance, de telles preuves d'une vivacité d'esprit et d'une intelligence rares que nos parents, et plus encore, moi-même, son aîné de huit années, nous avons toujours cru que, quoi qu'il fut amené à faire, il était appelé à se distinguer.

Voilà pourquoi, lorsque la mort prématurée de notre père fit de moi un jeune chef de famille, je laissai Paul, ayant une certaine confiance dans son bon sens, se diriger comme il l'entendait. 82

The liberty which he enjoyed at home gave him the opportunity to develop his faculties and to pursue the study of those disciplines which interested him.

In conclusion it should be said that these direct imitations are not really important in Valéry's intellectual development, or in the mod-
ération de son esprit. Of much greater importance was first his encounter with the sea and the sun, and then his discovery of the aesthetic theories of Edgar Allan Poe. Mondor, Walzer, and Bémol agree that it was through Baudelaire's translation that he met his first literary master. Valéry himself affirms this when he states:
"j'en arrivais à Flaubert et à Baudelaire, je découvris alors le style l'art abstrait de l'écriture. Ed. Poe."

Like Baudelaire, and Mallarmé before him, Valéry discovered in Poe a true kinship of minds. Edgar Allan Poe attracted Valéry not with his poetry but rather with his theories about poetry. Since the influence of the American on the Frenchman was of a different nature than that influence exercised by his fellow countrymen, I shall devote a separate chapter to the relation of Valéry and Poe. In the third chapter I shall then treat the influence on Valéry of the French poets: the Decadents, the Symbolists and finally Mallarmé, as seen in his poems of 1888 to 1890. For in those early years, his theories of poetry, which he had found formulated by Poe and which he had been unconsciously seeking (as witnessed by his rejection of Musset and Lamartine), were advanced far beyond his actual poetic practice. It was the work of Mallarmé which combined in Valéry the rigorous theories of Poe with a perfect control of language and which showed him the possibility of such a union, as well as the despair of ever achieving it.
Valéry and Poe

As previously stated, Valéry read Edgar Allan Poe in the Baudelaire translation. Yet nowhere did he specify that he wished to study the American poet because Baudelaire admired him so much.

Valéry could have become interested in Poe through an article published by the Revue des Deux Mondes, May 1, 1886. In this article Th. Bentzon reviewed a book by E. C. Stedman entitled Poets of America. Bentzon mentioned the short stories, poems, and aesthetic writings of Poe and considered Baudelaire the best translator of the American's prose in France. If Valéry read this article, which is very possible, he might have turned, out of curiosity, to the Baudelaire translation of Poe.

It is of course also possible that Fourment, Blavet, Vincent, or Dugrip mentioned Poe's work and its importance to Valéry. It can thus not be clearly affirmed if Valéry's interest in Poe stems from his admiration of Baudelaire or from another source.

On the other hand, it is quite clear that as a young man, Valéry did read Poe in the Baudelaire translation and not in the original English. Mme Julien Cain is the only critic who believes that, at an early age, he already read Poe in English. She maintains that before leaving the lycée in 1888, he discovered the Histoires Extraordinaires and its preface based largely on Poe's Poetic Principle. She goes on
to say that Valéry went shortly thereafter to England, where he bought
2
Poe's Works in English. Mme Cain, however, does not give the
date of that particular visit to England. Mme Rouart-Valéry reports
only one more visit after 1878 by Valéry to England and that in 1896.
3
She does not mention the purchase of Poe's books. Valéry himself
states nowhere that he purchased Poe's works in England. No concrete
evidence exists to support Mme Cain's statement that Valéry read Poe
4
in English.

During a personal interview, Mme Valéry assured me that Paul
Valéry had read Poe in Baudelaire's translation. Further substantia-
tion for this contention exists in the little black notebook which contains
a page listing a number of books, among which appear: Traduction de
Poe, 10; Eureka, 3, 50; Histoires Extraordinaires, C. L.; Nouvelles
5
Histoires Extraordinaires, 3. 5. (The number which appears behind
the titles indicates the price, and the initials, the editor. Calmann-
Levy.) It is not clear if the first book mentioned is Histoires Grotesques
et Sérieuses, which contained the "Philosophy of Composition," or
Arthur Gordon Pym. These are the only two books by Poe missing
from the list. Although the entry is undated, Mondor believes it was
6
written in 1890. This page of the notebook indicates that Valéry first
read Poe in Baudelaire's translation.

Although we cannot be certain when Valéry first read Poe, it was
certainly before the end of 1889. Agnes Mackay states that it was in
July 1889, prior to his military service and his meeting with Pierre Louys. Yet Miss Mackay makes no mention of the source of her information. Berne-Jouffroy affirms that Valéry read Poe before August 1889. This would mean that he read Poe before Huysmans and roughly at the same time as Mallarmé.

Valéry himself first mentioned Poe in the little black notebook. Mondor has shown throughout his examination of the little black notebook, which is dated 1888, that Valéry added notes to it as late as 1890, without ever giving the date of his subsequent entries. He implies that the following page was written late in the year 1889. This page on Poe appears between one on Spinoza and one on Leibniz. I shall quote it here in its entirety:

L'étendue d'un poème doit se trouver en rapport mathématique avec l'élévation ou excitation qu'il comporte: quantité d'effet.

Longueur une centaine de vers.
Le ton de la plus haute manifestation du beau est la tristesse.
Méditant tous les effets... Le mot effet étant pris dans le sens scénique.
Le refrain: monotonie du son, évolution de la pensée.

Deux choses sont éternellement requises: a) une certaine quantité de complexité ou de combinaison; b) une certaine quantité d'esprit suggestif: un courant souterrain de pensée non visible, indéfini.

...Le lecteur commence de loin à considérer le corbeau comme emblématique mais ce n'est que juste au dernier vers de la dernière st ance qu'il lui est permis de voir distinctement l'intention de faire du corbeau le symbole du souvenir funèbre et éternel.
These few lines are obviously a summary of Baudelaire's translation of *The Philosophy of Composition*. The eighteen year old Valéry did not adopt all the ideas of Poe's essay; he seemed to know exactly what he was looking for in the aesthetic theories of the American poet. There are several points which he did not mention: 1) the necessity of originality; 2) the contention that Beauty is "the sole legitimate province of the poem;" 3) the premise that "the death of a beautiful woman is the most poetical topic;" 4) the detailed discussion of "The Raven." Young Valéry extracted from this essay only the most general concepts and ones which he could apply to his own work.

The dominant idea which he selected is that the poet, through a thorough knowledge of the reader's psychology and by a conscious approach to his work, can achieve a certain effect on the reader. "L'étendue d'un poème doit se trouver en rapport mathématique avec l'élévation ou excitation qu'il comporte: quantité d'effet." The poet knows that the length of the poem bears a mathematical relation to the intensity of the effect it can produce on the reader. Basing his decision on a knowledge of the reader's psychology, the poet knows that the poem must be short in order to produce its maximum effect. "Longueur une centaine de vers."

Valéry summarized Poe's discussion of Beauty in one sentence: "Le ton de la plus haute manifestation du beau est la tristesse." He
substituted the word "tristesse" for "mélancolie" used by Baudelaire in translating Poe's word "melancholy." The reason for this change is not apparent; it could perhaps be assumed that the word "mélancolie" recalled for young Valéry the poetry of Lamartine or Musset.

Valéry's summary resumes on the last page of Poe's essay:

"Deux choses sont éternellement requises: a) une certaine quantité de complexité ou de combinaison; b) une certaine quantité d'esprit suggestif: un courant souterrain de pensée non visible, indefini." Valéry divided the sentence into a) and b); moreover, he used the word "quantité" in both parts of the sentence, whereas Baudelaire only used it in the latter part. I shall quote Poe's original sentence and Baudelaire's translation here. Poe: "Two things are invariably required--first, some amount of complexity, or more properly, adaptation; and, secondly, some amount of suggestiveness--some undercurrent, however, indefinite, or meaning." (Italics mine.) Baudelaire:

"Deux choses sont éternellement requises: l'une, une certaine somme de complexité, ou, plus proprement, de combinaison; l'autre, une certaine quantité d'esprit suggestif, quelque chose, comme un courant souterrain de pensée non visible, indefini." (Italics mine.)

Why did Valéry change the word somme to quantité? Is it possible that he found the usage of "somme" in this context rather poor, for
mathematically speaking quantité is a better choice here. The last sentence of Valéry's summary is an almost direct copy of Baudelaire's whose sentence reads: "Le lecteur commence dès lors à considérer le Corbeau comme emblématique;--mais ce n'est que juste au dernier vers la dernière strophe qu'il lui est permis de voir distinctement l'intention de faire du Corbeau le symbole du Souvenir funèbre et éternel." These comparisons substantiate Mme Valéry's statement and my contention that Valéry read Poe in the Baudelaire translation.

This summary of Poe's views is Valéry's first notation of a theory of poetry. He had not found it expressed in the work of Hugo, Gautier, the Parnassiens, nor in that of Baudelaire. It expressed his own ideas, which he had not yet been able to formulate himself. "Mais trois ou quatre phrases d'Edgar Poe me donnerent la sensation capitale qui éveilla l'être de désir, le démon qui me posséda."

A few months after these notes were written, Valéry wrote to the Courrier Libre, a periodical which took pride in publishing the work of little-known, young poets. On October 1, 1889, he wrote the following letter to Karl Boës, editor of the journal:

Voici quelques vers commis en province par un provincial loin du grand brasier de Paris.

J'ignore quel est le vent qui souffle là-haut si les jeunes sont symbolistes, analystes ou néo-chrétiens et je n'ai pas
cherche à satisfaire un programme d'école. Je suis partisan d'un poème court et concentré, une brève évocation close par un vers sonore et plein. Je chéris, en poésie comme en prose, les théories si profondes et si perfidement savantes d'Edgar Poe, je crois à la toute puissance du rythme (sic) et surtout de l'épithète suggestive. Je préfère Mallarmé à Verlaine et Joris Karl à tous les autres. Et quand je fais des vers c'est ma fantaisie que je suis. 13

This letter shows us an eighteen year old poet who refused to belong to any school of poetry and who stated his poetic theories with a frankness found only in the young. It is, of course, evident that these theories still proceed from Poe, which Valéry underlined rather than hid. He referred to Poe's ideas as "perfidement savantes," two words which need to be emphasized, for "savante" does not only imply erudite, but rather scientific. "Scientific" carries with it the connotation of something cold and rational, and it puts a completely new emphasis on poetry. The accent is placed on the mind rather than on the emotions as was the case for Romantic poetry. But what then does the sentence "quand je fais des vers c'est ma fantaisie que je suis" mean? The word "fantaisie" appears to be in direct contradiction with the scientific theories of poetry. But this word becomes clear when we look at the poem which Valéry attached to the letter, and when we consider that he preferred Joris Karl Huysmans to all others. The poem, "Élévation à La Lune," shows that Valéry still relied upon his imagination, rather than upon his theories, for his actual work:
**Élévation de la Lune**

L'ombre venait, les fleurs s'ouvraient, rêvait mon Ame,
Et le vent endormi taisait son hurlement,
La Nuit tombait, la Nuit douce comme une femme,
Subtile et violette épiscopalement!

Les Etoiles semblaient des cierges funéraires
Comme dans une église allumée dans les soirs;
Et semant des parfums, les lys Thuriféraires
Balançaient doucement leurs frêles encensoirs.

Une prière en moi montait ainsi qu'une onde
Et dans l'immensité bleuissante et profonde
Les astres recueillis baissaient leurs chastes yeux!...

Alors, Elle apparut! hostie immense et blonde
Puis elle étincela, se détachant du Monde
Car d'invisibles doigts l'élevaient vers les Cieux!... 16

This sonnet indicates that Valéry applied Poe's theories without trying to imitate his poetry. The sonnet was the form preferred by the Parnassians, Baudelaire, and Mallarmé. This in turn indicates that Valéry obtained his practical inspiration from the French poets, while he derived his theoretical inspiration from Poe.

Moreover, this sonnet neither contains the "épithètes suggestifs" nor the "vers sonore" advocated in the letter. Adjectives like: "subtile, violette, funéraires, profonde, chastes, and bleuissante" have very little suggestive or musical power; they give the impression of having been read, either in the writings of Huysmans or those of Villiers de L'Isle Adam. It is evident from this letter and the poem.
which it included, that in 1889, Valéry's theories of poetry were advanced far beyond his actual ability to write poetry. Between his ideas about poetry and his poetry itself, there existed a divergence which partially explains his despair with literature two years later.

Although Valéry knew Poe through the translation of Baudelaire, he was not interested in the ostracised victim of society whom Baudelaire found in Poe. Valéry distinguished from the very beginning the man from his work. He did not speak of Poe the man, but of his theories. As an eighteen year old boy, eager for method and order, he found in the aesthetic writings of Poe not only a theory of poetry, but also the possibility of taking as an object of study his own mental functioning. In 1889 the young author was only concerned with the genesis of poetry, which represents an isolated case in the mental functioning; after 1892, he enlarged the theory to include the genesis of thought itself, which represents the continuous activity of the mind. Valéry adopted Poe to his own needs, which indicates that Poe's influence was an active choice on the part of the young author.

In 1889 he began to think seriously about a methodology (Curtius' usage) of creation. In November of that year, one month after the first letter to Karl Boës, Valéry sent an article, "Sur la Technique Littéraire" to the Courrier Libre. This article is the first formal
expression of his aesthetic ideas, based upon his reading of Poe's

**Philosophy of Composition.**

The following letter accompanied the article: "Je prends
cette fois la liberté de vous envoyer un petit article. **Une causerie**
littéraire—sur divers procédés techniques—pensant que cela peut
intéresser vos lecteurs qui sont tous plus ou moins auteurs... Pourvu
que la morceau ne vous paraîsse pas trop gros!" The words
"Procédés techniques" recall a classical poetics, rather than the
words of a young poet of 1889. They strike us as being closer to
Boileau's **Art Poétique** than to Verlaine's. Yet we shall see presently
that Valéry gives still another meaning to the word "technique." It
is apparent from this article that Valéry had established his own
point of view on literary matters, prior to his meeting with Pierre
Louÿs and André Gide.

The title of the article **Sur la Technique Littéraire** calls for
comment. "Technic," as derived from the Greek technicos, is defined
by Littre as: "art que l'on rattache au Sanskrit tvaḥṣ, "carpenter;" or
as, "l'ensemble des procédés d'un art, d'une fabrication," as
"mechanical skill in Art." This definition excludes creation under
the influence of inspiration. It implies the exact opposite of inspira-
tion—a conscious, voluntary control by the artist of his medium, in
this case language.
Young Valéry's confidence in technique is evident throughout the article, which begins in the following manner: "La littérature est l'art de se jouer de l'âme des autres. C'est avec cette brutalité scientifique que notre époque a vu poser le problème de l'esthétique du Verbe, c'est-à-dire le problème de la Forme." The young iconoclast wanted to tear away the veil which hides poetic creation. The poet-vates became the poet-technician. In his youthful enthusiasm he took pleasure in "shocking" his readers with slightly cynical sentences and with the juxtaposition of poetry and science. "Technique" implies then a scientific approach to poetry on the part of the poet. He is no longer inspired, but skilled. Seen as a type of demiurge, the poet has an unlimited power over his reader, which he must exploit and use in the same manner as a musician uses musical elements to obtain a certain reaction.

This first article deals with the role of a new type of poet rather than a new kind of poetry. Poe's Philosophy of Composition revealed to Valéry the workings of another mind, those of a poet during the process of creation. The "inspired" poet as the Greeks conceived him exists no longer; the new poet is double in nature, "c'est un froid savant, presque un algebriste, au service d'un rêveur affine." Total inspiration is clearly dismissed. "La Muse Association-des-Idees," a force outside of the poet, is incapable of constructing a
poem. Poetry is created by the "froid algébriste" who weighs each word, each sensation which may reach the poet through the senses of his body. "...Tout ce qu'il aura imaginé, senti, songé, échafaudé, passera au crible, sera pesé, épuré, mis à la forme et condensé le plus possible pour gagner en force ce qu'il sacrifie en longueur." The technician will put into a concise form what the "rêveur affiné" has imagined and felt.

What poetic form can be more concise, more rigorously constructed than the sonnet? Young Valéry compared the sonnet to an altar: "Nous ne pouvons mieux le comparer qu'aux degrés d'un autel magnifique, aux marches de porphyre que domine le Tabernacle. L'ornement, les cierges, les orfévreries, les fumées d'encens--tout s'élanço, tout est disposé pour fixer l'attention sur l'ostensor--sur le dernier vers!"

As a young man of his time, Valéry was somewhat of an aesthete. The influence of the theory of "art for art's sake" is present in Valéry's work before 1891. Art has become almost a religion for the eighteen year old poet. "Une génération formée par le culte du beau! Ceci n'est pas ironie. Je note un fait--que je vois: un moment dont j'ai fait partie. Le rôle joué par l'idée vague et intense de "Beauté" sur les jeunes gens nés de '70 à '80 (et d'un certain 'milieu) est à noter. Il y a eu un moment où ce qu'on est convenu d'appeler Beau, Art, etc. a failli devenir un culte à mille sectes." This cult of
beauty will be discussed later; but it should be borne in mind that Valéry included all his ideas on poetry in this first article.

The article continues: "Edgar Allan Poe, mathematicien, philosophe et grand écrivain, dans son curieux opuscule La Génèse d'un poème—the philosophy of composition—démonstre avec nettete le mécanisme de la gestation poétique, telle qu'il la pratique et qu'il l'entend." Why does he refer to Poe by these three titles?

Mathématicien: Poe applied the same cold and rational reasoning to literary creation, as the mathematician, to the solution of an equation. Philosophe: the first page of the little black notebook contains a laconic definition of philosophy which reads as follows:

"connaître la raison des choses, leur premier principe, l'homme, 25
sa nature son origine, sa destinée." Transposing this definition to Poe, we can see that Valéry referred to him as "philosophe" because of his desire to know the nature, origin, and destiny of his poetic creation. Grand écrivain: Poe has succeeded in creating "The Raven" according to his technique. The rest of Valéry's article is concerned with "The Raven," a poem constructed according to an a posteriori technique.

As Ince remarks, a certain ambiguity prevails in this article. At the beginning Valéry seemed to envisage a poet trying to express, through perfect technique, a certain sensation which he had felt or
experienced. In the last part of the article, he described merely a craftsman who creates a work of art primarily for the purpose of producing an effect on the audience. The poet no longer seeks to find the perfect form for an inner experience, but a form which he knows will impress the reader. "C'est une technique entièrement a posteriori, établie sur la psychologie de l'auditeur, sur la connaissance des diverses notes qu'il s'agit de faire résonner dans l'âme d'autrui." What then was young Valéry's final opinion on this matter? Does the poet have to express something of himself in a perfect form? Does he have to work by an a posteriori technique, considering only the psychology of the reader? Or does he have to do both? In 1889 Valéry's poetic experience was too limited to answer these questions.

However, this article contains several points which constitute the permanent basis of Valéry's thought: 1) the new poet is a technician who conquers his art by perfect control of language; 2) this technician, by definition, cannot believe in total inspiration, and denies its existence entirely; 3) the work is created mindful of the reader on whom it will produce an effect calculated by the technician in advance; 4) the poet, during creation, must make use of the same logical processes, rigorous and cold, as the scientist. The word algébriste indicates that Valéry was interested in the workings of the mind, rather than
in the result; 5) the distinction between the poet, his work, and
the reader is outlined in the discussion of the effects that the poem
will have on the reader. In showing his position in 1889, a chart,
based on one that Wimsatt employs, is helpful:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poet</th>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Audience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Genèse}</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Total Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technician</td>
<td>Technique</td>
<td>Conventional Response</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of course Valéry modified some of these points during his maturity,
for his thought continued to revolve around them.

In November 1889, Valéry began his military service, a life in
which he found little pleasure. At the end of 1889, he wrote to Albert
Dugrip: "Voilà que j'ai déjà un mois d'esclavage, un mois de
douloureux sacrifice à la Patrie." During the year of his military
service he continued to read: Huysmans, Mallarmé, Les Goncourt,
Flaubert, and to write poetry. In fact, Madame Rouart-Valéry reports
that he wrote more than eighty poems during that one year.

In the early months of 1889, Valéry made a new friend, Pierre
Féline, who introduced him to two new disciplines: mathematics and
music through Wagner. In "La Technique Littéraire," Valéry had
already qualified the poet as a "froid savant" "presque un algébriste"
a vocabulary which indicates his interest in mathematics as a method
transferrable to poetry. "Les mathématiques" wrote Féline in 1945, "fournissaient à nos entretiens de la rue Urbain V les sujets les plus importants. Je me rejoyais de voir Paul prendre en affection les modes de pensée du géomètre. Sans pour cela repudier Mallarmé et Edgar Poe... Les spéculations du mathématicien le séduisirent dès leur abord. La théorie des fonctions fit sur ce poète de vingt ans une impression profonde. Plus tard, il s'intéressa vivement à la théorie des ensembles, et à celles des groupes de transformations. Les propriétés des ensembles sont plus dignes de l'esprit que ce qu'il transforme." Valéry's interest in two new disciplines bred within him certain grains of dissatisfaction with poetry, as witnessed in his letters to Pierre Louÿs during the year 1890-1891. Architecture, mathematics, and music became for Valéry disciplines founded on exact principles, destined to alter his approach to poetry and ultimately to language.

In May 1890 he met Pierre Louÿs who took Fourment's place in the confidence of Valéry. On the 30th of August 1890, Valéry wrote to Louÿs: "La littérature commence à m'agacer, j'entends par littérature la cuisine gargotière des rimeilleurs (quorum pars parva sum) et tout ce qui bafouille sur style, le rythme, l'art, etc., etc. Vous voyez que je suis bien bas! Oh! retrempez-moi un peu. À dire vrai je crois plus que jamais que je suis plusieurs!" This is a
rather curious letter, for on the one hand it consists of a mixture of decadent reflections on moonlit nights, lakes and vision—he even considered writing several "fantasmagories" inspired either by the decadent movement or by Flaubert's *Tentation de St. Antoine* to which he referred in the letter, but on the other hand we can detect the young man irritated by literature and impatient with its results. As Valéry himself said: "je me crois plus que jamais plusieurs." He was decidedly divided between that which attracted him emotionally, the moonlit nights and lakes, and that which attracted him intellectually, a rigorous discipline of the mind. Foreshadowing M. Teste, he wrote in September 1890 to Fourment: "Je ne lis plus rien. Je rumine mon fond."

The question as to whether Valéry was dissatisfied with literature in general, or only with his own writings, must be asked. An answer can be obtained from his letters written during the year 1890-1891.

In October 1890 the young poet did not hesitate to write to Mallarmé the following letter in which he underlined their common admiration for Poe. "Pour se faire en quelques mots connaître, il (Valéry) doit affirmer qu'il préfère les poèmes courts, concentrés pour un éclat final, où les rythmes sont comme les marches marmoréennes de l'autel que couronne le dernier vers! non qu'il
puisse se vanter d'avoir réalisé cet idéal! Mais c'est qu'il est
profondément pénétré des doctrines savantes du grand Edgar
Allan Poe—peut-être le plus subtil artiste de ce siècle.” 34
Young Valéry wanted to believe in the power of literature and in the method
which he found in Poe’s work. He used virtually the same words as
in the "Technique Littéraire," yet his tone is less confident, since
he did not believe he had attained his ideal.

On the 19th of January he wrote to André Gide: "Mais quand
ferai-je, Moi? je vois toujours devant mes yeux le mince livret
que vous savez, une demi-douzaine de poèmes, Narcisse Tempus,
etc. Cela m'obsède et le découragement rôde toujours autour de
moi. C'est difficile le vers, la page de chair que l'on s'arrache,
sans hurler comme Musset, mais secrète et inouïe, avec des
35 sourires... ouverts sur la tristesse." This letter reveals the
discouragement which he experienced with respect to his own work.
He found it extremely difficult to make language yield what he ex-
pected of it—an unalterable relationship between words.

Another letter to Mallarmé in April 1891 seems to be more
optimistic and reaffirms his faith in the theories of Poe: "Une
dévotion toute particulière à Edgar Poe me conduit alors à donner
pour royaume au poète, l'analogie. Il précise l'écho mystérieux
des choses, et leur secrète harmonie, aussi réelle, aussi certaine
qu'un rapport mathématique à tous esprits artistes, c'est-à-dire, et comme il sied, idéalistes violents..." He considered analogy as the true domain of poetry. Valéry wished his analogy to be comparable to a mathematical relation. If the poem aims at total independence from the world of experience, this analogy can only be an analogy of form, such as used in a number system.

In August 1891 Gide received a very pessimistic letter from Valéry:

Tout est faux! La dissonance (sic) me creve les oreilles de l'entendement. La langue est pauvre comme une veuve. La nature, laide comme si un médiocre l'avait faite. L'autre monde n'existe pas car nulle âme n'en reviendrait... Or, rien ne se crée... Les païens stupides. Les chrétiens laids à faire peur; le Nirvana: paradis des bêtes. Hamlet serait bien s'il n'y avait pas de drame autour. Le mystère n'existe pas, helas! Poe est le seul... Encore a-t-il quelques fausses notes. Barrès est à lui retourner ses poches et à le ligoter. Les savants empestent le parvenu. Les causes, les effets n'existent pas! Nous les creons, Messieurs! alors qu'est-ce que cela prouve?

Le style? Aller le voir fabriquer, pour vomir! Artistes, vous serez fous! Bourgeois, vous êtes bêtes... Qui a fait l'univers? C'est moi! Dieu est un atome qui s'irradie. Dieu est principe. Dieu est le Bien...

His doubts about language and literature are quite violent here. Valéry was disappointed with his own work as well as with the insincerity of the work of others. It was neither entirely his own work nor literature in general which dissatisfied him, but rather a combination of both. Literature no longer satisfied the exigencies of his mind for extreme rigor.
In November 1891 Valéry wrote a letter to Gide in which he underlined his admiration for Poe, in spite of his aversion to literature as expressed a few months earlier. "Poe m'a fait sien. Je l'ai lu tous les jours, et tous les jours il a grandii. Je le trouve aujourd'hui colossal; et si ce n'est pas, lui, son type au moins. Mais je crois que c'est un des rares qui a pleinement réalisé son type." What exactly does Valéry continue to read by Poe? Valéry never discussed the work of the American poet; he talked about Poe as if he were a concept in itself. We know, however, that in 1890 he owned the following works by Poe: Une traduction de Poe, Les Histoires Extraordinaires, Nouvelles Histoires Extraordinaires, Eureka, and Mallarmé's translation of Poe's poems. Is it possible that Valéry read and reread the stories of Poe? This seems hardly credible, for his letters mention only "Ligeia" and "Morella" once. His notebook of 1894 mentions Dupin, so we know that he read Poe's stories, but it seems hardly possible that he found a lasting interest in these stories.

However, "The Domain of Arnheim" contains a sentence which had a great influence on Valéry in 1890 as witnessed by the two notations which appear in the Cahiers XXII and XXIII: "Ego: Je ne sais plus en quel lieu, Je ne sais plus dans lequel de ses ouvrages Poe dit que l'homme est loin d'avoir réalisé en aucun genre, la perfection
qu'il pourrait atteindre etc. (peut-être Arnheim) Mais cette parole a eu la plus grande "influence" sur moi et celle-ci de Baudelaire parlant du même Poe: 'Ce merveilleux cerveau toujours en éveil' ceci agit comme un appel de cor un signal qui excitait tout mon intellect comme plus tard le motif de Siegfried.'

Baudelaire's sentence to which Valéry refers reads as follows:

"Son étonnant cerveau incessamment en éveil."

Cahier XXIII contains a note on the same subject:

Ego: Arnheim-Poe 13/2/40

Dans cette fantaisie de Poe, se trouve l'une des phrases qui ont eu tant d'influence—thème sur moi de 19 ans.

Phrase sur les possibilités de perfection. Elle dit que l'homme est fort loin d'avoir atteint ce qu'il pourrait etc.

l'idée de perfection m'a possédé
Elle s'est modifiée peu après—changée en volonté de pouvoir ou de possession de pouvoir—sans usage de lui.

Les actes mêmes ou œuvres me furent des applications locales circonstancielles, d'une faculté ou propriété exercée en soi et pour elle-même—Et je plaçais toute l'importance dans l'entretien et le développement de l'instrument vivant.—et non dans la production et le produit.

et puis l'idée: on ne vit qu'une fois—Effective le maximum de combinaisons—Daimon.

It is not clear to what sentence Valéry refers in these two notations.

Baudelaire's translation "Le Domaine d'Arnheim" contains the following sentence: "Quant à la possibilité d'une perfection quelconque,
proprement dit, effectuée par l'homme lui-même dans la condition générale de l'humanité, il n'y accordait qu'une foi mediocre, je le confesse avec chagrin."

It seems, however, that Baudelaire slightly mistranslated the following sentence which appears in the original English version: "in the possibility of any improvement, [this is the word which Baudelaire translated as perfection, rather than as amélioration, perfectionnement, progrès, etc.] properly so called, being effected by man himself in the general condition of man, he had (I am sorry to confess it) little faith."

It is of course possible that Valéry referred to the sentence which appears on the following page of the Baudelaire translation: "...le monde ne verra jamais la perfection triomphante d'exécution dont la nature humaine est positivement capable dans les domaines les plus riches de l'art."

Once more the English reads slightly different: "...the world will never see--that full extent of triumphant execution [again a word Baudelaire translated by perfection rather than by execution] in the richer domains of art, of which the human nature is absolutely capable."

It does not really matter to which one of those sentences Valéry referred, that which does matter, is that Valéry remembered in 1929 and 1940 that it was this sentence read in Poe's story which had such a great influence on him at 19 and which directed his thought at that time. It must also be pointed out that these two notations are
very interesting for they show us that it was Poe who first stimulated
Valéry's interest in the workings and the capabilities of the human
mind. There is evidence that young Valéry turned yet to another
work of Poe previously not mentioned, namely Eureka. We know
that he read this long essay in 1891, the year which Mondor calls the
"year of Poe." Valéry himself wrote in 1941 to Mondor in reply
to a book on Mallarmé, which the former had just sent him: "Vous
ne pouvez imaginer combien, en particulier, la période ou Mallarmé
se fait créature de Poe et juge enfin Baudelaire m'a remis moi-même
en mes 91-92, époque ou le même Poe m'a possédé. (Mais, chose
notable, cette action s'est exercée chez moi plus peut-être contre
l'intention de poésie que pour elle...)"
1891-1892 was the year
when Valéry read Eureka, which was of great importance in his
intellectual growth. He never forgot the impact of that work on his
thought. Thirty-two years later he was still able to write the lauda-
tory article entitled Au sujet D'Euréka. "J'avais vingt ans, et je
croyais à la puissance de la pensée. Je souffrais étrangement d'être,
et de ne pas être. Parfois, je me sentais des forces infinies. Elles
tombaient devant les problèmes; et la faiblesse de mes pouvoirs
positifs me désespérait. J'étais sombre, léger, facile en apparence,
dur dans le fond, extrême dans le mépris, absolu dans l'admiration,
aise à impressionner, impossible à convaincre." Of course in
1923, Valéry did not fail to see the shortcomings of this work. He, who studied Cantor, Poincaré, and the theories of thermodynamics and relativity, could see the weakness of Poe's scientific affirmations, yet this did not prevent him from remembering and recognizing the great importance that the work had for him at the age of twenty. In 1891 he believed in the power of thought, but he did not yet know the method capable of giving thought its proper dimension. When the mature Valéry wrote: "Je souffrais étrangement d'être, et de ne pas être," he described the state which he had already called to the attention of Pierre Louÿs in 1890, when he had written "je me sens plusieurs." There existed in Valéry a double nature, which we saw already in the child Valéry receiving his first notion of the Moi-Pur from the sea and opposing the permanent Moi-Pur to the ever changing empirical Moi.

A young man who had chosen the pursuit of a rigorous method must have found great difficulty in reconciling literature and consciousness. How can he transform literature into a pure discipline? The question remained without an answer and he renounced writing poetry.

"J'avais cessé de faire des vers; je ne lisais presque plus. Les romans et les poèmes ne me semblaient que des applications particulières, impures et à demi inconscientes, de quelques propriétés attachées à ces fameux secrets que je croyais trouver un jour, par
cette seule assurance sans relâche qu'ils devaient nécessairement exister." But *Eureka* opened a new way for the Valéry who had reached a dead end. It taught him the law of Newton, the name of Laplace, and confirmed in him the idea that the sciences could kindle enthusiasm and passion in a mind.

What exactly is this essay of Poe's, which no one reads any longer? It is an essay on the material and spiritual universe. Its first supposition is that "In the original unity of the first thing lies the secondary cause of all things, with the germ of their inevitable annihilation." The essay's first part deals with the method which Poe used in order to explain the material and spiritual universe, a method which Valéry called in 1923 "une maîtresse pensée." Poe named this method the Law of Consistency: "perfect consistency can be nothing but absolute truth." This consistency, or truth, can be perceived only by a mind capable of seeing analogies between the different parts of the universe.

Upon reading this essay, Valéry discovered for the first time that a mind can understand the totality of the universe through its ability to see analogies. He recognized that "l'analogie, instrument de l'induction scientifique, ramènerait le réel à des formes symboliques organisées en séries continues, parfaitement liées, lisibles, et maniables au regard de l'esprit." The discovery is
significant because Valéry had already discussed analogy as a means of writing poetry in that letter to Mallarmé in April 1891. At that time he viewed analogy primarily as a means of writing poetry, hence my contention that his statement was based upon Baudelaire's theories rather than on Poe's. In the end of 1891 after having read Eureka, Valéry gave analogy a much wider function and meaning; it became a means of understanding the universe to be used by scientists and poets alike. This theory appears similar to the Symbolist theory, but there exists one difference; the latter considered the poet alone capable of explaining the universe by means of Symbols, while Valéry considered any man able to see analogies, be he a mathematician, a physicist, an architect, or a poet, capable of understanding the universe. Conclusions hitherto reserved only for the mathematician can be reached by the poet's intuition by applying the former's method. "L'univers est alors construit sur un plan dont la symetrie profonde est en quelque sorte presente dans l'intime structure de notre esprit. L'instinct poetique doit nous conduire a la verite."

In Eureka, Poe replaced the two traditional methods of science, inductive and deductive, by Consistency, which he terms a new method for reaching truth. Consistency is conceived on the principle of identity, giving us the only means of arriving at an explanation of the
universe. Poe searched for an explanation not only of the phenomenal world, but also of human conscience, which unites in itself both the spiritual and the material worlds.

In Valéry's eyes, Consistency reconciled thought with poetry. The law of Consistency is a discovery in itself, as well as a means of discovery. The mind which aspires to universality, that of the scientist as well as of the poet, seeks truth by this method. The symbolist poet seeks truth through his poem, with which he conquers the world; the scientist searches for truth by means of his calculations, which are also a conquest of the world. To Valéry these two processes resembled each other, for both create order from disorder through the power of organized and methodical thought. It is the act of creation, not its result, which counts.

Valéry gradually detached himself from literature. In 1892 he no longer believed in the poetisation of the world. His new poet was not the magician of the Verb, but the magician of the method, able to see the universe constructed on a harmonious plan. His method, and not his work, defined him. Valéry knew that research in science lead to the same end as research in poetry.

It is interesting to note that twenty years after his first reading of Eureka, Valéry still believed that the man who mastered the science of relations could conceive the universe in its entirety. "Ce n'est
pas en exagerer la portee que de reconnaître dans la théorie de
la consistance une tentative assez précise de définir l'univers par
des propriétés intrinsèques. Au chapitre huitième d'\textit{Eureka}, se
lit cette proposition: \textit{Chaque loi de la nature depend en tous points
de toutes les autres lois.} N'est-ce point, sinon une formule, du
moins l'expression d'une volonté de relativité généralisée?"

Does Valéry not imply in this paragraph that Poe, because of his
method, had predicted modern physics and Einstein's representation
of the universe?

\textit{Eureka} revealed to Valéry the possibility of applying to his
thought the rigorous principles of mathematics, thereby raising his
own consciousness to a high degree of abstraction. It introduced
him: 1) to the law of consistency; 2) the similarity of the poet's and
mathematician's process of thought; and 3) the possibility of a union
between the spiritual and the material forms of the world. He had
found a new intellectual basis from which to begin his investigations
about poetry and language. After having read \textit{Eureka}, Valéry deposed
poetry from its autonomous position; he no longer considered it as
the only discipline capable of reaching truth, but rather as a disci-
pline on the same level as all others.

Between the reading of \textit{Eureka} in 1891 and the notebook of 1894,
his crisis of the 4th-5th of October 1892 took place. During that night
the former idols were abolished by the young man, and Valéry became the "spectateur de son propre drame et le mécanicien de ses propres actes." According to all appearances, Valéry abandoned literature after that fateful night in 1892. In July 1893 he wrote to Gide: "l'erreur, je parie, de bien de gens à mon egard est de me supposer--malgré tout une arrière-pensée littéraire."

According to his own statements he read little and then only non-literary works: "mes lectures sont rares--Une très bonne Histoire du Materialisme, par Lange, un bien curieux essai sur Le Principe générateur des Constitutions politiques par J. de Maistre Et surtout, le passionnant Electro-Magnétisme du dernier grand théoricien (mort) Maxwell." During that same year he also read the lectures by Sir William Thomson (Lord Kelvin) Constitution de la Matière. On this subject he writes: "Sir Thomas a voulu réaliser matériellement ces mécanismes de compréhension. En fer, en cuivre, en verre il a fait des métaphores. Toute la physique d'aujourd'hui est une métaphore hydraulique, et lui l'a extraite des formes algébriques pour donner aux sens eux-mêmes, le spectacle de la continuité de la pensée."

1894 is the first year during which he regularly kept a "rendez-vous" with himself in order to observe his own thought processes and to note them in the Cahiers. This first notebook reveals that he had not com-
pletely rejected literature, but that his interest in it, and his
writings henceforth had a different tone.

The first journal of 1894 is entitled *Journal de bord*, and has
as a subtitle *Pré-Teste*. The personality of M. Teste emerges here
under the title *Portait de Monsieur un Tel*. Although I am not
going to discuss the personality of M. Teste here, I do want to
consider one of the models for M. Teste. A few pages after the
*Portrait*, the following note was added in pencil: "La vie et les
aventures volontaires du Ch? Dupin Londres 1853 Cazanova
71
del'esprit [sic]." Numerous notes indicate that Valéry once
72
had the intention of writing an article on Poe. In this article
he wished to express "l'acte ou l'esprit apparaît unique sous les
73
innombrables gestes et circonstances." It is apparent from
this statement that Poe's master detective interested him. Dupin
impressed Valéry as "un esprit fort qui se regarde agir." In the
notebook's notation quoted above the word *volontaire* is of special
importance, for it implies a disciplined mind, a mind able to
observe its actions and to control them. The "Cazanova de l'esprit"
is by definition a man who conquers the world by means of his mind;
his adventures are of an intellectual nature. Poe's detective is
the incarnation of the lucid and analytical mind. He, like Teste
after him, is defined by the method which he has found. A note
analyzing the mental world of Dupin reads as follows: "montrer
dans chaque homme l'Être élémentaire--puis ce qui le distingue.
Car dans les livres un voleur n'est que voleur. Un voleur,
saisi par la douceur du printemps, se sent un grand, un bon et
74
beau voleur." Dupin uses in reality only the theory of effects
transposed on the level of the detective story; the psychology of
the other still plays the dominant role in this method. Dupin,
in order to solve a mystery, is able to understand his opponent
in the same ways as the poet, whom Valéry described six years
earlier, understood the mind of his reader in order to predict his
reactions. Poe writes: "It is merely, I said, [Dupin's friend
draws the conclusion from the former's argument] an identification
75
of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent." The universal
mind is able to perform this transformation because it sees analogies
between situations. In the Purloined Letter we can read: "The
material world, continued Dupin, abounds with very strict analogies
76
to the immaterial."

A very interesting analysis of Dupin's thinking process can
be found on that same page of the notebook:

L'œil tend à suivre le mt. ou l'esprit à l'imaginer.

Il est bien sûr que l'œil [des mots barrés] considérant
une forme peut y voir un mouvement trajectoire de
l'élément [sic] de l'objet vu. Mais comme l'œil est
immobile et que l'objet l'est aussi, ce mt. s'opère
dans le contour fermé de la forme de l'objet. Il est
[mot barré par Valéry] rapide par rapport à la durée
des imp. lumineuses

Inversement l'œil considérant un mt. peut y lire une
forme dont la perception ne dépend que de la même durée,
applications des nombres pratiques infinis. Dans les
deux cas on peut prolonger ces deux procédés psychiques
(d'analogie)
1° le mt. implique physiquement une force qui implique
une masse....

del enveloppe [sic]
77
masse inerte

The reader of Poe recognizes Dupin scrutinizing the apartment of
the Minister D, the thief of the letter. Valéry has transposed the
situation into the precise language of mathematics. This language
can express a relationship system more clearly, since it has
eliminated the language of reference in favor of that of "sound-
look."

The remark on the "application des nombres infinis," indicates
that Valéry has realized the general application of language. His
detective can, by means of mathematical abstractions, transpose a
situation into the greatest generality possible, applicable thereby to
all other situations.

Valéry saw in Dupin a mind whose functions were in themselves
an object of study and enjoyment. Yet there is a fundamental difference
between the Dupin of Poe and the Dupin of Valery's notebook. The former cultivated his intellectual powers in order to produce an effect on the outside world, i.e. by solving a mystery. The latter used his intellect as a means of analyzing the workings of his own mind, considering any exterior evidence of his thought as weak.

From this can be seen that, from 1894 on, Valéry no longer sought to produce an effect on the outside world whose intimate structure was contained within his own mind; on the contrary, he only wanted to observe the function of his mind. All his intellectual activity was henceforth directed toward knowledge of his own mind and its functions. This desire to observe its workings of the mind began in 1894; its first expression is seen in the notes on Dupin which will later be developed in Léonard and Teste.

This chapter demonstrates that the reading of Poe furnished Valéry with a number of ideas important in the evolution of his creative thought.

A) The Philosophy of Composition revealed to him:

1) the association of mathematics and poetry, two disciplines united through a common method.

2) the theory of effect and hence, the importance of psychology in literature.
3) a disdain for the inspired poet and a conscious need for perfect control of language.
4) the idea that not the subject in poetry matters, but the relationship of words, as set up in a system by the poet.
5) the possibility of observing a poet's mind during the process of creation.

B) _Eureka_ disclosed to him:

1) the name of Laplace and the law of Newton—in short, the seed of modern scientific thought.
2) the law of consistency as a scientific method, capable of giving the greatest possible generality to a problem.
3) the importance of the process itself, rather than the result.
4) the possibility of relations between hitherto separated phenomena, i.e. analogy.

C) Dupin gave him the concept of:

1) a mind which used its intellectual powers in order to reduce the possibilities of chance.
2) a mind capable of transforming any situation into the dispassionate, unconnotative language of mathematics in order to obtain complete freedom from the reference of words.
Valéry drew from Poe a scientific and a poetic method. The latter led him to formulate his ideas about poetry and the poet. It helped him to evolve his attitude with respect to the problem of artistic creation and later of creation in general. The former permitted him eventually to consider language and the function of the mind in the light of scientific thought. Poe was important in the development of Valéry's thought because Valéry found in the American's work a method from which to begin his investigations. In fact, Poe was a starting point for Valéry, he became for him the symbol of intellectual purity.

This early contact with Poe's work, as well as Baudelaire's commentary on Poe directed Valéry toward the idea of "manoeuvre" an idea which he never abandoned. As late as 1943 he referred to Baudelaire's phrase on Poe: "...son étonnant cerveau incessamment en éveil," in the following note in his Cahiers:

Ego L'idée de manoeuvre spirituelle m'a jadis enivré...
La phrase de Baudelaire sur Poe "Ce merveilleux cerveau toujours en éveil..." phrase, somme sans autre importance...
eut pour moi valeur d'un trésor des 1001 nuits entr'ouvert ou de ce simple mot trésor lu avec des yeux d'enfant dans le conte arabe...
Ce me fut aussi mon appel de cor et la forêt enchantée des choses Abstraites me...etc.
Je rêvais sur les possibles de l'esprit et je m'exerçais de mon mieux à user de mes articulations de signes avec images, de signes avec signes, et des transformations d'images, --en quoi je trouvai le mépris de tout ce qui ne pouvait être que par l'ignorance ou la crainte de ces étranges
expériences. Une opinion sur quoi que ce soit me parut une sottise quelle qu'elle fut, si elle ne se donnait pas elle-même pour une simple possibilité. — un specimen d'une collection de combinaisons.

Ceux qui tenaient leur pensée pour autre chose qu'une formation de valeur arbitraire. tant que quelque circonstance non mentale, ni corporelle (affective) ne lui donnait pas valeur indépendante de moi—de mon état, de ma "sensibilité," me parurent des idolâtres, ou bien des gens qui dorment, et donc, croient aux productions que leur excitent linéairement dans l'esprit les sensations accidentelles et non contrôlée qu'ils subissent sous le sommeil. Ils sont dans l'état partiel et ne peuvent user du tout de leur organisation.

Ceci ruinait bien des choses... Mais qui étaient déjà virtuellement condamnées en moi par ma nature. quelle autorité peut résister à ce qui, même sans l'attaquer ni vouloir la détruire, se met à la considérer avec précision et à presser un peu le langage dont elle use? Si on ne trouve alors que du langage et des images, des abstractions sans définitions non verbales, etc. on ne trouve donc que des produits particuliers d'une faculté dont on possède soi-même l'appareil qui peut façonner bien d'autres combinaisons du même genre.

Voilà ce qui vous arrive quand vous avisez ce qui fut ma découverte, de tenir le verbal pour verbal, des images pour des images et les idées pour les idées, c-à-d d'associer (comme on dit) ces espèces mentales à leurs groupes de substitutions et de noyer la valeur de chacune dans la conscience de la possibilité des autres c-à-d de l'imminence des manoeuvres de l'esprit libre, à peine se réveille-t-il d'entre les dormeurs.

L'esprit à soi seul, est (et doit être) incapable de vérité. Il ne se fait que des convictions. Il reçoit la "vérité" ou plutôt la constate par une comparaison analogue à celle que l'on fait d'un portrait avec le modèle qui sont deux objets d'espèce toute différente. 80

This last quotation succinctly summarizes Valéry's state of mind.
during the years 1889-1892 and the role that Poe played in his intellectual development.

In order to complete the study of Valéry's affiliation with Poe, it is necessary to add an appendix. Although Valéry mentioned Poe less frequently after 1892, his admiration for his first master never diminished. In the appendix I shall briefly demonstrate Valéry's admiration for Poe after 1892, for he never forgot that it was Poe who first revealed to him the immense interest of the workings of the human mind.
Valéry and the French Masters

I

Valéry did not spend the years 1889-1891 reading Poe exclusively; on the contrary, he read Poe and the Decadents, the Symbolists, and above all Mallarmé. It was shown in the previous chapter that Poe's influence was primarily theoretical in nature; this chapter will deal with the influence of the French poets on Valéry's early literary productions, for he did not learn his craft from Poe, but rather from those poets contemporary with him. This influence I have divided into three categories: that of the Decadent-Symbolists, that of the Symbolist aesthetics in general, and finally that of Mallarmé. Each of these influences will be treated separately, but their concurrence should be kept in mind.

What exactly was the literary situation in France at the time Valéry began to write, that is to say in 1889? The generation of the 1880's, united in a movement against the respectable academic school of criticism, expressed its views in a number of independent reviews. La Nouvelle Rive Gauche (later Lutéce) was the most famous among them. The reviews provided an instrument for discussion of the emerging poetry, without ever crystalizing their position. Coppé, Rollinat and Richepin were among the central figures of the movement. Verlaine entered the literary scene rather late and Rimbaud had not written a single word for fourteen years. In 1886 Moreas coined the epithet
Symbolism with a capital letter in a series of manifestoes, the first of
which appeared in *Le Figaro* of September 18, 1886. The following
five years were filled with slogans, manifestoes, and numerous defini-
tions. Mallarmé built a circle of admirers around him in Paris, among
whom were Villiers de l'Isle Adam, Vielle-Griffin, and numerous
others. Finally three schools emerged: Décadence under Baju;
Symbolism under Moréas; and "l'école instrumentiste" under Ghil.
New reviews were established, among which the most interesting were
*La Plume, L'Ermitage, Entretiens politiques et litteraires*, and the
*Mercure de France*. Only the latter has survived until today.

Such, in brief, was the literary situation in Paris between
1880 and 1890. As for the ideas propagated by these movements, it is
again necessary to give a rather cursory view. During those years
Schopenhauer enjoyed a sudden popularity in France. Part of this popu-
laritly was due to a general feeling of pessimism and disillusion prevalent
in France at the end of the 19th century. Renan had written: "La France
se meurt, ne troublez pas son agonie." Schopenhauer, as he was inter-
preted by Rémy de Gourmont (*Le livre des Masques*), Dujardin and
others, centered his thought around a solipsist myth, promulgating the
theory that introspection alone is valid and that the universe can be
comprehended only by a knowledge of the self. Reality, as positivism
saw it, was vigorously denied by the exegetes of Symbolism, who based
their denial partly upon the authority of Schopenhauer. For them, the artist could deny the world around him, in fact, flee from it, since he carried true reality within his innermost self.

It is easy to see why the Pre-Raphaelites appealed to the Symbolists and Decadents. In the painting prior to Raphael, the Pre-Raphaelites sought the naivete of feeling which seemed to them to translate the true and pure state of the soul. They were impressed by the mysticism of Giotto, Cimabue, and Ghirlandajo. Mysticism mixed with art is reflected in their paintings and their poetry. Their aestheticism, combined with the introspection of Schopenhauer, was an essential element of the poetry emerging in the 1880's.

This poetry distinguished itself by a profound disdain for the Parnassian poems, a disparagement of naturalism, and a vigorous denial of positivism. To liberate themselves from the world of phenomena, these young poets searched for a vague dream world in which to take refuge. By means of poetry they set out to explore the interior world, far removed from the vulgarity of daily reality. Their lassitude and pessimism was manifested in twilight landscapes conveying a languishing nostalgia for the purity of another world. The lack of precision in their poetry was designed to suggest the vague music proclaimed by Verlaine and to contrast with the precise jewel-like poems of the Parnasse.
The need for evasion from reality was also translated into a renewed interest in Catholicism. The result was a Neo-Catholic poetry attached, so to speak, to the accidental elements of Catholicism. It emphasized the stained glass windows, the spiral towers, the beautifully robed priests, the candles, and the statues. In other words, this interest in religion was based upon an appreciation of the beauty connected with the Catholic service. Man's salvation or his relation to God was of no concern to neo-Christian poetry. The church harbored in its tranquil beauty those souls tired of the agitated movement of daily life.

A distinction between the Decadents and the Symbolists is necessarily a rather artificial separation for the two movements were so closely linked. The "Esprit decadent", as used by Laforgue, described a certain state of mind prevalent in France between 1880 and 1890. In literary circles, such as the Hydropathes, Les Hirsutes, Les Zutistes, the spirit of the futility of life, a horror of banal reality, and a search for novelty in sensation manifested itself. The word "décadent" possibly owes its origin to Verlaine's sonnet "Je suis l'Empire à la fin de la décadence." The Decadents did not aspire toward a more profound reality. Cultivating a taste for the rare and the strange, their only end seems to have been an evasion from the daily world into a world of dreams. They distinguished themselves primarily by an attitude toward
daily life, an attitude portraying a disdain for life. The curse of the poet, as Baudelaire had known it before them, or the thirst for an absolute, as the Symbolists experienced it after them, was unknown to them. In decadent poetry there was then no transposition of experience such as in the Symbolist poetry. Another distinction between the Decadents and the Symbolists rests in their attitude toward image. The Decadents started from an image in order to express a state of mind. The Symbolists looked for the image in order to add to it an ontological reality, hence making the image into a symbol.

The negative and artificial side of the decadent poetry was quickly exhausted and, little by little, under the influence of Wagner and Mallarmé, the Decadents evolved toward Symbolism. To be sure, the Symbolists adopted the vocabulary of the Decadents, but they used these words in order to aspire toward universal truth. Symbolism sought a reality hidden under appearances. It was evident to its exegetes that unalterable and ideal Truth existed underneath deceiving and ever changing reality.

Poetry was to express the profound reality which each man carries in himself and to formulate the total existence of the poet. The poetry of the Symbolists became, on the one hand, a movement toward the interior of man, and on the other, a flight toward the absolute. This was a superhuman task in which each "real" poem could only fall short. The
"finished" poem could never satisfy the Symbolist poet; he sought, through other word combinations, the "explication orphique" of the universe. A printed poem was never really perfect, hence Mallarmé's continual search for Le Livre.

Each creative act was an act which created the universe. And since poetry became an absolute for the Symbolists, it had to exclude all elements foreign to its nature, be self-contained, seek the most rigorous form possible, and create a language capable of expressing this total vision of the universe. For the Symbolists, the creative act was an act of order. Desire to seize the essence of poetry transformed the poet into a demiurge who transposed, by means of a symbol, the material world into another order of things. The symbol revealed eternal truth hidden under discontinuous reality. Poetry was knowledge.

In the first chapter we have seen Valéry's affiliation with the Parnassians. In November 1890 he wrote to Albert Dugrip: "Je sens que le parnassien qui a d'abord été Moi se dissout et s'évapore... Il me semble que ce n'est plus l'heure des vers sonores et exacts, cerclés de rimes lourdes et rares comme des pierres! Peut-être faut-il écrire des choses vaporeuses, fines et légères comme des fumées violetttes et qui font songer à tout, et qui ne disent rien précisément et qui ont des ailes..." This statement is not very different from the one, based on Poe's theories, he made to Mallarmé a month earlier.
The power of suggestion and the idea of an ethereal poetry have already been mentioned, yet a new note has been added, namely: "Peut-être faut-il écrire des choses vaporeuses, fines et légères comme des fumees violettes..." The last two words no longer recall Poe, but rather the Decadents, whose favorite color was purple. The poems he wished to write deny the existence of reality and wish to escape into a world of fantasy, "qui ont des ailes."

What could Valéry, living in Montpellier, have known of the Decadent and Symbolist poetry? It is entirely possible that he read a copy of the Parnasse Contemporain or the Anthologie des Poètes français du XIXe siècle. Besides these widely circulating reviews we know from his letters that he read many smaller revues such as L'Ermitage, La Plume, La Revue Blanche, La Revue Indépendante, and La Wallonie.

Although Valéry discovered the decadent-symbolist poetry in these reviews, it was above all Huysmans who revealed to him the real importance of that poetry. Huysmans' A Rebours was for Valéry a very important source of information. Again the exact year in which he discovered this book is not known. Nadal believes it was in 1888, while Madame Rouart-Valéry states that it was in September 1889. Valéry's enthusiasm for Huysmans was immediate and without restriction. At the end of 1889 he wrote to Albert Dugrip: "Huysmans est celui d'aujourd'hui dont mon âme s'accommode le mieux. J'en suis toujours à relire A Rebours; c'est ma bible et mon livre de chevet."
Rien n'a été écrit de plus fort ces derniers vingt ans. C'est un des rares ouvrages qui créent un style, un type, presque un art nouveau. Des Esseintes est assez dépravé dans ses sens et assez mystique pour me séduire..." In November of that same year Valéry dedicated his prose poem "Les Vieilles Ruelles" to Huysmans. His attraction for that author was of a curious nature; he sought in A Rebours a direction for his own literary preferences, as well as a confirmation of those already established, such as his esteem of Mallarme. A Rebours was for him above all a contemporary literary history. But the young poet also found in the person of des Esseintes the perfect expression of the "esprit décadent." Huysmans was thus of great, though momentary, importance in Valéry's development. "Puis Huysmans le romancier unique me découvrit les décadents, Verlaine, Mallarme, et les Goncourt."

Did Valéry make a distinction between the Decadents and the Symbolists? He used the word decadent in a more general sense than the word Symbolist. "Voilà pourquoi je ne m'intitule pas Esthète ni symboliste--cela a des significations trop précises et trop étroites. Je suis esthète et symboliste mais à mon heure; mais je veux quand il me plaira de le faire verlainiser, oublier la rime, le rythme, la grammaire, vagir à ma guise et laisser crier mes sens... et je suis Décadent."
Valéry's first poems were decadent-symbolist in nature. This decadent-symbolist period of his development prepared him for the poetry of Mallarmé. Valéry saw above all in the decadent-symbolist poetry a certain nostalgia for another world. Moonlit nights, black lakes, angelic women, incense, and all the conventional church decorations dominated his vocabulary. He was captured by an idealism disdainful of the world of phenomena. Like these "chercheurs d'i déal," as Michaud calls the Decadents and early Symbolists, he also sought the world of dreams, the world removed from the vulgarity of everyday life. His poems were the expression of his escape toward a purer world. "Je sens que je deviens un peu ce qu'j'appellerais préraphaelite! et cela malgré moi."

The poems which Valéry wrote between the years 1889 and 1891 fall into two categories: those which are Neo-Catholic and those which are simply decadent-symbolist in nature. If we read the poems which Valéry thought to unite in a collection to be called Chorus Mysticus, we will find them at first rather far removed from the aesthetic theories which we know him to have held during that period.

In August 1889 Valéry sent to Fourment the following poem:

L'Eglise

Parmi l'immensité pesante du Saint lieu
Dans l'ombre inexprimable, effrayante, dorée
Solennelle, se sent la présence de Dieux
Dans le recueillement de la chose adorée.
L'obscurité confond les pourpres et les ors
Et les lampes d'argent gardiennes des Reliques
Et dans ce sombre éclat plane sur ces trésors
L'âpre mysticité des dogmes catholiques.

Le Grand Christ, constellé de pleurs en diamants
Et de rubis saignants, coulant du coup de lance,
 Là-haut semble rêver, fermant ses yeux aimants
Dans ce vague parfum d'encens et de silence!

La Vierge byzantine et de massif argent
Demeure hiératique en sa chape orfoisie
Fixant ses yeux de perle aux Cieux, comme songeant
Aux Azurs lumineux et lointains de l'Asie. 16

The stiff and cold atmosphere of this poem recalls the rigid paintings
of Della Francesca where the Christ is present in body, but absent in
spirit. The eyes of the Christ in this poem are closed as a sign of his
effacement. He is not charitable, makes no gesture to communicate
with man; he is removed from the world, enclosed in his own world of
incense and silence. He seems, like the poet, to escape from his sur-
roundings. The Virgin, Byzantine and austere, hides behind her gilded
cape, which protects her from the real world. Her eyes of pearls also
do not regard the faithful, but seek another, purer world. There is no
movement in this poem. All is fixed and silent, a vague scent of in-
cense penetrates each line. Young Valéry seems to have chosen rare
elements to adorn his poem: "diamants, rubis, perles, l'argent, l'or,"
for they create an atmosphere of remoteness and transport the reader
into another world. Yet it must be pointed out that the pure descriptive
nature of this poem recalls the Parnassian sonnets which Valéry had ad-
mired previously. The Parnassian in him was not yet dead and only superficially covered by the Neo-Catholic elements.

Flight from the world of reality is, however, not the only end which Valéry saw in Catholicism. Perhaps under the influence of the Symbolists, he saw in Catholicism a work of pure art uniting song, rhythmic movement, and an austere beauty. In September 1890, he wrote to Dugrip: "A propos d'église, j'ai été ce matin à la Cathédrale faire un peu de liturgie. J'adore ma vieille et austère Cathédrale et j'aime les grand-messes, comme aujourd'hui. Un jour sombre et livide glisse à peine dans les obscurs vitraux. Peu de monde. L'orgue suffit à remplir la cavité des voûtes. Comme cela paraît lointain! Hors du siècle. Comme cela vous transporte aux premiers temps, ce symbolisme des rites, ces cierges comptés, ces trois officiants attentifs aux signes mystérieux; et l'encens, et la coupe antique et traditionnelle des dalmatiques! Quelle œuvre d'art pur que la Messe!...

The following poem combines the mysticism of the Neo-Catholic poems with a decadent-symbolist setting:

Elévation de la lune

L'ombre venait, les fleurs s'ouvraient, rêvait mon âme
Et le vent endormi taisait son râlement.
La Nuit tombait, la Nuit douce comme une femme,
Subtile et violette épiscopalement.

Épandant leurs parfums, des Lys thuriféraires
Lentement balançaient leurs frêles encensoirs.
Les étoiles semblaient des cierges funéraires
Comme dans une église allumée par les soirs.
Une prière montait ainsi qu'une onde
Et dans l'immensité bleuissant et profonde
Les astres recueillis baissaient leurs chastes yeux;

Alors Elle apparut! Hostie immense et blonde
Puis Elle étincela, se détachant du monde,
Car d'invisibles doigts l'élevaient vers les Cieux! 18

This poem does not describe a church, but a funeral mass "cierges funéraires." The whole sonnet is a comparison with the Consecration of the mass. During the Consecration the priest lifts the Host above his head and it is miraculously transformed into the Body of Christ. In this poem Valéry compared the moon to the Host, the night to a church, and the stars to the faithful who lower their heads at the moment of the Consecration, during which silence reigns. The human element is even further removed from the poem by the absence of the priest. "Car d'invisibles doigts l'élevaient vers les Cieux." This sonnet is less static than the preceding poem. The verbs are active; "tombait, balançaien, montait, baissaient, apparut, élevaien." Although all the verbs describe withdrawal, it is possible to say that this poem is less rigid than the first one. In this night, or church, there is a communication between man and God, Christ is present in the form of the Host, and "une prière montait ainsi qu'une onde." The poet projects himself toward the spiritual world through his prayer and with the help of Christ. Everything in the poem seems united and harmonious: moon, stars, flowers, night, and sky.
A third poem transforms a vague sensation of ennui and a longing for another world into a religious feeling:

**Fleur Mystique**

Lys mystique! Elle avait la ferveur des Elus
Et Vierge! Elle adorait les pieds calmes des Vierges;
Dans l'étincellement des métaux et des cierges,
Sa voix douce tintait comme un doux Angélus.

Une couleur de lune ondulait sous son voile.
Et, dans sa chair, semblaient fuir les reflets nacrés
Du petit jour luisant sur les vases sacrés
Aux messes du matin, vers la dernière étoile.

Ses yeux étaient plus clairs que des astres naissants
Indicible parfum de cires et d'encens,
Son vêtement sentait la vieille sacristie!

Et c'est en la voyant que le regret me vint
De n'être pas le Christ de ce rêve Divin
Car son visage pâle, était comme une Hostie! 20

Novembre 1889

This time a young girl is the central figure of the poem. By her presence, or perhaps by her absence, she furnishes the rare elements of the poem. Again everything merges into a mystic and fervent whole. The young girl is in perfect harmony with the surroundings of which she is the center. For the first time we see a person as the focal point of the picture, a person who still refuses the world, but who populates the vague and dream-like sonnet.

The last tercet reveals another new element, that of love. This love is not yet carnal love. On the contrary, the young man in the poem
confuses love for the young girl with divine love. The eternal feminine possesses no attraction for the Decadents. On this subject Valéry wrote to Dugrip: "Pour cette école nouvelle, la 'Femme n'existe plus', toute la tendresse, tout l'épanchement qu'elle occasionnait jadis, on le reporte vers de vagues formes catholiques. On ne craint pas de parler à je ne sais quel Dieu avec l'équivoque parole et l'ardeur d'un amour de choix.... Ce regain de ferveur religieuse dont les Verlaine, les Huysmans (en quelques pages curieuses) voire des Mallarmé, sont les magnifiques Apôtres n'a pas d'autre racine, que le dédain du sexe bête.

The theme of carnal love disdained for a purer love is seen in the "Le Divin Adultère" 1890.

Mais Elle, repoussant la prière charnelle,
Dit d'une voix où tremble une ardeur éternelle:
"J'adore un jeune Dieu venu de l'Orient." 22

It is also expressed in "Splendeur!"

Et garde ta splendeur comme un trésor secret
Très loin du baiser fauve et flétrissant de l'homme. 23

The rejection of carnal love announces the future struggles of la Jeune Parque, taming the desires of her body in order to preserve her Moi-Pur. The young girls of Valéry's adolescent poetry, whom one can hardly call women, do not yet know the struggle with the serpent; for them the refusal of carnal love is a natural act. The refusal to accept man's finite condition as manifested in carnal love is a thirst
for purity. In 1890 Valéry had not yet qualified this purity, which after 1892 became consciousness of self.

_Fleur Mystique_ shows then a development in young Valéry's technique. He adopted the rare elements in such a way that the young girl furnishes the unity of the sonnet. This foretells his great poems in which a central person symbolizes an idea dear to Valéry. The young girl, as a symbol of the lassitude of the world, is more poetic than the cold and sterile decors of his earlier poems. Finally this poem sketches one of the fundamental themes of all of Valéry's poetry, desire opposed to the intellect.

The above poems lead to the conclusion that young Valéry tried, through a Neo-Catholic vocabulary, to realize a certain unity between his being and the universe. He did not yet realize that this unity was not to be found outside of himself, but rather by descending into his innermost being. The same search for another world prevails in the poems I have called decadent-symbolist.

_Testament de Venitienne_

_la pompe sereine de la lune_
Scelle le bonheur du repos
_Le second Faust_
Goethe

Le jour où je mourrai, courez à ma gondole
Emplissez-la d'oeillets, de roses, de jasmins
Couchez-moi sur ces fleurs, croisez mes pâles mains,
Laissez mes yeux ouverts comme ceux d'une idole...
Déposez sur mon front aussi pur que le lait
Un diadème vert de feuilles enlacées,
Mettez un long baiser sur mes lèvres glaçées,
Et recouvrez mon corps d'un crêpe violet.

Quand vous aurez fini cette tâche imporente,
Oh! regardez-moi bien blanche au milieu des fleurs...
Regardez, regardez...puis sans soupirs, sans pleurs,
Poussez-moi dans la mer un soir de pleine lune.

...La gondole s'en va... s'en va parmi les flots!
Chantez! là-bas! chantez. Je vous entends encore
Oh! les douces chansons que l'espace dévore...
Que les accords sont lents!... Vos chants sont des sanglots

Adieu! moi je m'en vais froide et morte sur l'onde,
L'eau me berce et la lune argente ma beauté.
La gondole s'avance et puis l'immensité
M'entoure lentement, bleuissante et profonde. 25

Mardi, février 1887

This poem, perhaps the most purely decadent, plunges us into a calm atmosphere of waters where limpid forms mirror themselves. Yet this young girl is not even able to admire her reflection in the water; she is dying of some unknown cause (death is here the means of escape from the world). The atmosphere of purity is enhanced by the death of the girl surrounded by flowers. The young man's kiss remains chaste, for it is deposed upon the cold and icy lips of the dead girl. Purity and whiteness are accentuated by the purple crepe with which the girl's body is covered. Purple is the color which signifies for the church a longing for Light and Life and is thus only used on days of penance or fast, such as during Lent or Advent. The ephemerally
beautiful girl, which could symbolize the poet's longing for light, drifts gently into the moonlit night and merges with its immensity. Everything blends into a unity of dream and irreality. This poem seeks the same effects as those called Neo-Catholic. The real world has been abolished and the young girl escapes from the world for a reason which she does not disclose. Instead of using the religious vocabulary, this poem transmits the search for escape by the languid presence of the young girl. The subject is the same as that of so many of Poe's poems, yet the intention is different. The lover does not grieve; there is no regret at her passing. Valéry did not aim, like Poe, at a melancholy reaction from his reader; his young girl is merely the representation of purity. We do not really see the dead girl; all we know is that she is pale, icy and pure, three words which admirably summarize the poem.

The following sonnet treats the same theme:

Vierge Incertaine

Toi qui verses les nuits tendres sur tes pieds blancs
Des larmes de statue oubliée et brisée
Telle une douloureuse et mystique rosée
Par qui se courbent les doux calices tremblants.

J'irai ce soir vers l'eau taciturne ou bleuissent
De mornes fleurs dans la triste glace d'azur
Cueillir pour tes doigts longs l'iris antique et pur
Que les frais diamants de la fontaine emplissent.

Ainsi je t'aimerai dans ton droit vêtement
Tes yeux morts dans les miens arrêtés longuement
Avec ma fleur dans tes mains vagues d'innocence
Nous resterons longtemps muets d'ombre voilées
Et je t'adorerai sous ces bois violets
Ou de pudiques fleurs grandissent en silence. 26

1889

The cold and sterile atmosphere due to words such as: "diamants, statue, droit vêtement, glace d'azur," is still prevalent. This young girl is not dead, but the young poet tried to make her as absent and unapproachable as possible. She is dressed in a "vêtement droit," her tears are those of a statue, and her eyes are dead; that is to say they do not see the world. He adored her as he would have adored the statue of the Virgin in the Church, for "adorer" is used in its sacred sense. Carnal love was impure in his eyes, and he fled from it. Love cannot be consummated on this earth. The young poet still preferred the spiritual relationship to terrestrial love and the two Neo-Platonic lovers merge with the fountain, the lilies and the purple woods.

Le Cygne

Au rire du soleil posé sur une branche
Et sous sa plume un flot limpide se plissant
Le cygne file en plein saphir carène blanche
Et l'eau miroir le fait deux fois éblouissant

Neige sur l'onde! un souffle insensible le pousse
Comme un vaisseau fantôme enflé parmi l'azur
Puis il va s'échouer sur la rive de mousse
Et dort dans la lumière idéalement pur!

Vase de chasteté symbolique et splendide
Ayant d'un monde vil oublié le Destin
O Cygne immaculé tu fuis dans le matin
Baiser de la lueur sur ton aile candide
Vers la Rive céleste où dans l'Eternité
Se confondent l'Amour et la Virginité.
      9 Octobre 1889 27

This is the first poem in which Valéry sought a true symbol. Certainly the symbol is not original, it is reminiscent above all of Prudhomme's "Cygne". Valéry seemed to have incorporated the latter's description of the swan with the Symbolist elements. The whiteness of both swans is compared to snow:

Valéry: Neige sur l'onde!....
Prudhomme: ...Le duvet de ses flancs est pareil
           A des neiges...

Both swans are compared to a ship:

Valéry: Comme un vaisseau fantôme enfui parmi l'azur
Prudhomme: Sa grande aile l'entraîne ainsi qu'un lent navire.

It becomes once more evident from this sonnet that in 1889 Valéry had not completely forgotten the Parnassians, but it is also clear that he did not copy but rather adapted them to his needs. The two quatrains of the above sonnet are purely descriptive, while the tercets attempt an interpretation of the swan:

Vase de chasteté symbolique et splendide
Ayant d'un monde vil oublié le Destin
O Cygne immaculé tu fuis dans le matin.

The swan's withdrawal from this world into a purer world which he finds within himself is suggested on the one hand by the immaculate whiteness
of the swan, and on the other by the light in which the swan moves. He
does not vanish into the mysterious night, but into the bright light of
day, which became Valéry's symbol for clarity and consciousness.
The following remarkable line of this poem predicts the future Valéry:
"Et l'eau miroir le fait deux fois eblouissant". It is important to note
that he stubbornly kept this line in his final version despite Fourment's
objection to it. Fourment wrote: "On croirait que tu veux dire que
c'est en se reflétant dans l'eau ce 'miroir' que le cygne est '2 fois'
eblouissant. Il me semble que c'est une grosse erreur. J'ai vu
plusieurs fois les cygnes au Peyrou dans le bassin et, si j'ai bien vu,
leur reflet, c'était leur ombre. Mais j'ai peut-être mal vu..."

The mirror, which accentuates the purity of the swan, is the ancestor of
Narcisse's mirror and perhaps even of the "pensée qui se regarde
penser." This mirror is the symbol of introspection at its earliest
stage. The young poet wished to convey the impression of the swan
mirroring himself in its own image.

"Le souffle invisible" of the first version has become the "souffle
insensible" in the final version. This indicates Valéry's wish to achieve
a musical effect through alliteration, a process which distinguished the
poetry of his maturity.

The swan, like the girls in the previously discussed poems, re-
jects the world and flees from it through sleep, as the Fileuse does two
years later. Sleep forbids the swan all contact with the world outside of himself. But, contrary to the girls, who actually wish to leave this world, the swan retreats into his own self. The swan's world of retreat exists no longer outside of the earth, but rather within himself.

Luxurieuse au Bain

L’eau se trouble--amoureusement--de Roses vagues
Riantes parmi la mousse et le marbre pur,
Car une chair, illuminant l’humide azur
Vient d’y plonger, avec des ronds d’heureuses vagues!...

...O baigneuse!...de ton rire c’est le secret!...
Aux caresses de l’eau, tes mârs désirs s’apaisent
Tu chéris la clarté fraîche et ces fleurs qui baissent
Tes seins de perle, tes bras clairs, ton corps nacré.

Et tu te pâmes dans les lueurs! Dédainneuse
Des amantes et des jeunes gens! Ô baigneuse!
Toi, qui, dans la piscine, attends l’heure où soudain

Les bûchers s’allument, rouges, sur le ciel vide
Ta nudité s’enflamme et tu nages splendide
Dans la riche lumière impudique du bain!... 29

1890

The loosely constructed form of this sonnet is indeed decadent. Joy is the dominant note of the poem and is expressed in active verbs such as "plonger, chéris, s’embrase, nages." The obscurity of the night no longer hides the central person; on the contrary, the luminous day enhances the nude woman’s beauty. She is no longer a pale, asexual young girl, but a woman; she has a body of flesh, breasts, arms; she lives and enjoys her body, but she refuses all human contact: "Des
amantes et des jeunes gens! o Dedaigneuse!" The world is once more rejected in this poem as it was in the nocturnal poems. The epithets are still cold and were chosen for their power of estrangement: "vague, pur, nacre, marbre, vide." This young woman is disdainful and proud, two characteristics which mark Valéry's great women (La Jeune Parque, Semiramis). Within herself she does not have to combat physical desire, for her own body finds satisfaction in the water. She does not know the struggle with the serpent yet. However, it is evident that this poem is a very early treatment of La Jeune Parque. The water appeases the desires of the young girl: "aux caresses de l'eau tes murs désirs s'apaisent." And La Jeune Parque, after her struggle with the serpent finds affirmation in the sea.

L'être contre le vent, dans le plus vif de l'air, 
Recevant au visage un appel de la mer;

The joy of this young girl comes completely from her own person; she does not need an outside source to inspire it. Nor does she try to escape into purer spheres, for purity exists within herself. While the other young girls did not have bodies or any desires—they were statues, or dead women--this one is the young girl of light and laughter, the young girl of life. Even if she does not yet accept the exterior world, she does accept her own body, through which she seizes the significance of the world.
Narcisse is the nocturnal brother of the girl of light:

Narcisse Parle

Que je déplore ton éclat fatal et pur  
Source magique, à mes larmes prédestinée  
Ou puisèrent mes yeux dans un mortel azur  
Mon image de fleurs funestes couronnée!

Car je m'aime! o reflet ironique de moi.  
O mes baisers jetés à la calme fontaine  
Roses vaines que vers mon image lointaine  
Epand sur l'eau ma main suave avec effroi!

De mes propres beautés ma bouche est amoureuse  
Je lis dans mes regards ma fureur malheureuse  
Ma vie adore un spectre inviolable et cher.

O ma soif de moi-même, invoque l'améthyste  
De ce miroir dont m'attire la lueur triste  
Où dort ce noble vase harmonieux, ma chair!

28 Septembre 1890

Narcisse is the Symbolist symbol "par excellence." Of course this Narcisse may be inspired by Herodiade which Valéry discussed in his correspondence. Like "La Luxurieuse au Bain," Narcisse searches for purity in his own body; it is the beauty of his body which attracts him. However, Valéry has progressed one more step since the previous sonnet. The young girl is happy in her body, she accepts it and enjoys it, while Narcisse "déplore son éclat fatal et pur." Narcisse senses the anguish of man who wishes to know himself and who struggles in vain. Not being strong enough for the effort, he has forsaken the search and abandons himself to despair. La Luxurieuse did not yet
since the possibility of a failure in reaching her own essence and she laughed; but Narcisse, wiser than she, laments his fate. Unlike the girl Narcisse is cursed with consciousness—"O ma soif de moi-même."

His sudden awakening to consciousness discourages and weakens him.

For the first time we know why the central figure is weary. On the one hand the weariness is due to the impossibility of knowing himself completely, and on the other to the poet's despair of reaching his proposed ideal in poetry. Valéry wrote to Pierre Louÿs on the 19th of November: "Je vous envoie le Narcisse tel qu'il est, bien inférieur, hélas! au personnage rêvé! Puisse-t-il vous faire songer un peu, si vous avez le temps, à ce troublant et difficteux thème."

With the sonnet on Narcisse, Valéry began to turn away from the decadent-symbolist poetry and to turn toward himself. In the Symbolist poetry, from which he has taken the theme of Narcisse, he found his first great symbol, that of the man who mirrors himself. The rather effeminate Narcisse of 1890 was developed not only in the other Narcisse poems, but also in the person of Teste and Léonard.

Valéry sent one last decadent-symbolist poem to Gide in February 1891:

Sur le minuit Futur

A minuit sur la montagne calme!   
La mer comme un souffle dans des palmes 
La mer comme une veuve, à mi-voix 
Pleure la morte Lune et les bois...
Les harpes lègres du silence
Sur le minuit s'écouent languir
Il n'y a plus d'heures ni d'espérances
Les fleurs sont mortes sans un soupir.

Toi! le seul qui vis, o Coeur solitaire,
Et sur la montagne et sur la terre
Tu dors! et la mer t'appelle en vain...

Peut-être sans éveil tu reposes
Tu rêves qu'il n'y a plus de demain
Comme il n'y a plus de lune et de roses. 34

With this farewell to roses and the moon, ended his decadent symbolist period, a period which touched, above all, his sensitivity rather than his intellect. I have shown that the Decadents' taste for the rare and the Symbolists' dream-like settings offering an escape from reality had attracted Valéry simultaneously, and that he made no noticeable distinction between those two literary doctrines.

II

During his decadent-symbolist period Valéry also discovered Rimbaud whose role in his intellectual development was of another nature from that of the previously discussed French poets. I have thus kept the relationship of Valéry to Rimbaud separate and will discuss it here in a parenthetical manner. To be sure Rimbaud's "influence" on young Valéry was different from that of Poe, Mallarmé, and the Decadent-Symbolists, yet the impact of Rimbaud's work was considerable on the nineteen-year-old boy. In 1943 Valéry still remembered the shock it caused him: "Voici un peu plus de cinquante ans, quand j'ai
subi le choc des Illuminations, j'ai essayé de m'expliquer le système, conscient ou non, que supposent les passages les plus virulents de ces poèmes. Il me souvient d'avoir résumé ces observations—et, en somme, mes défenses—par ces termes: R. a inventé ou découvert la puissance de l'incohérence harmonique."

It is evident from his correspondence with Gide that it was the latter who had first introduced Valéry, late in 1890, to Rimbaud's work with the poem "Les Chercheuses de Poux." In January 1891 he wrote to Gide: "Auriez-vous, cher ami, la bonté—la charité—de porter avec vous demain en venant me voir le Cahier de vers où je pourrai copier les 'Chercheuses de Poux?'" Valéry's relation to Rimbaud can best be followed in his correspondence with Gide. In August 1891 he stated that he was "drunk" with the sea after having read "Le Bateau Ivre." Valéry's love of the sea must certainly have been a definite link to Rimbaud. As a matter of fact during the same month in which he intoxicated himself with Rimbaud's poem, he projected to write a Symphonie Marine of which he gave a few excerpts to Gide:

La lassitude me fait abandonner ma symphonie marine, pour le moment. Je t'en donnerai le début à la fin de cette lettre....

C'était d'abord: un prélude vague, dormant sur le sujet de typiques indications, en phrases non liées mais simplement juxtaposées—le tout en sourdine. Puis un vaisseau se détache des lointains primitifs que j'évoquais en commençant: il approche. Il s'incline suivant les moindres désirs de la mer. Une première idée se dégage: la mer est
une musique ou valse le beau navire voile d'argent... Il se laisse bercer mais cette nonchalance trahit cependant une volonté.

Ce caractère de volonté est alors développé. Etre du bateau. Partie technique. Gymnastique descriptive. Les engins, les toiles, les rames. La morale de cette existence artificielle, c'est-à-dire, l'antagonisme entre la force du vent et des lames, et celle de l'intelligence qui tient la barre. Analogie à peine indiquée avec la vie des hommes. Puis ces résultats se cachent un moment. L'horizon se peuple de galères. Toute la splendeur marine est appelée en quelques phrases. Le paysage se précise... 38

Definite echoes of Rimbaud can be seen in these descriptions: the pilot-less ship, the storm and the waves which attack it, the will which conquers the sea, and the symbolic nature of the ship. The inspiration behind this prose work is clearly Rimbaud's "Bateau Ivre."

Moreover, a certain Rimbaldian tone can be detected in a few of Valery's letters to Gide where an unusual violence, for someone as controlled as young Valéry, can be read. In May 1891 he wrote the following letter:

Je désire presque une guerre monstrueuse où fuir parmi le choc d'une Europe folle et rouge, où perdre le souvenir et le respect de toute écriture et de tout rêve dans des visions réelles, trépignements funèbres de sabots clapotants et déchirements de fusillades, et n'en revenir!

Je ne sais quel sang parle en moi, ni quel loup des anciens jours baille dans mon ennui, mais je le sens là. La hideuse mécanique littéraire m'écoeure, et toute vie n'en vaut la peine. Ce barbare vous étonne. 39

Does this letter not recall some of the prose poems of Une Saison en Enfer, notably "Mauvais Sang?" for visions of war, blood, and general
oblivion never plagued Valéry. Another letter, written to Gide in August 1891, continued this tone of revolt and disgust:

...Ce monde est ridicule comme une pendule; ces astres virent sottement, très peu nombreux (trois mille cinq cents), pas beaux en somme, ni curieux. Et que me font les cervelles, si simples! Des gens dont les cheveux s'allongent, se posent au bord des cieux, lyres d'or, en Orphée--parce qu'ils cassent un alexandrin en 8, 4 ou 3, 9 ou qu'ils repètent une lettre dans le vers! Horrible!

Nos fleurs sont bêtes comme des femmes!... On ne peut rien boire qui ne soit vil et barbare. Une seule odeur artiste--le sel--un peu, la houille. L'encens pue. La mort est d'une petitece comique. On ne devrait finir que par explosion! ou couler à pic en plein fond sur un cinq-mâts qui sombrerait d'aplomb avec toutes ses voiles! 40

However, it was not only the love of the sea and the revolt against the world which attracted Valéry to Rimbaud; much more important for Valéry was the great power of language the latter possessed. The power of the word made Valéry classify Rimbaud with Poe and Mallarme. 41 "J'ai lu les plus merveilleux, Poe!, Rimbaud, Mallarme,..." Rimbaud interested him also as a mind capable of having written these explosive and revolutionary poems to such a point that Valéry desired to write a study of Rimbaud comparing him to Faraday and Maxwell. In 1894 he wrote to Gide: "Rimbaud est le seul ingénieur de ce siècle qui ne soit pas fils du précédent. En effet, les autres sont Poe, Balzac, Stendhal,... A chercher des figures semblables en sciences, le groupe Poe-Balzac est comme le groupe Laplace-Ampère-Poisson, etc. Rimbaud, lui s'allie à Faraday-Maxwell-Thomson. Surtout si on isole ce
qu'il a écrit de tout neuf d'avec-souvenirs machurés, carne restée aux canines--le reste." It was Valéry's opinion that Rimbaud, through the extraordinary mind which he possessed, had brought to literature the same revolutionary discoveries as Faraday, Thomson, and Maxwell to modern science.

Yet Valéry was so different from Rimbaud in temperament that his admiration did not remain without criticism. In November 1893 he wrote to Gide: "R., qui tient du lingot, s'avoue en travail. Moment que je considère si paroxyque que de voir quelqu'un y être, et lui m'émouvrait, hormis qu'un calcul--exact après tout--n'en détermine que le risible. Je m'entends." And many years later, in 1908, he declared: "A l'un de ces repas nous parlions littérature. Il [Degas] ignorait Rimbaud. Je me suis amusé à lui dire quelques vers du Bateau Ivre. Sa mine était une mixture comique (et voulue) de désespoir et de blague. Mais moi! Figure-toi, mon vieux, qu'à mesure que je débitais mon Bateau, je trouvais cela de plus en plus niaud. Et pas moi, --le bateau! Je n'avais pas revu ni remâché ces vers depuis des ans et des ans. Le voilà qui reparaît à l'entrée du port de l'esprit et je le trouve... inutile. Est-ce que Mallarme aurait eu raison? Mais restent Les Illuminations, je pense. Serait-ce un bateau d'enfant? Est-ce lui, est-ce moi? Dis-moi si c'est toi." Yet these criticisms did not diminish Valéry's admiration of Rimbaud
as a great master of words, they merely accentuated the difference between the poets and their conception in poetry. In October 1906 he wrote to Gide: "...Repris hier soir Rimbaud. Il y a dix ans... Toujours épaté. Vraiment ce bougre-là a deviné et crée la littérature qui reste toujours au-dessus du lecteur. Mais ne commençons pas ni ne recommençons."

It seems that he admired Rimbaud from afar; if one excludes Valéry's early imitations in his letters, one may say that he remained a stranger to Rimbaud's experiences. The latter's "influence" on Valéry's thought was then only of temporary value and added nothing to the formation of his ideas. Admiration—yes, influence—no.

III

It should be clear from the above pages that Valéry's actual work was rather far removed from the aesthetics which he professed at that time. In fact his early poems can hardly be called original, for he freely used the decadent-symbolist elements mixed with reminiscences of the Parnasse, such as we saw in "Le Cygne." Valéry had not yet united theory and practice; his theory had advanced far beyond his practice. The dichotomy, to be sure, was a source of discouragement to the young poet who realized the poverty of the means at his disposal. The discouragement, as seen in those "violent" letters, was to be accentuated by his interest in music and by his realization that music could achieve that which poetry lacked—a greater freedom from the
common references.

Let us now turn our attention to the importance of music, notably that of Wagner, in Symbolist poetry, and to its presence in Valéry's thought.

In March 1861 Baudelaire published an article in the Revue Européenne in defense of Tannhäuser, presented in Paris 13 months earlier without success. Baudelaire had known Wagner by reputation since 1849, had admired his genius, but did not enter into personal contact with the German musician until more than ten years later. Beside Baudelaire a few initiates, such as Gautier, the music critic Asselineau, and Berlioz, appreciated Wagner. His music, and above all his aesthetic theories, became widely known primarily through the Revue Wagnerienne, founded only in 1885. This review was the primary cause for the performance at the Lamoureux Concerts of excerpts from Wagner's works. These concerts were frequented by Mallarmé and all his friends, who saw in Wagner one of the exponents of Symbolism.

Wagner represented for the whole Symbolist generation the final triumph of music, because he was able to carry the power of the orchestra and of voice to their highest degree of perfection. On the one hand, the Symbolists, haunted by the total sense of life, found that Wagner had realized in the Nibelungen, for example, the total experience
of man. On the other hand, Wagner revealed to them the close union of music and the spoken word and showed them the possibility of verbal extension. In the fusion of music and words the Symbolists hoped to express the total feeling which ordinary language, more apt at expressing the abstraction of thought than sentiment, is incapable of rendering. It must be understood that Mallarmé's interest in music was different from Verlaine's or Wyzewa's. Mallarmé attended a concert in order to learn the technique of music; he did not want to imitate music in his poetry, but rather to transpose the technique employed by music to his poetry. In 1920 Valéry defined Symbolism as "une intention commune à plusieurs familles de poètes (d'ailleurs ennemies entre elles) de 'reprendre à la Musique leur bien.'"

However, this definition applied primarily to Mallarmé and to Valéry himself. That is to say they wished to achieve in poetry the same effects as music achieved by employing the technical procedures of the latter. The poet sought to deliver the word from its conventional meaning by an introduction of music into his poetry. He strove to suggest the immobile states of the soul which hitherto only music could express. The ideal goal of Symbolist poetry was music, the least mimetic of the arts, a goal which it could never attain. This in part explains the failure of the movement and the anguish of its exponents. They needed a language capable of establishing multiple relations between
the *signifié* and the *signifiant*, a language which should try to establish
musical relations between words. Much later Valéry stated:

> Le contraste parfois si douloureux que nous voyons entre
> l'énorme puissance des moyens de l'orchestre et la pauvreté
> relative des ressources du langage nous tourmentait. J'ajouterais
> que vers 1888...la réaction qui se faisait contre le naturalisme
> et la description pure orientait les esprits vers les choses de
> la vie intérieure. Or, tandis que le langage est remarquable-
> ment pauvre dans la partie du vocabulaire qui peut servir à
> exprimer l'existence psychologique et affective, la musique
> a pour elle, par son action presque directe sur le système
> nerveux central, des moyens de produire et presque à son
> compte, toutes les illusions d'une vie complète, toute la fantas-
> magorie des passions, des événements sensuels;... 50

Music was all important to the Symbolist poet, and above all the
music of Wagner, or rather his aesthetic theories. Wagner's aesthetic
theories were promulgated in France by Wyzewska's articles in the *Revue
Wagnérienne*. These articles placed Wagner in the tradition of Schopen-
hauer, claiming that the musician's aesthetics rested on a solipsism
based on Schopenhauer's theories. Wyzewska's articles are proof of the
statement that French Symbolism neither followed nor really wished to
follow Wagner's aesthetics. He set out to prove the identity of Wagnerian
and Symbolist theories, thus necessarily modifying the musician's
thought.

The only deviation from Wagner's theory which is relevant to this
51
chapter is the classification of the arts. Wagner emphasized the
relation between words and music ("Wortsprache und Tonsprache"),
while he virtually ignored the other arts; he completely excluded
poetry or painting from his aesthetics. Wyzewa, on the contrary,
strve to make painting musical and poetical. For him all human ex-
perience consisted of sensation, emotion, and intellection; to each
art he assigned one of these spheres—to plastic art, sensation; to
music, emotion; and to poetry, intellection. Each of these three arts
represented one mode of life. Yet each art acquired real worth only
when it included traces of the others. Poetry included music, painting
emotion, and so forth. Synthetic art emerged and restored a balance
between the experiences of man and the different arts, grown stale
through separation, (for example, the naturalist novel).

Wagner made no distinction between the three modes of life and
their corresponding arts. He only emphasized music which belongs
to the realm of abstract thought. Yet contrary to Wyzewa, who placed
the origin of speech outside emotion, Wagner conceived of speech
as having evolved from musical utterance. For Wagner no drastic
operation was needed in order to restore speech to its original state
of music, for music was already inherent in speech. For him the
total art work was not poetry with an added dose of music, but rather
the music drama. The Symbolists, by grafting music onto poetry,
sought to endow the Word with all the extension of sound. The power
of expression was not to rest with music but with the Symbol, which
through its suggestive power could then express the emotional content of thought. In effect the Symbolists did not alter their conceptions through the influence of Wagner but rather searched for a confirmation of their own theories in his work.

The origin of Valéry's interest in the work of Wagner is unknown. Perhaps the reading of the Revue Wagnerienne or the high regard which Baudelaire and Mallarmé had for the German musician stimulated his interest. Wagner's name first appears in the little black notebook where Mallarmé's "Sonnet sur Wagner" was copied by a hand other than Valéry's. However, it was Pierre Feline who first introduced Valéry to Wagner's music by playing excerpts from the operas for him on the piano. "Tous les jours il venait s'asseoir à côté de mon piano. Je lui jouais du Wagner, quelquefois du Beethoven. Malgré mon jeu fort défectueux, il se prit d'enthousiasme pour Wagner.... A vrai dire, ce qui l'intéressait, c'était certains des procédés de Wagner et en particulier, la manière dont il sait développer en nous l'émotion musicale. D'abord contenue, cette émotion s'intensifie pour atteindre son paroxysme à un instant fixé d'avance, après lequel le retour au calme s'établit par degrés. Ce schéma, que l'on découvre dans la plupart des sonnets des Parnassiens, était bien connu de Paul; ce qui le séduisait, c'est l'art avec lequel Wagner en use." From Feline's essay it is evident that Valéry did not wish to "graft" music onto his
poetry, but, like Mallarmé, he was fascinated by the technique of
music and wished to endow poetry with this same technique in order
to expand its domain. Valéry was impressed with the ability Wagner
displayed in evoking pure emotion outside of all banal context. His
influence on the young Valéry can be considered, like that of Poe, as
intellectual rather than emotional. In 1944 Valéry expressed his
youthful interest in Wagner in the following manner:

Quant à moi, je me réfère constamment à l’idée que je me
fais de l’homme complet, ou plutôt de l’action complète, et
considérant comme telle l’exécution d’une œuvre, mon
"idéal" est d’y voir concourir toutes nos forces et facultés.
C’est pourquoi je fus si profondément conquis par ce qu’a
fait Richard Wagner, et qui me semble supposer une alliance
extraordinaire de puissances intellectuelles et sensitives, une
sorte de connaissance intuitive du système nerveux, sur lequel
la possession d’une science, et donc, d’une liberté technique
prodigieuse, lui permet d’exercer un empire qui parut long-
temps absolu. Il n’est pas d’homme dont je trouve plus
enviable l’état de l’être au moment de la composition que
celui-ci, si je l’imagine livré à tous ces pouvoirs et disposant,
sur les vastes pages d’une partition d’orchestre, de toutes
les variables de son art... La gloire est peu de chose auprès
de ces développements de soi dans la solitude. 55

It is then the extreme control which Wagner exercised over himself and
his material which attracted Valéry to the musician, for he imagined
the mind behind these works. He saw in music a perfect art, founded
on exact principles, which made him doubt the ability of language to
liberate itself from the habitual context and to give rise to a pure work
of art, free from all accident and from any meaning other than that of
poetry itself. The musical exploration of language removed it from its
affective functions and brought it closer to those purely poetic. The perfection of music further impressed the young poet with the imperfection of his own work. On March 27, 1891 he wrote to Gide:

Mon cher André, je suis dans Lohengrin jusqu'aux yeux. J'ignore le premier mot de musique, mais j'écoute et j'imagine, quand un de mes amis au piano, le soir, me joue le Prélude ou le Duo, ou La Marche mystique, du deuxième acte.

Cette musique m'amènera, cela se prépare, à ne plus écrire. Déjà trop de difficultés m'arrêtaient....

Et puis, quelle page écrite arrive à la hauteur des quelques notes qui sont le motif du Graal?  

Music, however, for Valéry was not the only discipline purer than literature. As mentioned above the young Valéry had been interested in architecture and had studied the works of Viollet le Duc and of Owen Jones with great interest. Ultimately he asked the question if the total work of art could not be constructed by the intimate union of architecture and music.

In March 1891 L'Ermitage published Paradoxe sur L'Architecte. In this essay the young poet sought the principles of rigor on which to base his aesthetic thought. It appears from this article that Valéry wished to do for architecture what the Symbolists had done for poetry, that is, to add music and to endow architecture with wider meaning. In order to build this tabernacle of pure art, as Valéry envisaged the union of music and architecture, a supreme architect was needed. "Il
naître, peut-être, pour élever les premiers tabernacles et les sanctuaires imprévus où le Credo futur, à travers l'encens, retentira."
The vocabulary of this article is still reminiscent of his early decadent-symbolist poems, yet its purpose is no longer a flight from this world, but rather a coming to terms with a new aesthetic theory. Long ago, in Orphic times, architecture and music were united in the highest creations of man. "...l'esprit soufflait sur le marbre; les murailles antiques ont vécu comme des hommes, et les architectures perpétuaient les songes." But since the decadence, architecture trails behind the other arts which have all found their correspondence in music.
"Tous les autres arts sont serrés autour des hautaines enseignes d'or. Les purs artistes ont trouvé dans l'adoration indistincte des musiques, des couleurs et des mots, une grâce mystérieuse qui touche leurs œuvres particuliers." Does Valéry not mean by "les autres arts" Symbolist poetry which found its supreme architect in Mallarmé? The pure artist no longer copies nature, but replaces it in the poem. The poem, like music, exists independently from reality. Words stand in reciprocal relation to each other, establishing thereby a symmetry found only in music. These new relations, syntactically speaking, take words out of their ordinary context and give them a purely poetic sense. "Et le rêve de chacun se magnifie et s'exalte, et tout cet univers exaspéré qu'abritent les esprits magnifiques, ou flambent les
fleurs et les métaux, où les êtres sont plus beaux et plus douloureux, s'enferme, -- o triomphe des luttes avec l'Ange! -- dans une parole, dans l'hymen délicat des nuances, dans la vie personnelle et décisive des sons!" Valéry now used the Symbolist vocabulary for an aesthetic end and no longer in a purely decorative fashion. Through a special grace, the poet can perceive correspondences between sounds, colors, and words. It is a grace to see further and beyond the appearance of things and to perceive a common essence of things. Since the universe is conceived as a totality and its constituents are secretly linked, the poet can, through his symbols, enclose the entire universe into a poem. Yet his divine condition is never really assured, and the struggle with the angel continues; the poet's triumphs are rare.

Poetry has then, according to Valéry, found its supreme architect who can create a closed system through words. But architecture still awaits the master who will give it a purer sense.

La poésie a obtenu son constructeur de Temples qui taillait les mots longuement comme des pierres dures; mais aucun architectenâsu être Flaubert...

Demain le suprême édificateur surgira d'un peuple, si ce peuple et le temps n'en sont pas les meurtriers. Sa pensée sera forte et harmonieuse, car il aura bu le lait d'une Déesse.

Ce soir, je veux en ces lignes vaines que dicte le caprice avec la songerie, prévoir l'invisible étoile, --cette âme lointaine et par mon âme désirée.
Valéry imagined the method according to which the architect will create his work. In reality the method imagined is none other than that employed by the Symbolists transposed to another art. Like the poet, this architect will be a musician. The works of Wagner and Beethoven will inspire the harmony of his edifice, because only music can convey the subtle analogies of the unreal and the real. "Le héros, qu'il combine des octaves ou des perspectives, conçoit en dehors du monde... L'architecte de l'Avenir, quand libre des choses visibles et des types exprimés, il aura trouvé le symbole et la synthèse de l'Univers intérieur qui confusion l'inquiétait, lors cette volonté et cette pensée de musique agrandie composera sa création originale comme une haute symphonie—aussi indépendante des apparences... qu'un Edgar Poe en ces étranges poèmes où toute cette vie est oubliée!—ainsi se manifestera l'indicible correspondance entre deux incarnations de l'art, entre la façade royale de Reims, et telle page de Tannhäuser."

His work will be independent from exterior reality. He will find the perfect symbol to express the universe which he carries inside of himself. Each part of his cathedral, for it is a cathedral that he will construct, will be arranged symphonically, like the words of the Symbolists. He will establish musical relations between the respective parts of the cathedral in order to endow each part with its purest sense.

Car les cuivres sont resplendissants comme des portes d'Or, les cordes étirées sur les violons versent avec une tendresse
Valéry's thought had progressed since the "Technique Littéraire" where, under the influence of Poe, he sought the musical effect only at the end of the poem in an "éclat final." At this point he insisted upon the musical harmony of each part in the work.

But what kind of a man will this architect be? He will have "l'intelligence mathématique" which discerns the analogies between things, and the will to use this knowledge in the construction of his supreme work. In this description we perceive the prototype of Valéry's geniuses as exemplified by Léonard, Napoléon, and Teste, the men capable of seeing relations between things.

The discussion of the method and of the architect is followed by a description of the edifice and its setting. "Et voici dans l'air bleu le Décor tel un somptueux désir d'enfant réalisé..." It is a curious description, recalling again the Symbolist poems. The cathedral's stained glass windows are mauve in tone, the columns sculptured with mysterious and symbolical flowers, silence reigns once more. The cathedral itself is compared to a forest, a forest described in Symbolist images. It is not quite clear from the text if the forest itself is the cathedral or merely the setting of the cathedral. "Et c'est la forêt
ou l'on oublie, ou l'on écoute! Le long des parois précieuses, coupées
par les hiératiques bandeaux les lotus nimbés d'or, inattendus et purs,
épanouissent leurs pâles calices, cueillis peut-être au fond de
wagnériennes rêveries, dans les plaines de la lune et traduits en
69
gemmes fondues sur les murailles du sanctuaire."

The music of the cathedral-forest is not so much heard as sensed.
It is an interior music, occasioned by the harmony of the cathedral.
"Un largo triomphal et total éclate enfin sous l'ultime voûte; de tous
les motifs exprimés se dégage et s'essore le secret, le glorieux amour
absolu..." This largo which breaks forth is not a truly auditory move-
ment, but rather is evoked by the "charm" of the edifice.

The cathedral's stones have the gift to sing, as in the time of
Orpheus, which makes us suspect that this architect is no other than
Orpheus the poet-musician, and indeed the article closes with a sonnet
to Orpheus. Gide admired the "rêve d'harmonie cristallisée en irréelles
70
architectures qui le [the article] termine." The poem as it appeared
in the article follows:

\[
\text{Il évoque en un bois thessalien, Orphée,}
\text{Sous les myrtes; et le soir antique descend}
\text{Le bois sacré s'emplit lentement de lumière,}
\text{Et le dieu tient sa lyre entre ses doigts d'argent.}
\]

\[
\text{Le dieu chante, et, selon le rythme tout-puissant,}
\text{L'élèveant au soleil les fabuleuses pierres,}
\text{Et l'on voit grandir vers l'azur, incandescent,}
\text{Les hauts murs d'or harmonieux d'un sanctuaire.}
\]
Il chante! assis au bord du ciel splendide Orphée!
Son oeuvre se revêt d’un vespéral trophée,
Et sa lyre divine enchante les porphyres,

Car le temple érigé par ce musicien
Unit la sûreté des rythmes anciens,
A l’âme immense du grand hymne sur la lyre!... 71

This poem represents the fusion of the three arts dear to Valéry:

poetry, music, and architecture. The fusion of these three arts repre-
sented for young Valéry the perfect art work, as non-mimetic as
possible, constructed by the artist capable of generalizing the creative
act. Orpheus, the greatest musician and magician of antiquity, is the
symbol par excellence of the architect whom Valéry imagined. His
magic gift as a musician gave Orpheus the power to create this beauti-
ful and pure dream, detached from the material world. Instead of
fleeing from the world, Orpheus creates a work of art so pure that it
has no point of reference in this banal world. In other words Orpheus
dominates the world through the magic of his words and does not submit.
Valéry, too, refused to submit and tried to flee through the mysticism
of his poetry.

The stones obey Orpheus because he calls them by their true
name. He reigns supreme over them by the power of his language.

Orpheus is thus a symbol as important as Narcissus. With this poem
Valéry established his preference for the magic of language over
mysticism. In other words, he chose Apollo and not Dionysus,
Mallarmé and not Rimbaud. Valéry now abandoned the vague regions of spiritual mysticism and entered upon the difficult road of light and pure consciousness.

In the Paradoxe Valéry realized the purity of music and the freedom of its expression. The poverty of the linguistic means at his disposal became more evident and discouraged him. "Cette musique, m'amènera, cela se prépare, à ne plus écrire." Words seemed incapable of expressing this universal dream. Imprisoned in their habitual meaning, they are condemned to evoke always the same banal feelings and can never hope to attain the absolute purity which he sought.

Valéry entitled this essay Paradoxe sur L'Architecte because he believed the architect of the future should draw his inspiration rather from the work of Beethoven and Wagner than from Greek architecture. This shows, on the part of young Valéry, a great faith in the theory of correspondences, i.e. correspondences not only between things, but also between all the arts, just as the Symbolists, basing their theories on Wagner, had seen it. Valéry chose the architect, rather than the poet, as a representative of his new creator, because on the one hand architecture impressed him with its rigorous discipline, and on the other because he began to suspect the inherent value of each creative act. With this essay Valéry dethroned poetry from its privileged position among the arts and substituted the creative act. He placed
all the arts, indeed all the intellectual disciplines, on the same level
for they all stem from the creative act and ultimately return to it.

His faith in the correspondences between the arts was transformed little
by little, during the year 1891, into a faith in the conscious act.

The influence of Wagner, or better yet, of music was in one
sense a negative influence. It revealed to Valéry the inadequacy of
language, "la langue est pauvre comme une veuve" and confirmed his
doubts as to its power. Since he doubted the absolute powers of poetry,
he was disappointed in the poet and could not consider him as the supreme
artist. Therein lies the fundamental difference between Valéry and
Mallarmé. Let us now turn to the relation between those two poets.

IV

Mallarmé's influence on Valéry can be analyzed in two separate
categories: 1) in the conception that Valéry formed of poetry and the
poet; and, 2) in Valéry's own poetry in the form of direct imitation.

When Valéry discovered Mallarmé's poetry he encountered pre-
cisely the perfection which the other poets, including Baudelaire,
lacked and for which he felt an immediate necessity. He had created
in himself, so to speak, "la nécessité de Mallarmé."
Puis-je faire comprendre en 1943 à quelques personnes beaucoup moins âgées que moi, l'effet que pouvait produire vers 1891 la rencontre brusque d'un certain jeune homme avec les vers de Mallarmé? Il faut supposer ce jeune homme assez occupé de poésie et sensible surtout aux inventions de forme, à la diversité des solutions qu'admet un vers, ayant par conséquent fort peu d'estime pour Lamartine ou pour Musset, ayant assez bien lu quelques Parnassiens, et trouvant dans Baudelaire le mélange plutôt déconcertant d'une magie extraordinaire, rebelle à toute analyse, et de parties détestables, expressions vulgaires et vers très mauvais. J'insiste sur cette imperfection que je trouvais dans Baudelaire mêlée à une pleine puissance harmonique car cette impression était comme expressément faite pour créer en moi le besoin, ou plutôt la nécessité de Mallarmé. 73

Mention has been made earlier of Mallarmé's "Sonnet sur Wagner," copied into the little black notebook either in 1888 or 1889. The same notebook contains "Les Fleurs" and "Eventail de Mlle Mallarmé." "Les Fleurs" appeared in the Parnasse Contemporain where Valéry could certainly have read it, while "Eventail de Mlle Mallarmé," as well as "Les Fleurs," were among the Mallarmé poems of the Anthologie des Poètes français. It is quite possible that Valéry knew all of the poems by Mallarmé which had appeared in the Parnasse Contemporain. They were: "Les Fenêtres," "Le Sonneur," "Azur," "Les Fleurs," "Soupir," "Brise Marine," "Tristesse d'Été," "Aumône," "Don du Poème," "Angoisse," "Renouveau," and "Las de l'amer repos où ma paresse offense." These poems published in the Parnasse Contemporain are of course Mallarmé's early poems and are less "pure" than his later works such as L'Après-Midi d'un Faune. It is then a Mallarmé
still under the influence of Baudelaire whom Valéry first admired. In these poems Mallarmé opposes an Ideal: "Le vierge Azur" "le ciel antérieur ou fleurit la Beauté" to the ugly reality which he detests. In a letter written to Pierre Louÿs, Valéry proudly announced that he had discovered Mallarmé all by himself: "Et il [Valéry writing about himself in the third person] put s'accorder certain jour le mérite d'avoir, lui, provincial parmi les provinciaux, découvert et chéri quelques-uns des secrets poèmes par qui s'impose la Gloire solitaire de Mallarmé."

It is impossible to determine when Valéry first began to read Mallarmé. Although he talked about his first encounter with the work of the master frequently, Valéry is not accurate in this respect. From that same letter to Pierre Louÿs, written in September 1890, it would seem that he already knew Mallarmé's work in 1888. He stated: "Vous êtes bien fortuné de posséder Mallarmé, moi je grapille ses poèmes un peu partout. Quant à Hérodiade, je la recherche depuis deux années en vain et je désespère de la lire." However in _Propos me Concernant_, written in 1943, he commented that it was in 1891 that he suddenly came in contact with the poetry of Mallarmé. Yet in October 1890 he wrote his first letter to the master of the Rue de Rome. In his _Lettre sur Mallarmé_ he asserted that he first read Mallarmé at the age of twenty. "À l'âge encore tendre de vingt ans, et au point
critique d'une étrange et profonde transformation intellectuelle, je subis le choc de l'oeuvre de Mallarmé." While in the essay Je disais quelquefois à A Stephane Mallarmé, he recalled the age as nineteen. Finally in the essay entitled Stephane Mallarmé, he stated that he first knew of Mallarmé in 1889. "J'ai connu le nom de Mallarmé vers 1889; d'abord par quelques traits plus ou moins ironiques dirigés contre lui dans diverses publications.... Ensuite, j'obtins du poète raille une connaissance un peu moins sommaire par deux citations très courtes insérées dans le curieux ouvrage A Rebours de J.-K. Huysmans."

It can, however, be concluded that Valéry knew a number of Mallarmé's poems from the Parnasse Contemporain and the Anthologie des Poètes Français in 1888 at the very earliest or in 1889 at the latest. Certainly he knew them before reading A Rebours, which reaffirmed his admiration for the master and introduced him to a fragment of Hérodiate. Besides these poems by Mallarmé the little black notebook also contains Mallarmé's Avant-Dire. This was definitely copied in 1890, for it is followed by an autograph of Pierre Louys, which could not have been entered into the notebook before 1890.

The preface by Mallarmé poses the problem of language, and it is certainly possible to assume that these lines met with the same enthusiasm in the young Valéry as those by Poe. In the previous section it was seen that the Symbolists, and above all Mallarmé, wanted to give
the word, through the Symbol, the suggestive power of music. Mallarmé's _Avant-dire_, so carefully copied by young Valéry, analyzes precisely such a symbol. The Mallarméan symbol consists of two terms, one spiritual and the other suggestive rather than expressed. The reader must recreate the analogy which links the two terms.

"Je dis: une fleur! et, hors de l'oubli où ma voix relégue aucun contour, en tant que quelque chose d'autre que les calices sus, musicalement se lève, idée même et suave, l'absente de tous bouquets."  

Mallarmé gives here the material element, "je dis: une fleur," which in the symbols of his poetry is merely suggested; "l'absente de tous les bouquets" is the interior or spiritual element of which "fleur" is the material projection and the analogy which links them is

"musicalement se lève, idée même et suave." This symbol is formed "hors de l'oubli," in other words in memory. Memory contains the analogy and the power to project it upon a concrete object. Valéry alluded to the evocative power in the "Paradoxe," for the "souvenance héroïque," awakened in the spectator of the cathedral, is no other than the Mallarméan memory.

_Le vers qui de plusieurs vocables refait un mot total, neuf, étranger à la langue et comme incantatoire, achève cet isolement de la parole: niant, d'un trait souverain le hasard demeure aux termes malgré l'artifice de leur retrempe alternée en le sens et la sonorité, et nous cause cette surprise de n'avoir oui jamais tel fragment ordinaire en même temps que la reminiscence de l'objet nommé baigne dans une neuve atmosphère._
Mallarmé was convinced that poetic language was unique and necessary, and that absolutely nothing could be substituted for it. Poetic language, composed of an interior necessity, can conquer chance. For Mallarmé, as for Orpheus, the exterior world has disappeared. It is negated by the magic of the poetic act. The poetic act is language and words are therefore true reality. The great impression that this conscious conquest of reality through the power of the word, in other words, through a mental discipline, must have made on the young Valéry, who had tried to escape from reality, cannot be underestimated.

Son oeuvre me fut dès le premier regard, et pour toujours, un sujet de merveille: et bientôt sa pensée présumée, un objet secret de questions infinies. Il a joué sans le savoir un si grand rôle dans mon, histoire interne, modifié par sa seule existence tant d'évaluations en moi, son action de présence m'a assuré de tant de choses, m'a confirmé dans tant de choses; et davantage, elle m'a intimement interdit tant de choses que je ne sais enfin démêler ce qu'il fut de ce qu'il me fut. 86

Mallarmé's poetry and his theory of poetry gave Valéry a concrete demonstration of Poe's aesthetic and revealed to him the perfect artist of whom Poe had written. His discovery of Mallarmé was a "conquête spirituelle décisive," analogous to that of Poe. Suddenly he came face to face with a work, rigorous and perfect, which accomplished exactly what he had envisaged for his own poems.

J'avais fait quelques vers; j'aimais ce qu'il fallait aimer en poésie vers 1889. L'idée de perfection avait encore force de loi quoique dans un sens plus subtil que le sens plastique et trop simple qu'on lui avait donné
dix ou vingt ans avant.... en un mot, on demandait alors de la poésie qu'elle produisit une idée d'elle-même tout opposée à celle que la suite du temps a rendu séduisante un peu plus tard: ce qui devait arriver. 88

This absolute poetry imposed itself with all the magic power it contained.

Je conclus à un système intérieur chez Mallarmé, système qui devait se distinguer de celui du philosophe, et, d'autre part, de celui des mystiques: mais non sans analogie avec eux.

J'étais tout disposé par ma nature, ou plutôt par un changement de nature qui venait de se produire en moi, à développer dans une voie assez singulière l'impression dûe à des poèmes qui me manifestèrent une telle préparation de leurs beautés qu'elles-mêmes pâlissaient devant l'idée qu'elles me donnaient de ce travail caché. 89

But the young Valéry did not consume himself in this struggle with the absolute; his interest lay, from the very beginning, in the hidden force behind that poetry, in the poet who had created such an enchanting work. He perceived this work through the power of the poet. The perfection of Mallarmé's poetry re-emphasized the importance of the creative art.

"Je me disais que ce n'est point l'oeuvre faite et ses apparences ou ses effets dans le monde qui peuvent nous accomplir et nous édifier, mais seulement la manière dont nous l'avons faite. L'art et la peine nous augmentent; mais la Muse et la chance ne nous font que prendre et quitter." Mallarmé presented for him the homo-faber and the man of restraint. Behind this work, Valéry felt the presence of a mind which had chosen each word, had meditated upon each verse, in order to give it the greatest amount of generality possible. "J'essayais de me repré-
senter les chemins et les travaux de la pensée de l'auteur. Je me disais que cet homme avait médité sur tous les mots, considéré, énuméré toutes les formes. Je m'intéressais peu à peu à l'opération d'un esprit si différent du mien, plus encore, peut-être qu'aux fruits visibles de son acte."

It was Poe who made Valéry aware of the intense power of Mallarmé. Not even the slightest shade of inspiration could be detected behind Mallarmé's poetry. Valéry perceived the cold attention of the technician with which the master surveyed his work. Through this rigor Mallarmé seemed to have bridged the chasm between poetry and algebra; he had endowed language with the pure sense of mathematics, using words as signs and symbols.

Young Valéry suspected that Mallarmé, through his act of writing, made poetry something greater than a simple lyrical endeavor. He conceived poetry as a metaphysics. "C'est ainsi qu'il en est venu à vouloir donner à l'art d'écrire un sens universel, une valeur d'univers, et qu'il a reconnu que le suprême objet du monde et la justification de son existence, --pour autant que l'on accordait cette existence, --était, ne pouvait être qu'un Livre." The true subject of this poetry was the very act of writing, requiring on the part of the creator a retreat into his innermost self. This descent into the essence of the self demands from the poet a heroic force, much greater than that of the Romantic poet, since he refuses all irrational inspiration. The
descent into the microcosmos, which the creator carries within himself, gives universal meaning to the poem and to the creative act, and is hence an act of universal creation. The poet is no longer a prophet who expresses what a God whispers into his ear. Inspiration is dead and the poet has become God. "Ma pensée s'est pensée" wrote Mallarmé and we are struck by the resemblance of that sentence to Aristotle's description of God, in place of the empirical Moi an impersonal Moi, free from the phenomenal world, arises to summarize the Universe in a work of absolute beauty. Yet this absolute can never be completely expressed and its purest expression is silence. Mallarmé's poetry is thus an ontology whose probing question concerns the relation between language and nothingness.

Valéry was charmed by this mind which manifested such a will to work, such a conscious method. The poetic act became edified for him through this "esprit mathématique" which displayed the same rigor as architecture and music. The creative act became an ethics for the young poet who henceforth refused all that was easy. The poet, along with his language, realizes the abyss which separates phenomenal reality and daily language from his own idea. No compromise is possible.
Ce que j'aimais le plus en lui, c'était ce caractère essentiellement volontaire, cette tendance absolutiste démontrée par l'extrême perfection du travail. Le travail sévère, en littérature, se manifeste et s'opère par des refus. On peut dire qu'il est mesuré par le nombre de refus. Que si l'étude de la fréquence et de l'espèce des refus était possible, elle serait d'une ressource capitale, pour la connaissance intime d'un écrivain, puis qu'elle nous éclairerait la discussion secrète qui se livre, au moment d'une œuvre, entre le temperament, les ambitions, les prévisions de l'homme et, d'autre part, les excitations et les moyens intellectuels de l'instant. 95

Mallarmé, much more so than Poe, was Valéry's first "héros de l'esprit." Valéry created Mallarmé according to his own ideals. 96

"Je ne sais enfin démêler ce qu'il fut de ce qu'il me fut."

Mallarmé's example incited Valéry to pose the problem of literature with much more intensity: what is the relation between poetry based on language and the mind? A year and a half earlier, in the "Technique Littéraire", he still believed in the unlimited power of literature and in its effects upon the reader. Mallarmé's influence drew him away from the naive notion of creating a preconceived effect upon the reader. The dehumanisation which the latter's poetry had undergone and the great importance the creative act held for Valéry forever separated the reader, the author, and the work. The work became autonomous and distinct from the two human aspects. Language could no longer be a message, but an expression of a deeper reality. Poetry became knowledge of the self, expression of the self,
but no longer a message. The poet liberated himself through the creative act; the reader remained completely absent. In the preface of M. Teste Valéry wrote: "Il me semblait indigne de partir mon ambition entre le souci d'un effet à produire sur les autres, et la passion de me connaître tel que j'étais sans omission, sans simulation ni complaisances." He conceived the creative act as an act of the Moi independent of the "personnalité." The imperfection and easy sensitivity of his poems became even more apparent to him upon his contact with the perfect poetry of Mallarmé.

It would be exaggerated to state that Valéry imitated Mallarmé, but it is clear that his poems of 1891 have a new accent which recalls the poetry of the master. Why did he wait almost two years in order to add a Mallarméan tone to his poems? One may give two possible answers to this question: 1) he was not quite ready to do so earlier; or, 2) he did not really recognize the inherent difference between Mallarmé's poetry and that of the Decadents or Symbolists until later. At any rate a new vocabulary began to adorn Valéry's poems, and the decadent-symbolist terms disappeared. Words such as: "astre, sidéral, désastre, azur, chevelure," became evident in the poems of 1891-1892. In other words, a Mallarméan vocabulary was substituted for the decadent-symbolist one.

If we look at the sonnet "Arion," which was published by La Wallonie at the beginning of the year 1892, we see that all the extraneous
elements have disappeared.

Arion

Inter delphinas Arion...

Le luth luit sur le monstre élu pour un tel astre
Plus haut que le sourire adoré des oiseaux
Qu'amuse la beauté des larmes du désastre
A la figure sidérale du héros.

Dont la main d'or, dans la splendeur du soir, délivre
Par le luth ou scintille un vol pur de sa chair
L'eau vagabonde, peau d'azur claire et nue, ivre
Au jeu de la mortelle écume de la mer.

Des papillons neufs naissent vers des fleurs futures,
Doux dans les boucles d'onde, o fines chevelures
Qu'une profonde enfant démèle du cristal...

Mais la lèvre du dieu par le silence insulte
Toute épaule limpide éparse au flot natal,
Vénus!... et nul beau cri dans le ciel ne se sculpte! 99

Valéry no longer mentioned the power of the god's song, as he had done in "Orphée," but rather suggests the magic of the divine song through the choice of vocabulary. He sought to break the habitual reference of the words and to give them a meaning applicable only to the poem itself. These words should have no meaning outside the poem.

Des papillons neufs naissent vers des fleurs futures
Doux dans les boucles d'onde, o fines chevelures
Qu'une profonde enfant démèle du cristal...

The last line of this tercet, especially the choice of the words, "profonde enfant" is already typically Valérien. The idea of silence is also completely new in this poem. Arion's song is suggested by the words
and the rhythm of the poem, but it is a song of silence: "Mais la levre
du dieu par le silence insulte." The poet-musician is silent, his song
is interior. He is a god who can manifest himself only through silence,
for all expression would be a fault in his divinity. An actual song would
only accentuate the insufficiency of language. As Mallarme's "La
Sainte" disdains her musical instrument, so Arion imposes silence
upon his lips. Silence has become more musical and greater than
auditory song.

Several images of the second quatrains already suggest images
of the "Cimetiere Marin."

L'eau vagabonde, peau d'azur claire et nue, ivre
Au jeu de la mortelle écumé de la mer.

The great attraction which he felt for the real world, the world of the
senses, has come again to the surface. It is sufficient to extract the
typically Mallarméan words to see here a very early version of the
"Cimetière Marin." Valéry could no longer ignore his ties to the
real world and above all to the sun and the sea. He no longer tried to
flee or to abolish reality. The concrete world, as perceived through
his senses, henceforth furnished him with the symbols of his poetry.

Unsatisfied with the poem, Valéry wrote to Gide in 1892: "'Arion'
joliment mauvais, sonnet expérimental."

The craftsman within him was eager for self-imposed constraints
and Valéry had already experimented in 1891 with different rhythms. This
indicates his conception of poetry as discipline rather than metaphysics, as it was for Mallarmé. In April 1892 he dedicated the following octosyllabic poem to Fourment:

Comme pour prédire un sort pur  
A qui des nudités s'amuse,  
Penchant sa vérité camuse  
Et sa barbe d'automne sur

L'ornemental pré qu'il effeuille  
Un Faune, épars au calme esprit  
Du paysage et qui sourit  
De son ironie haute, cueille

La gerbe! heureuse de se voir  
Surprise au détour du dimanche  
Pour, rieuse, odorante et blanche,  
Etre au gré de ce geste noir  
Offerte en signe de malice  
A qui s'amuse de Narcisse. 101

Noteworthy is the more abrupt syntax of this fourteen line poem which results from the numerous enjambments. "Un faune cueille la gerbe" is the essential sentence of these three stanzas. The broken syntax is worthy of Mallarmé. Also significant is the modification of the subject matter in Valéry's poems of the last year. His subjects have become simpler, their power lies in the suggestion of the words and in their unusual combination. The subject of the poem is a faun gathering flowers, in other words an exercise in the manner of Mallarmé.

Another poem which clearly indicates the influence of Mallarmé is:
Ballet

Sur tes lèvres d'or ou l'ombreuse bouche
Baille (pour mieux se taire à tout le bête azur)
Sens-tu, tel un vil astre indifférent, la mouche
Transparente tourner autour du mot très pur

Que tu ne diras pas--fleur, diamant ou pierre
Ou rose jeune encore dans un vierge jardin
Une nudité fraîche sous une paupière
Balancée, amusée hors du chaos mondain

Cette minute ailée épargille un sonore
Vol d'étincelles au vent solaire pour briller
Sur tes dents, sur tes hauts fruits de chair, sur l'aurore

Des cheveux ou j'eus peur à la voir scintiller,
Petit feu naturel d'un sidéral insecte
Ne sous le souffle d'or qui tes songes humecte. 102

This sonnet, still filled with Mallarméan vocabulary, describes a fly buzzing around a sleeping woman. The sleeper is removed from the ever changing phenomenal world and fixed into a static presence and reality. The woman of this sonnet also remains silent, she will not say the word which is formed in her mouth. Silence is once more purer than any word.

Sens-tu, tel un vil astre indifférent, la mouche
Transparente tourner autour du mot très pur
Que tu ne diras pas....

The fly, with its sonorous flight, disperses the word which the mouth would have formed and which dream had whispered. The sleeping woman unlike the poet of "Aurore," is not strong enough to break the web which dream has spun. The fly, an exterior element, performs
this act of liberation, had she said the word, it would have lost its purity.

During the year 1891-1892, Valéry continued to work on "Narcisse." The 13th of July he wrote to Gide: "Mon Narcisse atteint des proportions (non dans l'espace, mais dans l'accord)... vagabondes! Donc je ne l'écrirai jamais. Il est maintenant assez complet. Mais il faudrait le mettre au point poétique; le composer et surtout versifier." His despair over the difficulty of poetry and the poverty of his own results seemed to increase daily. Moreover Valéry realized the impossibility of ever reaching in poetry what Mallarmé set out to do. Literature could not furnish him with the rigor and discipline he needed. When he finally met Mallarmé in 1892, he no longer believed in literature as an absolute or as a means towards self-knowledge for himself. In 1912 he wrote to Thibaudet: "Quant à moi, entre tout et ce rien, j'ai oscillé. J'ai connu Mallarmé, après avoir subi son extrême influence, et au moment même ou je guillotinais intérieurement la littérature." In spite of this imitation, Mallarmé's real influence on Valéry does not lie in his poetry, but in the mind which Valéry imagined to be the force behind this work. His interest in the functioning of a mind able to create such a work led him to consider the mind in general.

Il est exact, --et presque mieux qu'exact, --que Léonard, que Poe, que Mallarmé ont fortement agi sur moi à l'âge
This is the point at which we left Valéry in the previous chapter after his reading of *Eureka*. In 1892 he was ready to abandon poetry and cultivate his mind with other, more rigorous disciplines. He felt himself a prisoner of Mallarmé, because he would have liked to have accomplished as much and even more, yet he realized that he would never be able to create without first liberating himself from Mallarmé and the other idols. He had to find himself. And what is this self? It is free from the phenomenal world, pure, and its own focal point. A glimpse of this self has already been given in a little poem of 1887 entitled "Solitude," and now Valéry came back to that point so that he might "jouir de son propre cerveau."

Valéry's course was different from Mallarmé's. He placed his value not on the material of construction but on the act itself. The problems of construction, and those of composition and order assumed their important place in his intellectual life. We have seen how Valéry placed less and less importance on poetry, and more and more upon the creative act as a mental discipline. Since it was only the act which counted, its result no longer interested young Valéry, be it a building,
a symphony, a poem or a mathematical formula. Poetry was for him no longer a privileged discipline, as it was for Mallarmé, but was assigned a place equal to all the other mental disciplines. The mind at work, not the work, interested him. This was the ultimate result of having read and cherished Mallarmé, who in the last analysis did not so much reveal a new idea to Valéry as to direct him toward the search of the Moi-Pur. In 1892 Valéry felt ready to abandon the discouraging search of poetry and to enter into that of science, whose means appeared more promising to him. "Quand un ouvrage ou tout une œuvre, agit sur quelqu'un non par toutes ses qualités mais par certaines ou certaines d'entre elles, c'est alors que l'influence prend ses valeurs les plus remarquables. Le développement sépare d'une qualité de l'un par la toute-puissance de l'autre manque rarement d'engendrer des effets d'extrême originalité."

Valéry retained from Mallarmé's work a consciousness of the sovereignty of the mind and of a great mental discipline. He applied these qualities to himself in order to reach the knowledge of the self. Thus he spent the rest of his life in this sometimes overpowering search for self-awareness.
"Que peut un Homme?"

The year 1891-1892 was an important one in young Valéry's intellectual growth; indeed it was the year during which his thought crystallized. The twenty year-old Valéry asked the fundamental question which will be the base of all his future research, "que peut un homme?" This question, later the motto of M. Tête, seeks to illuminate the mental potential of man and the best way to put this potential to use.

In 1892 Valéry ceased to write and began to concentrate on the mechanism of thought. Since there are no documents available from that period, I shall base this chapter on the first Cahier, which, although of a slightly later date 1894-1900, represents his state of mind during the period immediately following the crisis.

One of the first questions in the Cahier, "Oui, que peut faire quelqu'un en somme...?" sets the tone of that whole period. The interest of the nineteen year-old Valéry in the creative process of the poet ("La Technique Littéraire") had become general enough to include the mental operations of any thinking man. The "age of idols" had come to an end and the "age of possibilities" commenced.

What was Valéry's attitude toward poetry in 1892? He still disdained inspiration, as a matter of fact in 1927 he described his state of mind at twenty in the following manner:
His rejection of inspiration was uncompromising and absolute. He did not admit it under any form. An extreme confidence in the power of technique and of conscious method, which he had found explained in the work of Poe and demonstrated in that of Mallarmé, was his guide. This rejection of inspiration demanded from the poet a great rigor toward himself; he must refuse all that is easy, reject verses which occur suddenly, and impose constraints upon himself to keep his lucidity with respect to his work. Behind each poem is hidden a great will which created it. On this subject Valéry wrote to Gide in February 1891: "J'ai pris ma plume, et me voilà dans les affres. Car le Narcisse longuement rêvé ne devrait se faire que minutieusement, à courttes heures. Et je souffre de la sentir s'augmenter facilement; presque, et je suis très ému car je vois l'Oeuvre se détacher ingratement de moi et leurrer mon songe d'éphèe solitaire."

By 1891 Valéry had established well-defined relations between the poet and his work. The poet-technician is completely detached
from his work, he stands above it and considers it coldly, 
"l’enthousiasme n’est pas un état de poète."

The poet is not a medium, but an extremely conscious mind. This is what Friedrich Schlegel meant by irony which he defined as a superiority of the poet over the poem, a detachment from his work, and a conscious manipulation of the subject matter. The poet who creates in a trance is not free, his will is chained to the spirit which possesses him and whispers words, sentences, whole poems to him. Thus Valéry could state that the inspired poet, who is nothing but a tool of the Muse, could create a poem in an unknown language. In truth, art demands a free mind, because the poet must rise above the chaos of the world and must create order in language and in the universe. Schlegel's irony is the recognition of the essential paradoxical nature of the universe which only an ambivalent attitude can express. The paradox of the universe is expressed in the struggle between the absolute and the relative which the conscious poet recognizes, for he knows that all thoughts and words could have been other, and even contrary. The innermost being of the artist is dual, stated Schlegel, his thought is a kind of dramatic dialogue, between an Ego which supervises and observes and an Ego which is observed. Like Schlegel, Valéry was also very conscious of the division of his being into what he called the Moi and the personnalité, two terms
which he defined in the following way: "La personnalité est faite par le souvenir et l'habitude tandis (que) le moi se forme toujours actuel." Valéry's attitude toward poetry, and toward intellectual activity in general was one of "irony".

Often he expressed his mature thought in the form of Platonic dialogues. These dialogues were "écrits de circonstances". Valéry chose this form because it permitted him to meet the demands of rigor which he imposed upon himself. Eupalinos for instance was to contain a prescribed number of words (around 120, 000), a feat easily accomplished in the dialogue form. "La souplesse que procure l'emploi de la forme dialoguée permet, par le jeu de répliques insignifiantes, de remplir ce programme en quelques coups autour du but, à la mode des artilleurs. Un 'Certes' ou un 'Sans doute' qui ne compromettent rien, font une ligne qui peut-être ou ne pas être."

Yet this form came to suit Valéry perfectly and accentuated the versatility of each thought expressed. However, in 1891, his "irony" was primarily expressed in his concept of the superiority of the creator over the thing created. But this creator was not Poe, Mallarmé, or even Valéry himself, he was an ideal creator whose empirical personality was surveyed by a superior Moi. This creator has nothing in common with his biographical personality. The "ironic" creator observes himself working, reducing the actions of
the mind to their mechanisms. The poet at work knows that he is observing himself work.

In a letter written to Fourment in 1892, Valéry described at length this double vision of the self. Valéry suddenly perceived Mme R. at the corner of a street, he felt himself seized by a great emotion, but at the same time a new feeling was born, a great consciousness observed his emotional turbulence. He felt himself another. The Valéry moved by Mme R. was seen by this other Valéry who was above the feeling. Supreme consciousness enveloped Mme R. and the young Valéry full of love; "la structure de l'événement annulait même l'être et le mien que le faisions."

In this letter the young Valéry described his faculty of "doubling himself," the capacity of the Moi to observe itself. But did he not go one step further? In other words he observed himself observing himself. He was not only conscious, but conscious of being conscious, or in his own words: "c'est la conscience de la conscience." One could say that Valéry raised the mirror of Mallarmé to the nth power. In a series of opposite mirrors, each reflects the image of the man who looks at himself, but at one point he encounters the image of the Moi which only reflects itself.

Valéry, searching for this consciousness of consciousness, was forced to break with his own "sentimentality" which must have been so pronounced that it demanded such strict discipline. "Il m'est
arrivé vers 18... de considérer vulgaires, trop connus, tous les sentiments naturels, ou quasi tels, -- ou plutôt leur expression.

Je trouvais ignoble, indécent ou hypocrite, le fait de prêcher vertu, justice, humanité, de parler de l'amour qu'on avait. Cela sonnait toujours faux ou stupide à mes oreilles, impudicité ou exploitation.

Comment peut-on ne pas se cacher pour sentir? Je me faisais et me montrais sec de toutes mes forces, à une époque où j'aurais peut-être mieux fait de manifester--et donc, finalement de simuler et exagérer les sensations de mon être intime." Valéry had to destroy his old idols and start anew, "from zero", starting with the tabula rasa in order to construct his Moi. By this radical act he tried to establish his spiritual equilibrium, substituting for his idols of youth the knowledge of the self.

A l'âge de vingt ans, je fus contraint d'entreprendre une action très sérieuse contre les "Idoles" en général. Il ne s'agit d'abord que de l'une d'elles qui m'obsédéa, me rendit la vie presque insupportable. La force de l'absurde est incroyable. Quoi de plus humiliant pour l'esprit que tout le mal que fait ce rien; une image, un élément mental destiné à l'oubli? D'ailleurs, même l'intensité d'une douleur physique ne dépend pas de l'importance vitale de sa cause: une dent malade rend fou, et ce n'est rien en soi.

Cette crise me dressa contre ma "sensibilité" en tant qu'elle entreprenait sur la liberté de mon esprit. J'essayai, sans grand succès immédiat, d'opposer la conscience de mon état lui-même, et l'observateur au patient.
From an early age he had felt the struggle between sensitivity and intellect within himself, a struggle which culminated in the well-known "nuit de Gênes" from the fourth to the fifth October 1892.

Je devins alors un drame singulier que je ne crois pas qu'on ait jamais très bien et assez froidement décrit. Je me mis à recueillir tous les traits qui, dans ces irritations et tourmentes intimes, ces suspens apparents ces reprises, ces fureurs, ces stupéres de nos phases anxieuses, offrent quelque ressemblance avec des phénomènes physiques, font songer à des lois et permettent de considérer comme des troubles ou des vices d'un fonctionnement local, ce que notre naïveté attribue à des forces que l'on se forge, au destin, à des volontés adverses, comme le rêveur fait un monstre d'un oreiller, et un voyage au pôle d'une jambe qui s'est découverte et qui a froid. 13

This night of crisis was not a sudden break with his previous period; it was on the contrary a natural result of his development. During his youth, before 1891, he had sought by various means to find the type of expression best suited to him, but it was only during the year 1891-1892 that his genius affirmed itself. He now assumed toward his own life the "ironic" attitude which he had assumed toward poetry. He observed his own actions and emotions as if they were those of a stranger. As he separated the poet from his work, he separated his Moi from his personality.

It was pointed out in the previous chapter that young Valéry thought he had found perfect consciousness in Mallarmé. Behind the poems of the latter he saw a great creative will unadulterated
by inspiration: "Hérodiade m'hallucine, la glauque Hérodiade
en l'or sinistre des flammes de ses cheveux." Mallarmé repre-
14 sented for him "le poète artificiel," Valéry took the word
"artificiel" in its original latin meaning "artifex" which as a
substantive means "worker" or "craftsman" in a particular art;
as an adjective it has the meaning of "skilled" or "clever." In
Analecta Valéry defined "artificiel" in the following manner:
"L'artifice est naturel chez tous les hommes en qui la conscience
16 est très développée." Since his interest lay in the mental pro-
cess involved in the act of creation, he wanted to retrace the steps
by which Mallarmé had arrived at this supreme poetry. He thought
of treating Mallarmé's poetry like Poe had treated "The Raven" in
The Philosophy of Composition.

Son œuvre me fut dès le premier regard, et pour toujours
un sujet de merveille; et bientôt sa pensée présumée, un
objet secret de questions infinies. Il a joué sans le savoir
un si grand rôle dans mon histoire interne, modifié par sa
seule existence, tant d'évaluations en moi, son action de
présence m'a assuré de tant de choses, m'a confirmé dans
tant de choses; et davantage, elle m'a intimement interdit
tant de choses que je ne sais enfin démêler ce qu'il fut de
ce qu'il me fut. 17

For Valéry, only the problems and the process of creation
counted. Because of Poe and Mallarmé he had considered poetry
valid as a discipline only because of the complicated mental pro-
cess of the lucid creative act. It was neither the finished work
nor the metaphysical extension of poetry which interested him,
but this creative act by which the being of the poet becomes
superior to itself, abolishes the everyday world of variance, and
establishes a superior order.

During that year 1891-1892, Valéry oriented his symbols toward
the power of creation. Orphée animated nature with his song, Amphion
sang a song of silence, and finally Narcisse, Valéry's favorite sym-
bol, is nothing more than the poet observing himself at work. The
Narcisse of 1890 was a young man in the Symbolist tradition, fasci-
nated by his exterior beauty, while the Narcisse published by La
Conque, March 15, 1891, is a proud young man searching for his true
self. Pride and the desire to know himself dominate the poem entirely.

Et moi! De tout mon coeur dans ces roseaux jeté,
Je languis, ô saphir, par ma triste beauté!
Je ne sais plus aimer que l'eau magicienne
Où j'oubliais le rire et la rose ancienne.

Que je déplore ton éclat fatal et pur,
Si mollement de moi fontaine environnée,
Où puisèrent mes yeux dans un mortel azur
Mon image de fleurs humides couronnée!

During that important year of his life Valéry began to direct
his thoughts towards a greater and greater generality; instead of
probing into the mechanism of the mind during the creative process
alone he set out to investigate the functioning of the mind in general
during the thinking process. "J'ai relié le processus poétique et de
l'invention à certains principes généraux bien connus et à diverses méthodes mathématiques ou physiques."

It was not the content of thought but the operation which henceforth interested him. Yet in order to study the functions of the mind, language, he insisted, must be purified, for the language hitherto used to describe the operations of the mind he found imprecise, impure, and filled with affective connotations. Valéry searched for an abstract language and found it in the language of mathematics. This language presented him with a precise and pure system of expression. Valéry's interest in mathematics was then two-fold: it furnished him with a precise and pure language and it introduced him to laws and concepts which he could transfer to the functions of the mind and thus come closer to grasping its mechanism. In 1943 Valéry defined his interest in mathematics thus: "Les livres de mathématiques ne m'intéressent que parce qu'ils sont les seuls livres qui ont pour objet la manœuvre de l'esprit, ceci sans trop de conscience--L'appareil logique dissimule cette manoeuvre qui est cependant déclaré dans le mot inévitable je puis, nous pouvons, essentiel aux mathématiques. Or je crois depuis deux fois 25 ans que c'est là un des grands moyens de l'intellect..." Valéry's Cahiers abound in reflections on modern physics and mathematics. Since this analysis centers on Valéry's intellectual development, only the first Cahier, which covers the years 1894-1900, will be discussed.
If language is to be considered from the mathematical point of view, it must no longer attach itself to things or phenomena, but rather discern the relations between them. Images must be reduced to figures. "Les choses me faisaient sourire de pitié. Ceux qui s'y arrêtaient ne m'étaient que des idolâtres. Je savais que l'essentiel était figure. Et c'était une sorte de mysticisme, puisque c'était faire dépendre le monde sensible aux yeux, d'un mode sensible à l'esprit et réservé, supposant révélation, initiation, etc." Valéry realized that there was a more general human activity than mathematics and poetry—pure thought. Through pure thought, poetry and mathematics became united, for both the mathematician and the poet arrived, although by different means, at pure thought. Having come to this conclusion, Valéry considered poetry as an exercise whose language tries to attain the same rigor and preciseness as that of mathematics, for he considered the language of literature inferior to that of the sciences and lacking in precision.

Linguistic function is most clearly manifest in scientific signs. A mathematical formula, contrary to the word of a sentence, contains nothing of our prejudices, our remembrances or our emotions. The formula establishes a complex system of relations and represents the total sum of the potential actions which are defined
by the general rules of the formula. The totality of these relations fuses with the expression of the particular and gives to the particular a new meaning. The mathematical sign contains no longer what we learn from our observations but establishes pure relations. Because the mathematical sign establishes these pure relations, it is put into the sphere of pure signification and thus can represent not only the particular of the mind, but its most general movement. In addition to establishing relations, mathematical representation also serves to establish new points of view.

"La géométrie peut-être dans un sens défini la science des formes possibles et de celles imaginables..." wrote Valéry in the first Cahier.

Valéry had already learned from his reading of Mallarmé that it is useless to isolate a word and to give it an absolute meaning, words can take on meaning only in relation to other words. Words exist by function of others. He now proposed to substitute scientific signs for words. By virtue of their removal from the known world of reference, the signs would result in an algebraic formula in which "a" is a function of "b". In this manner greater freedom and generality of operations can be obtained. Valéry in search of the greatest generality, turned to the language of mathematics in order to purify literary language of its particularity. (Many years later he defined
the word bétese as particularity opposed to generality.) "A le mot proposé. A' le mot produit--discontinuité des mots."

This is a typical example of Valéry's substitution of algebraic signs for words and his ability to establish relations between them. Perhaps another more interesting example of this nature can be seen in the following notation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>La chose auditive</th>
<th>S Le Mot cheval produit image et associations connues et autres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vue etc.</td>
<td>S' La chose cheval----Association et mot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idée</td>
<td>I L'image cheval--------Association et mot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M(u) = I + A_p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C(u) = A_q + M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I(u) = A_r + M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d'où C(u) + I(u) = 2M + A_q + A_r = K</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for an explanation of this formula, "u" represents the constant cheval of which "M", or the word (mot) "C", or the thing (chose) and "I", or the image are a function; now "M" as a function of "u" gives the image plus association at a specific instance or I + A_p; the subscripts always refer to specific instances. If one adds the thing horse or C(u) to the image horse or I(u) the obvious result will be 2M + A_q + A_r which still more generally can be called by a new constant K, a form which can be easily and efficiently manipulated without being obstructed by associations or images.
It is obvious from these examples that mathematics did not serve Valéry as an end in itself (Valéry was not a mathematician), but that he used mathematics as a means toward a proposed end, comprehension of the mental processes. There was then no neat breaking point between his youth and those years commonly known as the years of silence. His interest in mathematics was merely a development of his early interest in the poetic process. Already in his youth things appeared to him as properties of his mind. In 1887 he wrote: "Je jouis sans cesse de mon propre cerveau." With the aid of mathematical language, Valéry could construct from imprecise language a system of logical forms. Since this system was established upon relations of signs, the manipulation of ideas was greatly facilitated. The great advantage of this language is that it defines its terms and gives to each term a specific meaning which remains invariable throughout the operation. Thus throughout the Cahiers, Valéry used the symbol $\Psi$ to designate the interior world of the mind and $\Phi$ to designate the sensations received from the outside.

A whole section of the first Cahier, dated February 1897, is entitled Analyse du Langage. In ten pages Valéry analyzed language according to the mathematical method. A few of his preliminary propositions follow:
Valéry believed that the old classification of concrete and abstract nouns, which depended upon common references, was inadequate. He wanted to regroup them into the psychological classes which they commanded in order to give them a new dimension. "Valeur des mots substantifs et radicaux psychologiques analogues. Abstrait-concret-vieille division à refaire. Reference commune (r. c.)

c concrets généralsés" 30

The following chart illustrates this point:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>image</th>
<th>concept</th>
<th>r. c.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>arbre</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>r. c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rougeur</td>
<td>n-m(=1)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>r. c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>image</td>
<td>concept</td>
<td>r.c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>valeur</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raison</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mouvement</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>r.c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paroi</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>i.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ciel</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>i.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ivresse</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>i.d.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dieu</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>esprit</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>définition</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>r.c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>calcul</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>r.c.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"n" indicates that the word varies; O, that it remains fixed; r.c. that it possesses a common reference. Thus the word "God" varies both in its concept and in its image, while the word "tree" varies in its image but not in its concept, but its common reference is identical to itself (±). Accordingly words differ by the psychological classes they command; words like "tree", "redness", and others Valéry called 32 "stables".

In these ten pages of the notebook, Valéry established the fact that language is incapable of reproducing thought. "Il est impossible de monter du langage à la pensée autrement que par probabilité."
"Il n'y a point de rapport entre ce qu'on pense étant lecteur ou auteur et ce qui est écrit ou même lu." Here we find the linguistic reason behind Valéry's disassociation of the poet and the reader. It is impossible to believe in the theory of effects if a word can have "n" meanings. In order to establish a theory of language, it is necessary to establish mathematical correspondences between verbal phenomena and mental phenomena. These correspondences deduce the properties and the forms of the language from the double series. "Donc à chaque mot correspondent N déterminations possibles. Toutefois il y a un élément fixe, toutes les déterminations de la même classe comprennent une constante commune."

Valéry also attacked the very existence of words because they hide the world around us by their prefixed meanings:

Supposons qu'un mot désigne une classe d'objets: Table, associons ce mot à l'un des objets de la classe, une table, supposons que cet objet se déforme jusqu'à ce qu'on ne puisse plus le nommer ainsi. Un autre mot devra intervenir. Ce mot sera peut-être plus vague, plus général.

Propriété fondamentale du Mot. Toutes les fois qu'il se représente, certains ph. psych. constants se représentent. (autres que ceux suscités par le physique du mot). Nous pouvons le produire physique à volonté. 35

Each known object has its name, it is forbidden to give a new name to an object, and what is not known by a name is not known at all. The danger of ready-made language is that it forces the mind to
perceive reality through words, preventing it from apprehending reality directly, and worse yet, it imposes the thought of others upon us. "Les mots font partie de nous plus que les nerfs. Nous ne connaissons notre cerveau que par oui-dire." We suppose in our daily conversations that each word has its corresponding and fixed phenomena, and we never dare to give a new name to a certain class of objects.

The penetrating view of language taken by Valéry had the great merit of excluding the possibility of asking senseless questions as philosophy does according to Valéry. "La plupart des idées qu'on soutient, il suffit de les préciser (ou les rendre explicites) pour les anéantir. On arrive bientôt à la contradiction, à la pétition de principes ou aux postulats toujours fragiles, qui y sont toujours." Another note concerning language and especially the language of philosophy reads as follows:

Les mots philosophiques sont beaucoup trop vagues pour pouvoir saisir la pensée dans son détail, il leur est impossible de se former en raisonnements de la vraie logique de l'homme.

Ainsi l'abstraction, peut se dire d'un million de phénomènes mentaux très différente. L'esprit n'est que travail. Il n'existe qu'en mouvement.

Valéry's man objection to philosophy was the fact that it believed in words as if they had an independent reality. Philosophers never
examine the words such as "time", "reality", "soul", and so forth but rather hope to find in these vague concepts and antiquated words a universal truth. "Le philosophe croît au mot en soi--et ses problèmes sont des problèmes de mots en soi, de mots qui s'obscurcissent par l'arrêt et l'isolement...." For Valéry such words as "time" and "reality" could have meaning only in a precise context and in relation to their contexts, such as in the analysis of modern physics. For example Valéry accused philosophy of not examining the questions it asked and of being merely concerned with the answers, which are, of course, determined in part by the question itself. "Qui a fait le Monde? Ce n'est pas là une question, c'est un dogme." Valéry tried to destroy every idea preconceived through language in order to ask new questions, which seemed essential and basic to him, and which he valued more than the answers they might bring.

Valéry, unlike Mallarmé, did not wish to give "un sens plus pur aux mots de la tribu," but rather strove to give language the precision and rigor of mathematical formula. He believed that unless language were stripped of all its common references and preconceived notions, it would only lead to muddled thinking, determined by language rather than a true problem. While algebraic language, free from conventional meaning, gives us the freedom to
manipulate thought in an objective and impersonal way. It alone may lead to new points of view, revealing new relations between things, for common language is not constructed to unite but rather to designate. "Le langage a fait ses mots plutôt pour désigner que pour relier. Il les a faits isolément." Valéry's skeptical attitude toward language brings to mind the contemporary schools of analytical philosophy; in England, Ryle, Ayer, and Russell, or in Vienna the circle of logical positivists, Carnap, Schlick, and Neurath; but above all Valéry's questioning of language recalls Wittgenstein who wrote: "Names are simple Symbols, I designate them through separate letters ('x', 'y', 'z')," or again about philosophy: "Most propositions and questions which are written about philosophical matters are not false but senseless... Most propositions and questions of philosophers rest on the fact that we do not understand the logic of language." Modern philosophy does contend that language has obscured our way of thinking and has made it impossible to distinguish between "real" and "verbal" problems engendered by the syntax or grammar of a given language. This re-examining of language is one of the fundamental characteristics of modern thought.

For Valéry mathematics served then a double purpose: a) it allowed him to examine language more closely and b) it enabled him
to consider the mind in a scientific light. "Je pose que: la
Science mathématique dégagée de ses applications telles que
la géométrie l'arithmétique écrite etc. et réduite à l'algèbre c'est-
à-dire à l'analyse des transformations d'un être purment différentiel,
composé d'éléments homogènes est le plus fidèle document des
propriétés de groupement, de disjonction et de variations de l'esprit."
He did not believe in the mind as an independent identity, but con-
sidered it, like language, a system of relations exchanged between
the body and the phenomenal world.

Ton corps tombe sous ses sens. Mais tout déplacement
de ce corps se produit par plusieurs modes. Le corps
est une portion de la réalité plus riche, avec à la
fois plus de liaisons et plus de variables. Une douleur
au pied, par exemple n'implique pas l'idée de pied,
l'image etc. Cependant elle se fait comprendre. On
associe le pied, le point douloureux. La sensation ne
peut se séparer de sa position initiale.

Toute sensation s'accompagne d'une évaluation d'espace
faite sur l'image qu'on a de son corps et des mouvements
possibles de ce corps. On localise non seulement une
sensation du pied dans le pied, mais encore un objet vu
à distance est localisé en direction et peut-être en
distance.

\[
\begin{align*}
  t_0 & \quad S_0 \\
  t_1 & \quad S_1 + M + C
\end{align*}
\]

Valéry's notations can be explained in the following manner; \( t_0 \), or
the initial point in time; \( t_1 \), or a definite value at a given time; \( S \)
represents the sensations, \( M \) represents the world (monde), and \( C \)
the body (corps). Another note concerning sensation reads as follows:
"Sa sensation ne pénétre pas dans la pensée. Elle serait un terme constant en équation avec des variables. Elle se transforme dès qu'elle a eu lieu en image. Cela est si exact que lorsque la sensation varie d'une façon continue nous la résumons à un petit nombre d'images--et passons outre." Later, while lecturing at the college de France, Valéry based his course of Poëtique on the relation between the body and the world as manifested in poetic creation. As pointed out earlier, the body as an organ of cognition was always important to Valéry, except for the brief decadent-symbolist period. Already "La Luxurieuse au Bain" apprehended the world through her body; the Narcisse of 1891 stated: "Je t'adore sous ces myrtes, ô l'incertaine chair..." and the last Narcisse contemplated

    toi seul, ô mon corps, mon cher corps,
    Je t'aime unique objet qui me défends des morts!

The Narcisse "curieux de son essence," tried to reach his essence through his body; like "La Luxurieuse," his body was once more his means of knowing.

For Valéry the mind which is dependent upon the body was a natural phenomenon which could be analyzed by the same scientific method as all other natural phenomena. At the very beginning of the first Cahier he wrote: "On a donné à toute l'analyse algébrique un sens géométrique--Peut-on lui donner une autre application?"
By applying the laws of mathematics to thought process, Valéry tried to come closer to the analysis of the functioning of the mind. Poincaré had already raised the question of the possibility of giving a mathematical explanation to the process of thought. In geometry, for instance, common notions serve as links between different concepts; they unite to form a new thought. Each concept in this discipline becomes merely an act of substitution. Valéry believed that the function of the mind could be analyzed in the same way. Words which must necessarily express our thought become algebraic symbols which form links between different concepts. Through these symbols Valéry could attain a general formula to describe the operations of the mind.

Valéry's conception of the human mind was based upon its power to establish relations. His world was not a world of things but of relations. He continually underlined the fact that a single mental event is not isolated but an integral part of a whole system which operates as a unity.

Lorsqu'un fait se répète on dit que le fait a est le même que le fait a ayant existé antérieurement. L'antériorité ici est la possibilité de regarder a comme identique à autre chose.

A chaque apparition d'a est associée une fonction d'a suffisante pour faire juger \( a_m = a_{m-1} \). En m a aura décru, c'est-à-dire que a tendra à être oublié instantanément, c-à-d a occasionne une variation nulle.
de l'état m. \( a_1 = dV_1; \quad a_m = dV_m = 0 \)

Ceci n'est possible que si la connaissance est limitée par unité de changement. 54

In order to establish relations, the mind must continually question its results and modify its method of observation. Valéry's interest in science as a means of investigating the functions of the mind never ceased. His later Cahiers apply the latest scientific discoveries to the mind. But already in the first Cahier he discussed thermodynamics and group theory.

Why not apply the laws of electrochemistry to the human mind, Valéry asked, since it is applied to the kinetic energy of a steam engine? He noted that the functions of the mind are produced in cycles, similar to a system of thermodynamics which passes from the solid to the liquid, to the gaseous and back to the solid state again, completing a closed cycle. By cycles of the mind, Valéry understood different states of the mind such as the recurrent phases of sleep, wakefulness and sleep.

\[
\text{état 1} \quad \text{sommeil} \quad \text{syncope} \quad \text{mort} \quad \text{catalepsie}
\]

\[
a \quad b \quad c \quad d \quad e
\]

\[
\text{état actif} \quad \text{constatation} \quad \text{inconscience} \quad \text{sommolence} \quad \text{sommeil}
\]

\[
g \quad h \quad j
\]

sommeil hypnotique--catalepsie--syncope--mort
The system passes from a state of being calm through a nervous excitation back to its original state of calm. The mind as well as the body accomplishes these cycles or phases---muscles are relaxed, strained, and relaxed once more, the nervous system is calm, excited, and calm once more. By analyzing the phases of the mind according to the thermodynamic point of view, Valéry could note in a simple manner a very complex system of operation.

Another aspect of thermodynamics which attracted him was its second law, that of entropy. According to this law the disorder of an irreversible system can only increase. The possibility of mathematically measuring the degree of order of any system gave him the power to transpose this law to the function of the mind. Valéry remarked that all the sense data received by the mind in the state of disorder are regulated and classified according to a system, which the following note, taken from the Cahier explains:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{fixation par examen} & \quad \text{perception} \\
\text{et par association} & \quad \text{distinction} \\
\text{commencement du changement} & \quad \text{division} \\
\text{changement} & \quad \text{V} \\
\text{s} & \quad \text{S}
\end{align*}
\]
This notation describes a cycle of disorder to order which a sensation received from the outside undergoes in the human mind. The human mind operates then in direct opposition to the physical systems of the universe in which the given disorder only increases.

The mind functions by a system of transformation.

Théorème: Le champ de la connaissance est susceptible de transformations totales ou partielles. Cette proposition implique le Temps et le moi.

Or again:

On peut donc créer cette relation entre n'importe quels termes — mais il faut voir le champ, la portée de ces relations. Elles servent dans les transformations uniformes dans les transformations à moindre énergie possible de combinaisons.

But if thought consists of transformations, what is the invariable? How can it be precisely stated and defined? It was group theory which supplied Valéry with an abstract system of representing the invariant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symboles</th>
<th>Groupes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a b</td>
<td>a = (b)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a, b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b a</td>
<td>(a, b) = 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Langage, similitude
tous les signes symétrie
montre d'opérations qui sépare le a du b et les marque.
A perhaps more explicit notation on group theory and its applicability to the functioning of the mind can be found a few pages further in the Cahier:

Recherches sur certains groupes

Si l'on soulève un corps M, on déforme un état a de vue, b de sensation musculaire etc. dont la somme $a + b \ldots n = A$ après les opérations, M est venu de M en M' et on a un normal état (partiel) $a' + b' \ldots = n' = A'$

On a créé aussi divers groupes tels que

$(a, b) \ (a', b')$

Etude de ces êtres psychologiques. 64

Group theory facilitates the separation of groups of transformation so that a system of invariants can be drawn from it. Throughout the different states of transformation, Valéry tried to define a system of invariables which corresponded to them. "La psych. est une théorie de transformation, il faut en dégager les invariants et les groupes c-a-d. les figures, les distances pour établir l'espace psychologique.

Si $A$ est un état, $B$ un autre état, on a souvent

$$\phi(A) = A \phi(B).$$

But what is the invariant which remains fixed throughout the different mental phases? It is the Moi, supreme invariable of mental transformations. In the first Cahier Valéry defined the Moi in the following manner:

Le "moi" est supposé fixe.
en ce sens que toutes les variations de la connaissance
où les états s'attirent tous suivant des formes peu nombreuses et facilement réductibles à l'unité.

En somme c'est par la restitution des états que cela se voit chaque état en particulier peut être celui de n individus. L'individu se particularise par la coïncidence et la suite des états, parmi les possibles, qui sont les mieux.

Le moi est déterminé par l'ordre des états qui se succèdent à partir d'un état quelconque dans un individu. Plus le nombre des états successifs [sic] pour déterminer est grand, plus l'individu est particularisé; plus aussi, il est rare. On peut admettre qu'il y a des individus à plusieurs solutions à partir d'un état.

Le moi est ce par rapport à quoi s'opère le changement des états, le groupement des notions etc. 67

The Moi is then the constant point of reference with respect to which transformations and phases take place. It is "une forme qui se conserve."

Valéry was to live at a time of great scientific achievement and did not fail to realize the importance of these scientific discoveries, not only in the world of science but above all in their universal application. Science had upset the preconceived ideas of reality and had shown that no well-defined distinction between object and subject will be maintained. The implications of these discoveries were obvious to Valéry, who realized that as soon as vague words are replaced by well-defined symbols, the age-old mysteries are dispersed. As he stated in that first Cahier, he had to begin at the beginning in order to solve the problem of mental functioning. And his beginning was,
as we have seen, a "cleaning-up" of language in order to achieve
greater freedom of operation. He has set up a system under the
general name of discipline in which the arts and the sciences are
parallel and draw from each other:

**Discipline**

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Arts} \leftarrow \text{Language} \leftarrow \text{Poetry} \rightarrow \text{Mathematics} \rightarrow \text{Algebra} \rightarrow \text{Sciences} \\
\end{array}
\]

Valéry's research in language and in the functioning of the mind only
convinced him that literary language could not offer him the rigor
which he demanded. He abandoned literature for the more rigorous
discipline of mathematics and its language which explained the
mechanism of the mind in precise fashion. At eighteen he wanted
to know how Poe had composed "The Raven," at twenty-one he wanted
to know how man's mind functions, and at twenty-four he constructed
the personality of M. Teste whose only interest was the functioning
of the mind, not of the mind in general, but of his own.

Language and the mysteries of the mind were the last two idols
which Valéry abolished, and with their disappearance his youth came
to an end. Much later in 1923, he described his state of mind in
1893 in these words: "Lorsque j'ai commencé de fréquenter Mallarmé
en personne, la littérature ne m'était presque plus rien. Lire et
Écrire me pesaient, et je confesse qu'il me reste quelque chose de cet ennui. La conscience de moi-même pour elle-même, l'éclaircissement de cette attention, et le souci de me dessiner nettement mon existence ne me quittaient guère. Ce Mal secret éloigne des Lettres, desquelles il tient son origine." By this act of renunciation Valéry abolished his "personality" which was opposed, by its particularity, to the extreme generality of the Moi. The Moi constantly struggles against the limits of the personality, but in reality it can never quite liberate itself of the particular. M. Teste has no personality, for he is the potential of the human mind. He represents the most general and abstract mental activity possible. Yet even M. Teste cannot constantly dominate his personality. Although this attitude may appear anti-literary, Valéry gave it literary expression in Léonard and M. Teste.
The Drama of the Mind

As was seen in the previous chapter, Valéry renounced literature for its failure to meet his demands of rigor. Yet his friends, André Gide, Pierre Louys, and Léon Daudet still surrounded him in Paris and kept him in touch with the literary circles. It was thus, through the recommendation of Daudet, that Mme Julien Adam asked Valéry to write an essay for the Nouvelle Revue. The subject of the essay, also given by Mme Adam, was Leonardo da Vinci. No reason for this particular subject is given, but one can suppose that Mme Adam considered young Valéry qualified to write an article on the Italian artist, scientist, and architect, since he knew Italian and was particularly interested in Italy.

Exterior circumstances gave Valéry then the opportunity to study his own problems, for he continued to express his own preoccupations in this essay without regard for the imposed subject; in other words the essay on Leonardo was the literary representation of the first Cahier's notes: "Je savais trop que je connaissais Léonard beaucoup moins que je ne l'admiraïs. Je voyais en lui le personnage principal de cette Comédie Intellectuelle qui n'a pas jusqu'ici rencontré son poète, et qui serait pour mon goût bien plus précieuse encore que La Comédie Humaine et même que La Divine Comédie. Je sentais que ce maître de ces moyens, ce possesseur du dessin, des images
du calcul, avait trouvé l'attitude centrale à partir de laquelle les entreprises de la connaissance et les opérations de l'art sont également possibles."

Leonardo's name in the title seems almost like an afterthought, for the title is typical for the Valéry of 1894: "Introduction à la Méthode de Léonard de Vinci." In the first Cahier the word méthode occurs like a leit-motiv. Valéry understood under the concept méthode the organization and functioning of creative thought. In his essay on Leonardo he then sought to illuminate and to penetrate the mystery of the creative mind.

Leonardo was for Valéry an ideal mind which had resolved the problems which occupied him, the problems of personality, construction, language, science and arts. Leonardo is the universal mind turned artist. He is the type of "poet" Valéry imagined in 1894. His relation to Leonardo differed from that to Poe and Mallarmé in the fact that Valéry did not extract information from Leonardo's work but rather constructed a suitable background upon which to solve his own problems. Leonardo became a new kind of master. In 1919, describing his state of mind at the moment of writing the essay, Valéry stated: "Enfin, je le confesse, je ne trouvais pas mieux que d'attribuer à l'infortuné Léonard mes propres agitations, transportant le désordre de mon esprit dans la complexité du

As I have said before, "Introduction à la Méthode de Léonard de Vinci" is of course neither a historical nor a biographical essay but the study of an ideal mind. The Renaissance man, still capable of embracing the whole of human knowledge attracted Valéry, for he offered him the opportunity to describe the "possible" and not the result of thought. At twenty-three Valéry was already convinced that the possibilities of the mind are more important than the results of its activities, the process of creation dominates the works. "Ce qui est le plus vrai d'un individu, et le plus lui-même, c'est son possible que son histoire ne dégage qu'incertainement. Ce qui lui arrive peut ne pas en tirer ce qu'il ignore de soi-même." He thus set out to describe the unity hidden underneath the particular expressions of the universal mind; as found in architecture, sculpture, engineering, drawing, and painting. "Je me propose d'imaginer un homme de qui auraient paru des actions tellement distinctes que si je viens à leur supposer un pensée, il n'y en aura pas de plus étendue.
Et je veux qu'il ait un sentiment de la différence des choses infiniment vif, dont les aventures pourraient bien se nommer analyse." Since Valéry had already discovered that mathematics, poetry, and architecture are mere particularities of a general and common process of thought, the universal mind of Leonardo appealed to him, for the latter had explored the possibilities of his thought in all its expressions. He could thus take Leonardo's creations in their variety and construct one method which had made them possible.

In this essay Valéry proceeded to examine the origin and function of thought which dispersed the myth of the difference between minds whose products are different. "Elle [une telle recherche] est nécessaire pour ne pas croire que les esprits sont aussi profondément différents que leurs produits les font paraître. Certains travaux des sciences, par exemple, et deux les mathématiques en particulier, présentent une telle limpidité de leur armature qu'on les dirait l'oeuvre de personne. Ils ont quelque chose d'inhumain. Cette disposition n'a pas été inefficace. Elle fait supposer une distance si grande entre certaines études, comme les sciences et les arts, que les esprits originaires en ont été tout séparés dans l'opinion et juste autant que les résultats de leurs travaux semblaient l'être." Valéry could consider Leonardo through his own thought, since there exists an affinity between thought in general. Valéry's mind,
with the same physical make-up, can then imagine the mind of Leonardo.

Within the mind itself occurs a drama whose actors are the mental images; but what interested Valéry were not the particularities of the images but their mechanism, succession, frequency, periodicity, and finally their duration. This drama is the analogy which Valéry defined as: "la faculté de varier les images, de les combiner, de faire coexister la partie de l'une avec la partie de l'autre et d'apercevoir, volontairement ou non, la liaison de leurs structures." Leónard reduced these mental images to figures, more general than the former, and less attached to language. It is precisely the analogy which endows the universal mind with the consciousness of its innumerable possibilities. "Le secret, celui de Leónard comme celui de Bonaparte, comme celui que possède une fois la plus haute intelligence, -- est et ne peut être que dans les relations qu'ils trouverent, -- qu'ils furent forces de trouver, entre des choses dont nous échappe la loi de continuité." Through self-awareness the mind perceives the inherent unity of its own method and the universality of its applications. Valéry sought to unite the concept of the Moi-Pur with a system of rigorous thought, the Moi-Pur being nothing but self-awareness. "...le moi-pur, élément unique et monotone de l'être même dans le monde retrouve,
reperdu par lui-même, habite éternellement notre sens; cette profonde note de l'existence domine, dès qu'on l'écoute, toute la complication des conditions et des variétés de l'existence." It must be made clear at this point that, for the author of Léonard, the Moi-Pur was not a fixed entity, but rather an awareness of all the possibilities and combinations of thought. The Moi of Narcisse, the effeminate young man, has by now become a rigorous consciousness of the self without any conceivable relation to the world of things. "La conscience les pensees que l'on a, en tant que ce sont des pensees, est de reconnaître cette sorte d'égalité ou d'homogénéité; de sentir que toutes les combinaisons de la sorte sont légitimes, naturelles et que la méthode consiste à les exciter, à les voir avec précision, à chercher ce qu'elles impliquent." Such is the drama of the universal mind which Valéry imagined under the name of Léonard.

The method of the universal mind, which Valéry sketched in a rather cursory manner in this first essay, consists then of finding analogies or combinations of thought and of considering their varied implications. This process is developed with such machine-like regularity that the particularities of ordinary thought are cast off, and the universal mind proceeds beyond thought and "se réveille hors de pensée." Valéry found literary language so incapable of
expressing this concept that once more he had to turn to mathematics and to Poincaré to illustrate this point. In mathematics this process is referred to as reasoning by recurrence or induction.

As in his first Cahier, Valéry again attacked philosophers for dealing, contrary to scientists, with particularities instead of generalities. In this essay we find the first formal public condemnation of philosophy. Philosophy, he stated in 1894, is a personal matter and does not wish to be such; philosophy is not concerned with method but with results, it looks at the world already certain of the answers it will find. The universal mind is not a philosophic mind. It begins its reflections by observation of the world, but, contrary to philosophers, it perceives the world merely through the senses and not with the intellect or with words which interpret, and which are not constructed for logical thinking. "Les mots [du langage commun] ne sont pas faits pour la logique." Leonard is an observer; he observes the world around him in its continual movement, yet he perceives the inherent unity of this world. Leonard is an unprejudiced witness. He equates himself to the objects observed, no personal views trouble his conception, while they obstruct those of the philosophers. The universal mind begins like every one else with the outside world, but continues in a different manner, for the universal mind orders what it receives from the senses in a state of
disorder, it transmutes it, abstracts it and proceeds to classify
the impressions received. This idea was already expressed in
the Cahier with the help of the second law of thermodynamics—
entropy. Non-mathematically Valéry described it in the following
manner:

Il arrange et défait ses impressions successives. Il
peut apprécier d'étranges combinaisons: il regarde comme
un être total et solide un groupe de fleurs ou d'hommes,
une main, une joue qu'il isole, une tâche de clarté sur un
mur, une rencontre d'animaux mêlés par hasard. Il se met
à vouloir se figurer des ensembles invisibles dont les
parties lui sont données. Il devine les nappes qu'un oiseau
dans son vol engendre, la courbe sur laquelle glisse une
pierre lancée, les surfaces qui définissent nos gestes, et
les déchirures extraordinaires, les arabesques fluides,
les chambres informes, créées dans un réseau pénétrant
tout, par la rayure grinçante du tremblement des insectes,
le roulis des arbres, les roues, le sourire humain, la marée. 14

The universal mind receives its stimulus for thought from the outside
world through a regard pur, but it dominates the chaos, which exists
on the outside, through construction.

Construction is a word which implies of course a conscious pro-
cess and the presence of a machine. As a matter of fact the remaining
pages of the essay treat once more, in a more mature way, the essen-
tial points of the "Technique Littéraire." In 1894, Valéry dealt not
only with poetry, but with creation in general. He defined construc-
tion in the following manner: "L'intervention humaine dans les choses
du monde." Construction is then an ordering process, it is the
substitution of one order for another. The universal mind, conscious of all the combinations possible of the impressions received, can thus create a new order, by new combinations, it constructs a whole where parts are merely given, it links aspects of things in a new way. In the "Technique Littérale," the poet composes, he does not yet construct, and he composes with only one purpose in mind—to produce an effect. "La littérature est l'art de se jouer de l'âme des autres." Léonard, however, constructs for the joy of construction. "Celui qui n'a jamais saisi, fût-ce en rêve! le dessein d'une entreprise qu'il est le maître d'abandonner, l'aventure d'une construction finie quand les autres voient qu'elle commence, et qui n'a pas connu l'enthousiasme brûlant une minute de lui-même,... celui-là ne connaît pas davantage, quel que soit d'ailleurs son savoir, la richesse et la ressource et l'étendue spirituelle qu'illumine le fait conscient de construire."

Léonard knows what the "technician" of 1889 did not know, namely that his own feelings can never be reproduced in the mind of the public. "...la plupart des désespoirs d'artistes se fondent sur la difficulté ou l'impossibilité de rendre par les moyens de leur art une image qui leur semble se décolorer et se faner en la captant dans une phrase, sur une toile ou sur une portée. Quelques autres minutes de conscience peuvent se dépenser à constater qu'il est
Leonard dominates through construction not only the given material (stones, words, paints), but also the future public. The theory of effects appears once more, but modified and less absolute in 1894 than in 1889. The universal mind dominates the public by its method for it can imagine the different reactions of a future public, since it can conceive of all the possibilities of an impression. The effect of the construction is then of secondary importance to Leonard. Construction achieves an effect upon the public through "ornament." Ornament abolishes the supposed opposition or union between art and nature; the effect achieved through ornament is much subtler than the simple effect achieved in the "Technique Litteraire."

Qu'on veuille bien se rappeler successivement les groupes de courbes, les coincidences de divisions couvrant les plus antiques objets connus, les profils de vases et de temples; les carreaux, les spires, les oves, les stries des anciens; les cristallisations et les murs voluptueux des Arabes; les ossatures et les symétries gothiques; les ondes, les feux, les fleurs sur le laque et le bronze japonais; et dans chacune de ces époques l'introduction des similitudes des plantes, des bêtes et des hommes, le perfectionnement de ces ressemblances: la peinture, la sculpture.

Toute cette vitalité multifromne peut s'apprécier sous le rapport ornemental. 18

As a matter of fact the ornament behaves again with machine-like precision: "L'effet est le but ornemental, et l'oeuvre prend ainsi le
caractère d'un mécanisme à impressionner un public, à faire surgir les émotions et se répondre les images." The work of art whose initial conception was organic, is constructed mechanically and continues to behave like a machine in relation to the public. "L'oeuvre d'art devient une machine destinée à exciter et à combiner les formations individuelles de ces esprits." Ornamentation impresses the public because it establishes a new system of relations. Ornament is removed from the every day function it fulfills to take on new meaning through construction. Thus, in a poem, the whole system of rhythm, word order, choice of words, juxtaposition of words is ornamental and causes the effect upon the unbiased public. "Les objets choisis et ordonnés en vue d'un effet sont comme détachés de la plupart de leurs propriétés et ne les reprennent que dans cet effet, dans l'esprit non prévenu du spectateur. C'est donc par une abstraction que l'oeuvre d'art peut se construire, et cette abstraction est plus ou moins énergique, plus ou moins facile à définir, selon que les éléments empruntés à la réalité en sont des portions plus ou moins complexes." Ornament thus accents the non-mimetic quality of a work of art; a painting should be judged purely on its colors, a poem on its sonorous quality, and then only can a system of references be established by the spectator or the reader. This ornamentation is then the machinery which acts upon the public to obtain an effect.
The closing pages of the essay emphasize once more the scientific approach to literature. Léonard, the universal mind, has succeeded in uniting art and the rigorous development of the whole of his intelligence. It will be recalled that Valéry's primary reason for abandoning literature, two years earlier, was its failure to reach the whole intellectual drama. In 1919 Valéry wrote on this point: "Peut-être je m'exagerais en ce temps-là le défaut évident de toute littérature de ne satisfaire jamais l'ensemble de l'esprit."

Through this essay on Léonard he was able to clarify the situation of the artist. He apologized ironically to the "artistes et les amoureux d'art" of having strayed from their favorite occupations, but he assured them of having touched upon the essential problem of art; the problem of composition which in Valéry's words meant the process of thought. Through Léonard he has established three points basic to all his future thought: 1) that the activity of the scientist and of the artist is one; 2) that thought by its nature is in continue motion, but that from this mobility one can reach a unity or universality; 3) and that as a result of these two points the universal mind must create in perfect consciousness of the mechanism of thought.

Léonard has then accomplished what Valéry sought to achieve, an extreme consciousness of his mental operations. Yet have Valéry and Léonard not merged in those last pages of the essay? In the
final analysis the workings of another mind can only be conceived through the functioning of one's own mind. "J'osais me considérer sous son nom, et utiliser ma personne." Léonard represented then a state of mind in Valéry's mental evolvement.

In 1919, the now mature Valéry stated in "Note et Digression" that Léonard's method is an "attitude centrale"; Léonard is first the observer of his thought and only then a creator. Yet in 1895 Valéry went beyond this attitude, for in the final pages of the essay on Léonard it becomes clear that he was only interested in the full knowledge of the "possibilities" of thought, in other words in the "comedy of the intellect" which became the "novel" of the intellect with the writing of Teste.

In his essay on Leonardo Valéry mentioned Descartes with Aristotle, Leibniz, Kant and Diderot as a universal mind above reproach. Descartes' role in Valéry's intellectual growth is comparable to Leonardo's. Valéry adopted Descartes to his own needs and made him again an "imaginary master." Although Valéry's essays concerning the philosopher all date from his maturity (1925, 1926, 1937, 1941, and 1944), young Valéry, so conscious of "method" could not be influenced by Descartes. We know that he reread the Discours de la Méthode at the time of writing Léonard. On August 25, 1895 he wrote to Gide: "J'ai relu Le Discours de la Méthode
tantôt, c'est bien le roman moderne comme il pourrait être fait.
A remarquer que la philosophie postérieure a rejeté la part autobiographique. Cependant, c'est le point à reprendre et il faudra donc écrire la vie d'une théorie comme on a trop écrit celle d'une passion (couchage). Mais c'est un peu moins commodément que je suis, je demande que la théorie soit mieux que du truquage comme dans Louis Lambert.\
\[24\] Descartes' "influence" can be seen in the essay on Léonard, which is in reality "la vie d'une théorie", and in M. Teste which is the "roman moderne."
Again it was not so much Descartes as seen in philosophy books who interested Valéry, but rather the Descartes as a master of method, a method which placed its importance primarily on the conscience de soi. The secret of Descartes' method as of Poe's and of Leonardo's is the substitution of "un type général de recherches et d'hypothèses à l'empirisme." The ability to generalize thought was for Valéry the secret of the great intellectual activity of a universal mind; much later in his comments on M. Teste he defined bêtise as "particularité opposée à la généralité." It was then again the manner of thought which attracted Valéry to Descartes and not the thought itself, not its content.

There exists a certain similarity between Valéry's youth and that of Descartes, which could imply a modeling of the former on the
life of the latter. Both Descartes, in 1619 at the age of twenty-three, and Valéry, in 1892 at the age of twenty-one, took the decisive step of abolishing all pre-established authority and setting up the self as the only authority possible. This extraordinary step demanded a rigorous introspection. In 1941 Valéry recalled the important moment in Descartes' life with these words:

C'est là, sans doute [in Ulm] que s'est précipitée dans sa pensée la résolution de se prendre soi-même pour source et pour arbitre de toute valeur en matière de connaissance. Nous sommes devenus si familiers avec cette attitude que nous ne ressentons guère plus l'effort et l'unité de puissance volontaire qu'il fallut pour la concevoir dans toute sa netteté et pour la prendre une première fois. La brusque abolition de tous les privilèges de l'autorité, la déclaration de nullité de tout l'enseignement traditionnel, l'institution du nouveau pouvoir intérieur fondé sur l'évidence, le doute, le 'bonsens', de raisonnements, ce nettoyage impitoyable de sa table du laboratoire de l'esprit, c'était là, en 1619, un système de mesures extraordinaires qu'adoptait et édictait dans sa solitude hivernale un garçon de vingt-trois ans, fort de ses réflexions, sur de leur vertu. 27

The analogy with Valéry's own "prise de conscience" in 1892 is evident. In 1923 he described his own state of mind shortly prior to the crisis, in the opening passage of the essay *Au Sujet D'Eureka*.

Like Descartes, Valéry questioned the value of all knowledge received and placed his hope only on those ideas which he had formulated and conceived himself. This philosophy of egotism, where the Moi becomes capable of detachment from itself and observes its own actions, is then what links Valéry to Descartes. Both possessed the
courage to start with the *tabula rasa* and to rethink everything with respect to the *Moi*. In 1937, in another lecture on Descartes, Valéry expressed the "grand lancé" of Descartes in the following words:

Comme il ne sent point ses limites, il va vouloir tout faire, ou tout *refaire*. Mais d'abord table rase. Tout ce qui ne vient pas de Moi, ou n'en serait point venu, tout ceci n'est que paroles. Tout ce qui ne se résout qu'en paroles, lesquelles ne se résolvent elles-mêmes. qu'en opinions, en doutes, en controverses, ou en simples vraisemblances, tout ceci ne tient pas devant ce Moi et n'a pas de force qui s'y compare. Et ce Moi se trouvera bien tout seul son Dieu, s'il le faut;...  

Yet this state of lucidity can only be attained after the abolition of the personality. This is the reason for the motto which appeared at the beginning of the *Soirée avec M. Teste: Vita Cartesii est simplicissima*. The word *simplicissima* does not imply easy but rather *plain* and *unpretentious*. All the accidents of personality have to be abolished so that the mind may concentrate entirely on its "*internité.*" "M. Teste entre et frappe tous les présents par sa simplicité. L'air absolu--le visage et les actes d'une simplicité indéfinissable" (italics mine). There exists then an analogy between M. Teste and Descartes; both men have known how to liberate the mind from the distractions of the personality by making the latter as simple and unassuming as possible. Their lives are of an extreme banality.

Descartes furnished Valéry with an approach to method of which Léonard was the supreme creator and M. Teste the final possibility.
La Soirée avec M. Teste, written in the summer of 1895, was conceived from a different perspective than Léonard the "story of a 32 theory." Léonard was presented subjectively, his nature was shown through the functioning of his own mind, while Teste, the "roman moderne" was written objectively from the point of view 33 of the observer, from the outside. M. Teste is the man implied in Léonard's method, he is the logical conclusion of that method.

M. Teste was also the true "imaginary master" of Valéry's intellectual life, he never ceased to meditate on this figure. It has often been affirmed that this extraordinary gentleman's name was derived from the old French word teste, meaning head, yet Valéry himself explained that the word was derived from the Latin testis meaning witness. M. Teste is much more than just a Head, he is a witness of his own intellectual mechanism. "M. Teste est le témoin... Conscious--Teste, Testis, Supposé un observateur 'éternel' dont le rôle se borne à répéter et remontrer le système dont le Moi est 34 cette partie instantanée qui se croit le Tout."

M. Teste does not apply method to art, but to life itself: Vita Cartesii est simplicissima... Léonard, the supreme creator, was followed by Teste, the impartial observer, who disdained creation, knowing its mechanism to be mediocre and facile. "Je me suis préféré. Ce qu'ils nomment un être supérieur est un être qui s'est
trompe. Pour s'étonner de lui, il faut le voir, --et pour être vu il faut qu'il se montre."

M. Teste refuses all manifestation of his genius; only his "internity" holds lasting interest for him. Yet the desired state of mind can only be prolonged for short periods of time. "...l'existence d'un type de cette espèce ne pourrait se prolonger dans le réel pendant plus de quelques quarts d'heure..."

For consciousness which is the object and the subject of contemplation, the snake which swallows its own tail, cannot be a state of duration. Although Teste tempted Valéry, he realized that in life such a man was impossible.

Was Teste completely imaginary, or was he constructed upon one or several models? Teste carries within himself traces of all of Valéry's masters. He is perhaps farthest removed from Mallarmé, for he refuses creation. "M. Teste n'a pas de rapport que j'aie voulu avec Mallarmé," Valéry wrote in 1912. As for Degas, his influence on M. Teste is that of an imaginary Degas, a man reduced to rigor, whom Valéry imagined under the name of the great painter.

In Degas, Danse Dessin we find the following statement relative to Degas' role in the creation of M. Teste.

"J'ai donc connu Degas à la table de Monsieur Rouart. Je m'étais fait de lui une idée que j'avais formée de quelques-unes de ses œuvres que j'avais vues, et de quelques-uns de ses mots que l'on colportait. Je trouve toujours un grand intérêt à comparer une chose ou un
homme avec l'idée que je m'en faisais avant que je les visse... Je m'étais fait de Degas l'idée d'un personnage réduit à la rigueur d'un dur dessin, un spartiate, un stoïcien, un janséniste artiste. Une sorte de brutalité d'origine intellectuelle en était le trait essentiel. J'avais écrit peu de temps auparavant la "Soirée avec Monsieur Teste," et ce petit essai d'un portrait imaginaire quoique fait de remarques et de relations verifiables, aussi précises que possible, n'est pas sans avoir été plus ou moins influencé, (comme l'on dit), par un certain Degas que je me figurais. 39

It is interesting to remark that Valery's idea of Degas was formed exactly like his idea of Leonardo—according to the works which he had seen of the artists, that is to say he imagined a method a posteriori.

I have already pointed out Descartes' role in the creation of M. Teste. The latter's will to know himself, the desire to withdraw into his self in order to observe, the courage to establish the Moi as the only source of information, link Descartes to Teste, but also to Leonard; that which establishes one more link between Teste and Descartes, is the fact that Teste lives according to the cartesian method, as Valery imagined Descartes to have lived. We can observe that Teste has abolished his personality to live according to method. He lives in a hotel room which shows no signs of his presence, it is an "intérieur le plus général."

There exists yet another model for M. Teste, namely Dupin, the ingenious detective of Poe's stories. This fact is substantiated
by Valery himself: "La lecture d'Edgard [sic] Poe et surtout le personnage de Dupin avait été le point de départ pour imaginer M. Teste dans son allure et dans sa mémoire de l'individuel."

Furthermore the exposition held at the Bibliothèque Nationale in 1956 contained a manuscript which, under the name Memoire du Chevalier Dupin, could be recognized as an early form of M. Teste. Although the manuscript is not dated, it definitely presents an early M. Teste under the name of Dupin. Dupin, like Teste, is a superior mind. He is able to generalize and hence dominates reality. M. Teste is then composed, in part of the intellectual moments of Valery's "heros."

But M. Teste is more than a synthesis of influences, he is the final expression of the self-discipline which was the crisis of 1892. He is the dramatic figure of thought carried to its logical conclusion, in other words, the limit toward which Valéry directed himself between 1892 and 1896. Teste had existed in a virtual state within Valéry ever since the night of crisis. "Teste fut engendré, --dans une chambre ou Auguste Comte a passé ses premières années, --pendant une ère d'ivresse de ma volonté et parmi d'étranges excès de conscience de soi" (italics mine).

The first Cahier (1894) contains yet another early version of Teste. The following is a sketch of the Teste figure which was to mature into M. Teste:
Portait de Monsieur un Tel
et tout ce qu'il se paraît—physique et moral

a) Tout ce qu'il paraît. Tout ce que dit tout ce qu'il paraît
marche, traits, couleurs
élasticité, production des gestes
variations de ses caractères

b) fixation de son identité
ordre de quantité du nombre immesurable de ses distinctions
A quoi a-t-il pensé?
A quoi a-t-il le plus pensé? Vision dominate
construction du modèle de sa symétrie
Pense-t-il aux autres? Se compare-t-il? Se classe-t-il?
Fréquences dans les emplois de mots, de manières.

c) Applications, Variations
Le figuren mangeant, baisant, souffrant
Interprétation principe des coulisse.

Jon Budget

This "Monsieur un Tel," whose name already signifies Valéry's efforts
to "tuer la marionnette," was created according to two categories:
a) his exterior behavior, distinguishing him from other men by its
absolute lack of mannerism; and b) his thought, distinguishing him
from others by its richness. This gentleman seems to seek no practi-
cal application for his thought; thought itself is already his goal. Like
Teste, this anonymous thinker can be considered from three different
aspects: a) how he appears to others; b) what he really is; and c) the
limits his body imposes upon him. The technique Valéry proposed to
use in this sketch of 1894 is the same used in M. Teste, that is to say
an observer describes impartially what he observes. M. Teste was
then not created suddenly in 1895, but evolved slowly during those years following the crisis. He represents not so much a state of mind as Léonard, but rather a possibility, a course of action which Valéry could have undertaken as a result of that event of 1892.

Although M. Teste was a possibility, Valéry never became M. Teste, he remained his friend and alter-ego. "Sur Teste la vérité est simple: j'ai cherché longuement des connaissances ou plutôt des opérations d'un certain genre, et j'ai attribué à M. Teste l'état de celui qui les aurait découvertes. Hélas ou heureusement, 43 je ne fus et je ne suis que l'interlocuteur..."

M. Teste is introduced by a narrator whose lucid state of mind is dangerously close to Teste's. It is the narrator who makes the famous statement: "La bêtise n'est pas mon fort." It is also the narrator who describes M. Teste to us and who suspects the great genius under the banal appearance of the speculator at the Bourse... à force d'y penser, j'ai fini par croire que M. Testé était arrivé à découvrir des lois de l'esprit que nous ignorons. Sûrement, il 44 avait dû consacrer des années à cette recherche." M. Teste enters a room as if he did not see it, speaks without gestures, and greets no one. In the opinion of the narrator he had not only found the secret laws of the mind, which Léonard had already done, but he had "added himself" to his discoveries.
The actions and thoughts of this peculiar genius are anti-literary and anti-philosophic, disciplines which are all but peculiarities of thought, abandoned by M. Teste long ago. Each expression of thought is but provisional in his mind whose real purpose is to observe the mechanism by which his mind establishes relations: "Il veillait à la répétition de certaines idées il les arrosait de nombre. Ceci lui servait à rendre finalement machinale l'application de ses études conscientes. Il cherchait même à résumer ce travail. Il disait souvent: Maturare! ..." Teste's masterworks are interior.

Only two valid categories exist for him: the possible and the impossible, and thus it is sufficient to know that he could have been a poet, a mathematician or even a philosopher in order no longer to desire its realization. "Monsieur! que m'importe le 'talent' de vos arbres--et des autres!... Je suis chez MOI, je parle ma langue, je sais les choses extraordinaires. C'est le besoin des esprits faibles. Croyez-moi à la lettre: le génie est facile, la divinité est facile... Je veux dire simplement que je sais comment cela se conçoit. C'est facile."

Paradoxically M. Teste is a fictional person who is part of the literature which he detests. Valéry endowed a literary person with all his disdain for literature. M. Teste is a negative aesthetic, if that is possible. But the fact that he exists proves that Valéry and M. Teste were not synonymous but rather ego and alter-ego. In order not to become M. Teste, Valéry had to create him.
After having admired the power of creation in poets like Poe and Mallarme, in artists like Degas and Leonardo, and scientists like Maxwell, Poincaré and Faraday, Valéry asked himself if it would not be possible to develop a still freer mind, a potential power, capable of all creation but disdainful of accomplishing it, a mind which would forever remain in the domain of the possible.

M. Teste represents a new intellectual ethics, an ethic where only the possibility matters. This denial of literature, already present in Leonard, has become absolute in M. Teste. In *Leonard*, Valéry wrote: "Il faut donc avoir quelque défi à l'égard des livres et des expositions trop pures." (Italics mine.) M. Teste states: "Il y a vingt ans que je n'ai plus de livres. J'ai brûlé mes papiers aussi Je rature le vif... Je retiens ce que je veux." (Italics mine.)

M. Teste will leave no works from which to deduce his genius. One must have "known" him in order to write about him.

In reality M. Teste is but another version of the Narcissus theme. Like Narcisse contemplating his image in the water, Teste contemplates his mind in action. Narcisse's words could very well be spoken by Teste:

\[
\text{Mais moi, Narcisse aimé, je ne suis curieux} \\
\text{Que de ma seule essence;} \\
\text{Tout autre n'a pour moi qu'un cœur mystérieux} \\
\text{Tout autre n'est qu'absence. 49}
\]
This perfection of self-knowledge not only demands the destruction of the empirical self, but also that of all surrounding objects.

Reality, according to Teste, consists of everything which his mind has created. All consciousness which the mind may have of a reality outside of itself is only the consciousness of itself. Consciousness precludes the intellectual activity of the knowledge of the self. If the exterior world exists for Teste, it exists only because his Moï wills its existence so that it may act upon it.

In order to illustrate this point, one only has to read the passage at the opera where Teste contemplates the public and the scenery surrounding him: "Une immense fille de cuivre nous séparait d'un groupe murmuran au delà de l'éblouissement. Au fond de la vapeur brillait un morceau nu de femme, doux comme un caillou. Beaucoup d'éventails indépendants vivaient sur le monde sombre et clair, écumant jusqu'aux feux du haut. Mon regard épelait mille petites figures, tombait sur une tête triste, courait sur des bras, sur les gens, et enfin se brûlait." Teste considers the people, and the decor as objects, distinguished from his Moi and subject to his classification. He constructs an ensemble from the walls, the ornaments and the public. Conventional classifications of animate and inanimate objects are discarded; he describes what he sees, and he sees the shoulder of a woman as a white pebble; this is not a
metaphor, M. Teste does not speak in metaphors, but his reality. He perceives his surroundings at the opera according to Leonard's method, nothing has nominal existence, everything is described as the senses perceive it. In this state of perfect lucidity, M. Teste detaches himself from the world of contingencies and makes himself spectator of spectators. "Le suprême les simplifie. Je parie qu'ils pensent tous, de plus en plus, vers la même chose. Ils seront égaux, devant la crise ou limite commune. Du reste, la loi n'est pas si simple...puisqu'elle me néglige."

However, M. Teste is menaced by this world which he tries to abolish. His power over those who surround him depends upon their attention being occupied on the stage. As soon as the opera is finished, Teste will be obliged to renew his own place in this world; he has not succeeded in dominating it completely; his domination lasts but a limited time, and reality escapes him once more. He is forced to remain attached to this life, he does not reach the state of pure mind which he seeks, his body interposes itself and makes him suffer; he remains human. "Mais si spécialise qu'il soit, si détaché des modes d'exister communs, il arrive un moment où la douleur physique a raison de lui et j'ai voulu indiquer dans M. Teste l'aspect que prend la sensation douloureuse aigue quand elle envahit et traverse le champ d'une intelligence elle-même toujours excitée."
Neither angel nor beast, M. Teste suffers. "Ma douleur grossissante me force à l'observer. J'y pense! -- Je n'attends que mon cri... et des que je l'ai entendu--l'objet, le terrible objet, devenant plus petit et encore plus petit, se dérobe à ma vue intérieure."

M. Teste, created one year after Léonard, is even more purified than Léonard, a Léonard who considers even his own creations as idols. Capable of everything, he decides to "do" nothing. M. Teste is an important moment in Valéry's intellectual life, because he is an extreme which Valéry had to imagine before taking a less absolute point of view. M. Teste represents Valéry between the years 1892-1896, leaving behind poetry in order to pursue self-knowledge. He is the symbol of pride and humility. This proud refusal to be anything whatsoever tempted Valéry, and he continually returned to M. Teste, but he knew that the latter was impossible and that he himself needed to take a less absolute stand.

La Soirée avec M. Teste was the last of Valéry's young works. Upon its completion in 1896 he reached maturity, if maturity can be defined as a completion of growth, for in Valéry's intellectual matura-
tion M. Teste represented such a state. This figure which Valéry created at the age of twenty-four continued to haunt him the rest of his life. The questions of language, intellectual discipline, philosophy, and history which M. Teste seemed to have resolved for Valéry in 1896
continued to be objects of his reflection. With the writing of this "roman moderne" young Valéry reached a plateau from which his thought could extend into all directions and to which it always returned. M. Teste became the protagonist of Valéry's intellectual drama throughout the remainder of his life. His later Cahiers are filled with references to this intellectual hero. Early in 1943 he wrote the following note concerning M. Teste: "Teste! le fond de la pensée est pavé de carrefours. Je suis l'instable. L'esprit est la possibilité maxima—and le maximum de capacité d'incohérence. Le Moi est la réponse instantanée à chaque incohérence partielle, ---qui est excitant."

In the same year another note concerning M. Teste reads as follows: "Teste: Merveilleuse transformation! et cette nettété extrême et extraordinaire des ordres ou phases de transformations sans confusion. L'ordre impose aux désordres de divers genres de l'esprit."

Before his death Valéry assembled all the notes and sketches pertaining to this figure in order to publish them in a new edition. This strange gentleman was then the beginning and the end of his mature intellectual pursuits. After having abolished the idols of his youth he began anew, at "zéro," at his beginning, which was M. Teste, and at the end of his life he returned to "zéro," to M. Teste. "Fin de M. Teste. Il s'agit de passer de zéro à zéro.---Et c'est la vie. De l'inconscient et insensible à l'inconscient et
insensible. Le passage impossible a voir, puisqu'il passe du voir 
au non voir aprè s être passe du non voir au voir...." M. Teste's 
death coincides with Valéry's death, for death is not the end of 
physical life but rather the end of thought. "Fin intellectuelle. 
Marche funèbre de la pensée." M. Teste provided Valéry with 
the orientation of his thoughts as well as with the pivot around which 
they revolved.

Yet even M. Teste could not overcome his body; he was a 
victim of physical pain. "Ma douleur grossissante me force à 
l'observer." The mind is forced to obey the body. M. Teste con-
tained then not only the major themes of Valéry's intellectual pursuits, 
but also the tow poles between which he moved the rest of his life--
the intellect and the senses. The poet of "Le Cimetière Marin" was 
already implicit in M. Teste. It was then the creative act which 
saved Valéry from the stiffling world of M. Teste.

Non, non!... Debout! Dans l'ère successive! 
Brisez, mon corps, cette forme pensive! 
Buvez, mon sein, la naissance du vent! 
Une fraîcheur, de la mer exhalée, 
Me rend mon âme... O puissance salée! 
Courons à l'onde en rejaillir vivant!
APPENDIX TO CHAPTER II

Madame Valéry told me during our conversation that Poe was the subject of Valéry's first public lecture in Paris. On May 31, 1922, Madame Adrienne monnier asked Valéry to give a private lecture at her home Rue de l'Odeon. He discussed Poe, but unfortunately no notes have been preserved, and consequently we do not know what thoughts he expressed in the lecture.

However, his 1924 lecture, entitled Situation de Baudelaire, has been printed in its entirety. In this lecture Valéry gave prime importance to the influence of Poe on Baudelaire and noted that the former saved Baudelaire from becoming merely a disciple of the Parnasse or of Hugo by giving him the possibility of a new type of poetry. "Mais ces dons n'eussent fait de lui qu'un émule de Gautier, sans doute, ou un excellent artiste du Parnasse, s'il n'eût, par la curiosité de son esprit, mérité la chance de découvrir dans les
ouvrages d'Edgar Poe un nouveau monde intellectuel." This lecture appears as a discourse on Poe's role in Valéry's intellectual evolution, as much as in Baudelaire's. Valéry speaking about Baudelaire, could just as well be speaking about himself during the years 1889-1892, when Poe exercised the greatest influence on his development.
The last proof of Valéry's life-long admiration for Poe can be found in a little-known article which appeared in *Commerce* No. XIV, Hiver 1927, and which is entitled "Quelques Fragments des Marginalia, traduits et annotés par Paul Valéry." Poe's text as Valéry translated it and his commentary appear side by side. Valéry had already read the *Marginalia* in 1894. In his essay of Leonard he made one reference to Poe's commentary on Shakespeare. Although part of Poe's work was translated in 1882 by Emile Hennequin, it is impossible to know if young Valéry had read the translation or the original at that moment.

In 1927 Valéry introduced his translation of the *Marginalia* with the following note:

Je ne sais dans quelles circonstances Poe a été conduit à publier les *Marginalia*. Il n'est pas difficile de les imaginer. Le préambule par lequel il les introduit respire l'embarras de l'auteur et paraît être une sorte d'excuse ou de plaidoyer pour une publication qu'il n'eût vraisemblablement pas même songé à faire, si quelque phase critique de sa triste fortune ne l'eût contraint d'imprimer malgré soi et de livrer au public ces miettes de sa pensée.

Il les a semées en divers temps dans le *Messenger*, le *Philadelphia Democratic Review*, le *Graham's Magazine*...

Les publications de cette espèce me font songer à l'histoire de l'homme dont le traineau est poursuivi par une troupe de loups affamés. Il leur jette, pour gagner du temps et de l'espace, tout ce qu'il emportait avec soi. Il commence par le moins précieux... ³

It is evident from this note that Valéry saw in Poe, the author of the
Marginalia, a mind kin in spirit to his own. He presumed that Poe, like himself, did not wish to publish his thoughts and would have preferred a proud silence to publication.

I shall quote Poe's original text, Valery's translation and his commentary on a few excerpts which he translated.

Poe: But the purely marginal jottings, done with no eye to the Memorandum Book, have a distinct complexion, and not only a distinct purpose, but none at all; this it is which imparts to them a value. They have a rank somewhat above the chance and desultory comments of literary chit-chat--for these latter are not unfrequently "talk for talk's sake," hurried out of the mouth; while the marginalia are deliberately pencilled, because the mind of the reader wishes to unburthen itself of a thought however flippant--however silly--however trivial--still a thought indeed, not merely a thing that might have been a thought in time, and under more favorable circumstance. In the marginalia, too, we talk only to ourselves; we therefore talk freshly--boldly--originally--with abandonnement--without conceit--much after the fashion of Jeremy Taylor, and Sir Thomas Browne, and Sir William Temple, and the anatomical Burton, and that most logical analogist, Butler, and some other people of the old day, who were too full of their matter to have any room for their manner, which, thus being left out of question, was a capital manner, indeed, --model of manners, with a richly marginalic air. 4

Valery's translation reads as follows:

Mais des annotations purement marginales faites sans préoccupations mnémoniques, ont ce caractère particulier de ne correspondre à aucun dessein particulier. Et c'est cela même qui fait leur prix.

Elles se placent quelque peu au-dessus des propos hasardeux et incohérents d'un bavardage littéraire qui se réduit, la plupart du temps, à parler pour le seul plaisir de parler, tandis que les marginalia sont crayonnés dans une intention
bien déterminée. L'esprit du lecteur veut se décharger
d' une pensée -- qu'elle soit légère, qu'elle soit naïve, qu'elle
soit triviale, -- mais enfin une véritable pensée, et non
seulement quelque chose qui aurait pu eventuellement devenir
une pensée dans des circonstances plus favorables. De plus,
dans ces marginalia nous ne nous entretenons qu'avec nous-
mêmes, et par conséquent nous parlons spontanément,
librement, originalement, avec abandon, sans apprêt, dans
la manière de J. Taylor, de Sir Thomas Browne, de Sir
William Trumple et de l'anatomique Burton, ou de ce Butler
le plus logicien des amateurs d'analogies, -- et de divers
autres anciens auteurs qui étaient trop pleins de leur sujet
pour qu'ils pussent s'inquieter de leur forme cependant que
leur forme, par cela même qu'ils ne s'en préoccupaient pas,
se faisait forme par excellence -- une modèle de formes dans
son aspect d'exubérance marginale.  

A comparison of the two texts reveals that Valéry translated Poe
with as much accuracy and regard for the original as Baudelaire had
done. Yet Valéry, the author of the Cahiers, was not satisfied with
the text by Poe and added his own marginalia to it.

Cette esquisse d'une théorie de la "forme" demanderait
une sévère discussion.

L'artiste se meut entre l'immediat et l'élaboré. L'immediat
n'a pas toujours les qualités que l'opinion commune lui
attribue a priori.

D'ailleurs, celui qui dans les moments d'abandon et dans son
discours spontané, est favorisé de trouvailles, invente des
formes et des modèles d'expression originale -- est en general,
le même que celui dont la peine et l'attention prolongée
arriveront à produire au moins les mêmes effets.

Un esprit puissant tend à obtenir de soi qu'il reproduise en
s'en préoccupant, des fruits analogues à ceux qu'il a pu
parfois produire par cela même qu'il ne s'en préoccupait
pas.  

Valery's commentary is of course based on his theory that the poet can receive "un premier vers tout rôti de la muse," but that he will have to work consciously and rigorously in order to construct his whole work as perfectly as the "inspirational verse;" in other words inspiration must be welcomed in perfect lucidity and does not exclude hard work.

The following passage is the last which Valéry translated of the first Marginalia.

I concluded at length, to put extensive faith in the acumen and imagination of the reader:—this as a general rule. But, in some instances, where even faith would not remove mountains, there seemed no sager plan than so to re-model the note as to convey at least the ghost of a conception as to what it was all about. Where, for such conception, the text itself was absolutely necessary, I could quote it; where the title of the book commented upon was indispensable, I could name it. In short, like a novel-hero dilemma’d, I made up my mind "to be guided by circumstances," in default of more satisfactory rules of conduct.

As for the multidinous opinion expressed in the subjoined farrago—as for my present assent to all, or dissent from any portion of it—as to the possibility of my having, in some instances, altered my mind—or as to the impossibility of my not having altered it often—these are points upon which I say nothing, because upon these there can be nothing clearly said. It may be as well to observe, however, that just as the goodness of your true pun is in the direct ratio of its intolerability, so is nonsense essential sense of Marginal Note. 7

Valéry's translation reads as follows:

Je me résolus enfin à placer toute ma confiance dans la pénétration et dans l'imagination du lecteur éventuel, et je posai ceci en règle générale. Mais dans certains cas ou la
foi elle-même me parut devoir être impuissante à transporter des montagnes, il me sembla qu'il n'y eut point de tactique plus sûre que de remanier la note de telle sorte qu'elle fit au moins entrevoir l'ombre de l'idée dont il était question.

Partout où le texte lui-même était absolument nécessaire pour donner à concevoir cette idée, je pourrais le citer; et là où le titre du livre commenté était indispensable je me manquerais pas de l'indiquer. Bref, comme un héros de roman enfermé dans un delimme, je pris la résolution d'agir, suivant les circonstances, à défaut de règle générale de conduite plus satisfaisante. Quant à la multitude des opinions désordonnées exprimées dans le chaos ci-dessous, --quant à mon adhesion actuelle à leur ensemble, --quant à la possibilité d'avoir change d'avis sur plusieurs points, --ou à l'impossibilité de n'en avoir pas changé--ce sont là des questions sur lesquelles je ne dirai rien car il n'y a rien à dire de bon. 8

Valéry again followed the original text very closely and made only two changes: a) he translated clever as bon and b) he left out the last sentence of Poe's text; both changes are understandable to the reader of Valéry. Interesting in this context is Valery's commentary.

Poe s'arrête au moment même ou il devait développer les reflexions les plus intéressantes de son discours préliminaire.

Cette multitude de pensées désordonnées, le regard ultérieur sur elles qui confirme les unes, dissipe les autres, abolit ou approfondit ça et là les effets actuels d'une quantité d'anciens moments enregistrés un par un, --point de thème plus excitant pour l'esprit. L'objet essentiel de l'esprit est l'esprit--. Ce qu'il poursuit dans ses analyses et ses constructions de mondes, ce qu'il traque sur la terre et dans le ciel, ce ne peut être que soi-même. Il se cherche une idée de soi qui le sature, qui l'étale, qui épuise toutes ses puissances, ou qui lui rend ce qu'il est. Mais rien ne l'instruit de la transcendance de son désir et de sa nature, qui est désir, plus nettement que la vue immédiate de ses contradictions et des manières infinies qu'il possède de considérer et de classer le même objet. 9
Valery again develops a theme which Poe merely mentioned in passing. Valery's interest in Poe was not so much due to the fact that he agreed with the American, but rather that he found in the latter's work material upon which to reflect and which to develop. I shall quote one last passage of the translation.

Poe: However commonly we hear it remarked, that such and such thoughts are beyond the compass of words! I do not believe that any thought, properly so called, is out of reach of language. I fancy, rather, that where difficulty in expression is experienced, there is, in the intellect which experiences it, a want either of deliberateness or of method. For my own part, I have never had a thought which I could not see down in words, with even more distinctness than that with which I conceived it:--as I have before observed, the thought is logicalized by the effort at (written) expression. 10

Valery's translation:

Quoi de plus commun que d'entendre dire que telle ou telle pensée est en dehors de la sphère des Mots! Je ne crois pas qu'aucune pensée--ce qu'on peut appeler véritablement une pensée--soit au delà des frontières du langage. J'estime plutôt que là où l'on trouve de la difficulté à s'exprimer, l'on trouverait dans l'intellect qui la ressent un manque de reflexion ou de méthode. Pour ma part je n'ai jamais eu une pensée que je n'aie pu l'exprimer en mots, sans la rendre plus nette que je ne l'avais conçu; comme je l'ai fait observer tout à l'heure, la pensée est rendue plus logique par l'effort vers son expression écrite. 11

Valery's commentary:

Il y aurait aussi à vérifier l'assertion de l'auteur relativement à la logique.

Il n'y a de logique que de quelque langage. Mais il n'y a point de logique d'un langage formé au hasard. Or le langage commun est un langage formé au hasard qui n'est logiquement utilisable
Valéry again added a nuance to Poe's rather simple thought. It is unnecessary to state that Valéry, contrary to Poe, had reflected on language and had questioned its power and utility for abstract thought.

The translation of one poet by another is witness of a great admiration. It stems from the desire to make the work of the particular author available to his compatriots in their native language. Baudelaire spent many years translating Poe into French, Rilke introduced Valéry to the German public, and Valéry brought a curious work by Poe to the attention of the French readers. This act of translation was his last hommage to his master.

Like Baudelaire and Mallarmé before him, Valéry chose the work by Poe closest related to his own thought. The *Marginalia* without a central theme, portray thought in movement, reach no conclusions, prescribe no system, and are thereby closest in concept to Valéry's *Cahiers*, which could be called his "life-work."
NOTES

INTRODUCTION


5. Valéry, Cahiers, t. XXVII, p. 449.

CHAPTER I


4. Loc. cit.

5. Ibid., I, p. 13.


8. Mondor, p. 31.


* Shall henceforth be referred to as L. Q.

** Shall henceforth be referred to as PL I or PL II.
(CHAPTER I)

10. Ibid., I, p. 13.
11. Ibid., I, p. 1092.
12. Ibid., I, p. 1090.
13. Ibid., I, pp. 1095-1097.
15. See Chapter IV.
16. Ibid., p. 1092.


19. Ibid., I, p. 1093.
20. Loc. cit.
22. Ibid., I, p. 1090.
23. Ibid., I, p. 1087.
25. The modern spelling.
27. Ibid., p. 14.
28. Mondor, p. 43.
(CHAPTER I)

30. Mondor, p. 46.


32. Mondor, p. 47.

33. Loc. cit.

34. Paul Valéry Vivant, Marseille, Cahiers du Sud, MCMXLVI, p. 45.

35. PL I, pp. 583-584.

36. Ibid., I, p. 586.

37. Ibid., I, p. 590.

38. Ibid., I, p. 589.


41. Paul Valéry-Gustave Fourment, Correspondance, p. 54.

42. Quoted by Mondor, p. 42.


44. Mondor, p. 52.

45. L. Q., p. 21.

46. Mondor, p. 52.

47. Ibid., p. 82.

48. Ibid., p. 84.

49. La Tentation de Saint-Antoine.
(CHAPTER I)

50. Le Rhin.

51. Mondor, pp. 55-56.

52. Ibid., p. 57.


54. Mondor, p. 53.

55. L. Q., p. 31.

56. Ibid., p. 33.

57. PL I, p. 777.

58. Mondor, p. 82.

59. L. Q., p. 42.

60. PL I, p. 1575.


62. Mondor, p. 54.

63. PL II, p. 1277.

64. See Chapter III.

65. PL I, p. 15.


67. Loc. cit.

68. Ibid., p. 67.

69. PL II, p. 1399.

70. PL I, p. 15.
(CHAPTER I)

71. In the third chapter it will become evident that Valéry's Catholicism of the year 1887 is one of an aesthete rather than of a firm believer.


74. L. Q., p. 21.

75. Mondor, p. 100.

76. PL II, p. 1610.

77. Ibid., II, p. 1611.


79. See Chapter III.

80. Nadal claims that Valéry already knew Huysmans in 1887.


82. Mondor, p. 170.


CHAPTER II

1. One of Baudelaire's translation of Poe's short stories.


4. It should also be mentioned that even if he had bought these works in English in 1896, it would have made little difference, since his thought was already formed at that time.
(CHAPTER II)


6. Ibid., p. 98.


14. Many years later Valéry referred to Mallarmé as "un savant," a word which he applied only to Poe and Mallarmé.

15. I shall quote the poem here but make only a few remarks about it. This poem will be analyzed in detail in the following chapter in a discussion of his literary productions of the years 1889-1891.


18. Valéry, who disapproved of biographical criticism, makes only one reference to Poe's private life. He concludes his preface for Gérard de Nerval's Chimères, written in 1944, with the following sentences: "On songe à Edgar Poe, quand par un froid de même dureté, il suivit le convoi funèbre de sa femme, enveloppé du châle dans lequel elle était morte. Il n'avait pas autre chose à se mettre." PL I, p. 597.
(CHAPTER II)


20. 1890 and 1891 respectively.


22. Ibid., p. 1787.


24. See Chapter III.


27. PL I, p. 1787.

28. L. Q., p. 11.

29. PL I, p. 17. See Chapter III.

30. Féline, Cahiers Du Sud, pp. 45-46.


32. He had discovered Huysmans a year earlier.

33. Valéry-Fourment, Correspondance, p. 115.

34. L. Q., p. 28.


36. L. Q., p. 45.

37. But does this concept of analogy arise from Poe or rather from Baudelaire? Poe certainly hinted at its existence, but Baudelaire developed it into a system.
(CHAPTER II)


39. Valery-Gide, *Correspondance*, p. 120.

40. Ibid., p. 134.


43. Valery, *Cahiers*, t. XXIII, p. 188.

44. Poe, *Oeuvres en Prose*, p. 1053.

45. Ibid., p. 955.


49. PL I, p. 854.

50. Ibid., p. 1734.

51. Ibid., p. 854.

52. See Chapter V for a discussion of the Moi-Pur.

53. PL I, p. 855.

54. Ibid., p. 856.


56. PL I, p. 857.

(CHAPTER II)

58. Valéry-Fourment, Correspondance, as stated by Nadal, p. 36.

59. Léonard as will be seen in Chapter V applies the law of Consistency.

60. PL I, p. 857.

61. Hans Sørensen, La Poesie de Paul Valéry, Kjøbenhavn, Universitetsforlaget I Aarhus, 1944, p. 36.


64. PL I, p. 858.


67. PL I, p. 20.

68. Ibid., p. 21.


70. See Chapter V.

71. Valéry, Cahiers, t. I, p. 50. Dupin is the detective of Poe's stories Murder in the Rue Morgue and The Purloined Letter. He is a master mind capable of solving the most baffling mystery.


73. Valéry-Fourment, Correspondance, as stated by Nadal, p. 37.


75. Poe, Complete Works, Vol. 6, p. 41.
(CHAPTER II)

76. Ibid., pp. 46-47.

77. Valery, Cahiers, t. I, p. 60.

78. See Sewell, op. cit., for a discussion of "sound-look."

79. Chapters IV and V discuss this aspect of Valery's thought.

80. Valery, Cahiers, t. 27, pp. 235-236.


CHAPTER III


2. Ibid., pp. 40-50.


6. This search for the absolute through aesthetics was already the concern of German idealism. Yet the German idealists, notably Schelling, already considered aesthetic activity itself an absolute, while the Symbolists recognized only poetry as an absolute, for it creates the universe by means of language.

(CHAPTER III)

8. Ibid., p. 28

9. See his letters to Pierre Louys in L. Q.

10. Valéry-Fourment, Correspondance, p. 32.

11. PL I, p. 16.

12. L. Q., p. 11.


15. Ibid., p. 36.

16. Valéry-Fourment, Correspondance, p. 211.


18. Valéry-Fourment, Correspondance, p. 213.

19. Valéry sent this poem to Karl Boes in July 1889.


22. PL I, p. 1595.

23. Ibid., p. 1580.


25. Valéry-Fourment, Correspondance, p. 221.


27. PL I, pp. 1585-1586.
(CHAPTER III)


29. PL I, pp. 1586-1587.


33. L. Q., p. 35.

34. Valéry-Gide, Correspondance, p. 51.

35. L. Q., p. 240.

36. Valéry-Gide, Correspondance, p. 41.

37. Ibid., p. 116.

38. Ibid., p. 123.

39. Ibid., p. 83.

40. Ibid., p. 120.

41. Ibid., p. 126.

42. Ibid., pp. 214-215.

43. Ibid., p. 191.

44. Ibid., p. 417.

45. Ibid., p. 411.

46. Walzer, op. cit., p. 33.

47. Lehmann, op. cit., p. 194.
(CHAPTER III)


50. Lefèvre, op. cit., p. 123.

51. For a complete discussion of the differences see: Lehmann, op. cit., pp. 196-206.

52. Ibid., pp. 197-199.

53. Mondor, Précocité, p. 82.


55. PL II, p. 1538.

56. Valéry-Gide, Correspondance, p. 74.

57. Already, for Taine, architecture and music were linked because both were non-imitative arts.

58. PL II, p. 1402.

59. Loc. cit.

60. Loc. cit.


62. PL II, p. 1402. This last sentence recalls Mallarme's sonnet on Wagner:

Trompettes tout haut d'or pâme sur les vêlins,
Le dieu Richard Wagner irradiant un sacre
Mal tu par l'encre même en sanglots sibyllins.
(CHAPTER III)

63. Just as Hermes, the God of Logos, so the poet has become God, the creator of the universe. For a discussion of Hermeticism see: Tindall, op. cit., pp. 51-53.

64. PL II, p. 1403.

65. Loc. cit.

66. Ibid., p. 1404.

67. Here we must think of Eupalinos who later, in 1921, spoke of mute, speaking, and singing monuments.

68. PL II, p. 1404.

69. Loc. cit. This recalls Baudelaire's sonnet "Correspondances:"

La Nature est un temple ou de vivants piliers
Laissent parfois sortir de confuses paroles:
L'homme y passe à travers des forêts de symboles
Qui l'observent avec des regards familiers.

70. Valéry-Gide, Correspondance, p. 70. After several re-writings this sonnet was included in Vers Anciens.

71. PL II, p. 1405.

72. For a discussion and a distinction between the magician and the mystic in poetry see: Karl Vossler, The Spirit of Language in Civilization, translated by Oscar Oeser, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1932, pp. 3-5. Adam was a magician whom all living things in paradise obeyed, since he called them by their right name. He was the master of all things not by force but by the power of speech alone, but the charm was shattered by the curse of reality. The world no longer responded to the names by which the magician evoked it. Thus the mystic arose against the magician for whom language was no longer an eye or a hand of the spirit, but a veil and a hindrance.

73. Berne-Joffroy, Présence de Valéry, p. 50.

74. Mondor, Précocité, p. 82.
(CHAPTER III)

75. L. Q., p. 21.

76. Ibid., p. 19.

77. Joffroy, Présence de Valéry, p. 50.

78. PL I, p. 637.

79. Ibid., p. 649.

80. Ibid., pp. 662-663. This last statement seems to contradict the letter to Pierre Louÿs, where he claimed to have discovered Mallarmé by himself.

81. It was Pierre Louÿs who copied for Valéry a long fragment of the great poem in 1890. See letter to Pierre Louÿs, September 26, 1890.

82. Mondor, Précocité, p. 95.

83. Ibid., p. 96.

84. Fiser, op. cit., p. 135.

85. Mondor, Précocité, pp. 96-97.

86. PL I, p. 634.

87. Ibid., p. 637.

88. Loc. cit.

89. Ibid., p. 640.

90. Loc. cit.

91. Loc. cit.

92. L. Q., p. 97.

93. PL I, p. 637.
(CHAPTER III)


95. PL I, p. 641.

96. Ibid., p. 634.


98. L. Q., p. 47.


102. PL I, p. 1592.

103. Valéry used the subject of a sleeping woman many times in his mature poetry: "La Dormeuse," "Agathe."


105. L. Q., p. 95.

106. PL II, p. 1537.

107. This disposition is, of course, also related to the reading of Eureka.

108. PL I, p. 635.

CHAPTER IV


2. PL I, p. 640.
(CHAPTER IV)


5. PL I, p. 1335.


8. Léonard will be such a creator.


10. Ibid., p. 125-126.


17. PL I, p. 634.

18. Mrs. Robinson quotes a very interesting passage from *Cahiers XV*, p. 274, in which Valéry contrasted his Narcisse with Gide's: "Mon Narcisse n'est pas le sien. Le mien est contraste, —la merveille que le reflet d'un Moi Pur soit un Monsieur—un âge, un sexe, un passé, des probabilités et des certitudes—ou que tout ceci exige ou possède un invariant absolu exprimé par cette contradiction: Je ne suis pas ce (celui) que je suis. Non sum qui sum."
(CHAPTER IV)


21. For an excellent study of the later Cahiers and their analysis of the mind, see Robinson, op. cit.

22. This was to be the method of Léonard whose intellectual drama of mental images will be so abstract that the images become figures. See Chapter V of this paper.


27. Ibid., p. 143.

28. Ibid., p. 145.

29. Ibid., p. 142.

30. Ibid., p. 144.

31. Ibid., p. 151.

32. Ibid., p. 175.

33. Ibid., p. 150.

34. Loc. cit.

35. Ibid., p. 177.

36. Ibid., p. 175.
(CHAPTER IV)

37. Ibid., p. 154.

38. Ibid., p. 131.


40. As quoted by Robinson, op. cit., p. 15.

41. Valéry, Cahiers, t. VI, p. 843.

42. Valéry, Cahiers, t. II, p. 705.


44. Ibid., p. 26.

45. In his later life Valéry admired Russell's writings on mathematics. See L. Q., p. 198. He did not, unfortunately, know Wittgenstein, who, it seems to me would have pleased Valéry even more by his probing questions about philosophy, his scientific training, his withdrawal from the world, and finally his refusal to publish. During his life Wittgenstein only published one small brochure of eighty pages entitled "Logisch-philosophische Abhandlungen," 1921. It also appears to me that Wittgenstein comes closer to M. Teste than any other thinker; even his own writing, in the form of aphorisms, is worthy of Teste.

46. George Steiner, The Listener, London, July 12 and July 14, 1960, examined what he called "the retreat from the word" not only in philosophy and the arts, but also in mathematics.

47. Valéry, Cahiers, t. I, p. 36.

48. Ibid., p. 226.

49. Ibid., p. 235.

50. See Chapter I.

(CHAPTER IV)


55. It is easy to see with what enthusiasm Valéry was to welcome the theory of relativity. Mrs. Robinson points out that his knowledge of relativity theory was far from superficial. He knew the contributions to the theory made by mathematicians besides Einstein, such as Fitzgerald, Lorentz, and Poincaré as well as by non-Euclidean geometers such as Riemann and Gauss. His *Cahiers* refer to relativity as early as 1906. Moreover, Valéry's library contained the complete edition of Riemann's work *Oeuvres Mathématiques*, Gauthier-Villars, 1898, as well as an annotated edition of Lobatchevsky's *Nouveaux Principes de la Géométrie avec une théorie complète des parallèles*, Impr. de Hayez, Bruxelles, 1900. See Robinson, *op cit.*, pp. 37 ff.

56. Valéry's knowledge of thermodynamics was quite good. His later *Cahiers* often refer to Carnot, Boltzman, Clausius and Gibbs. In *La Table Ronde*, 1948, pp. 199-201 an article appeared in which he recalled his great interest in the lectures given by Jean Perrin on thermodynamics at the beginning of the century. However, the first *Cahier* already contained a few remarks on thermodynamics.

57. It is interesting to note that there exists a definite affinity between Valéry's analysis of the mind and the theory of cybernetics developed much later. Cybernetics tries to liberate itself from the affective language traditionally connected with the mind and seeks a completely objective and scientific approach to its analysis of mental activity, which it conceives as a mechanical system similar to a machine. Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, Boston, 1948, cf. Robinson, *op cit.*


(CHAPTER IV)

60. Valéry, Cahiers, I, p. 516.

61. Ibid., p. 98.

62. Ibid., p. 256.

63. Ibid., p. 902.

64. Ibid., p. 911.

65. Robinson, op. cit., p. 531.


67. Ibid., p. 404.

68. In the first Cahier as well as in Léonard Valéry still conceived of the Moi and of consciousness as synonymous, which, as Mrs. Robinson points out, is no longer the case in the Cahiers dating from 1920 on. In these later notebooks the Moi is only the supreme invariant, without being identified with consciousness.


70. PL I, p. 630.

CHAPTER V

1. This was the second "commande" which Valéry wrote, the first having been "Le Paradoxe sur l'Architecte." I have used the English spelling Leonardo whenever I refer to the artist, and the French spelling when I discuss Valéry's "creation" of Léonard.


3. Ibid., p. 1232.

4. Ibid., p. 1203.
(CHAPTER V)

5. Ibid., p. 1155.
6. Ibid., p. 1157.
7. Ibid., p. 1159.
8. Ibid., p. 1160.
10. Ibid., p. 1162.
12. Ibid., p. 1164.
13. Ibid., p. 1167.
15. Ibid., p. 1188.
16. Ibid., pp. 1181-1182.
17. Ibid., p. 1197.
18. Ibid., p. 1184.
19. Ibid., p. 1185.
20. Ibid., p. 1198.
21. Ibid., p. 1185.
22. Ibid., p. 1206.
25. Ibid., p. 383.
(CHAPTER V)

26. PL II, p. 64.

27. PL I, p. 813.

28. Ibid., p. 855.

29. Ibid., pp. 808-809.

30. "internité" is a word invented by Valéry to describe Teste's concentration upon the mechanism of his own thought.

31. PL II, p. 66.

32. For Valéry the word théorie meant: "Une connaissance qui tend à la généralité." Stated by Bémol, op. cit., p. 136.

33. There is a definite affinity between M. Teste and the "roman modern" as it is used in the 1960's: lack of biographical detail, objectivity of the narrator, concentration upon one character, etc.

34. PL II, p. 64.

35. Ibid., p. 15-16.

36. Ibid., p. 13.

37. One of Valéry's favorite drawings to graphically represent the "conscience de la conscience."

38. L. O., p. 95.


40. Ibid., p. 1380.

41. Ibid., p. 11.

42. Valéry, Cahiers, I, p. 19.
(CHAPTER V)

43. PL II, p. 1380.

44. Ibid., p. 17.

45. Ibid., p. 18.

46. PL II, p. 22.

47. PL I, p. 1158.


49. PL I, p. 123.

50. We have seen this denial of the world in Valery's early poems (Chapter III); yet Teste does not flee from the world, he disdains it, knowing himself to be infinitely superior.

51. PL II, p. 20.

52. Ibid., p. 21.

53. Ibid., p. 1381.

54. Ibid., p. 25.

55. Mackay, op. cit., p. 92.

56. Valery, Cahiers, t. XXVII, p. 96.

57. Ibid., p. 909.

58. PL II, p. 56.

59. Ibid., pp. 74-75.

APPENDIX

1. PL I, p. 599.
(APPENDIX)


5. Valéry, Commerce, pp. 16-17.

6. Ibid., p. 16.


9. Ibid., p. 22.


11. Valéry, Commerce, p. 27.

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