Introduction

I had the good fortune and privilege of meeting Mike when I was a student, back in 1995, and I owe him so much in so many ways, both as a man and as a scholar, that no words of mine will ever be able to convey my gratitude, my admiration and my friendship. A bottle of red wine might do instead. Also, as a humble token of recognition and a heartfelt recollection of the times when we first met, I decided to answer the question that he has chosen for this symposium by going back to an author, Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), who was influential in making me interested in philosophy as a boy, but whose work I have not dealt with as a scholar. Thus, what follows is both old and new, being a first step into a terrain which I have not trodden for many years.

In effect, had I been asked to give an immediate answer to the question 'what is morality?' I would have said: 'an instance of civil commons', that is, an instance of "social constructs which enable universal access to human life goods without which people's capacities are always reduced or destroyed." (John McMurtry, "Human Rights versus Corporate Rights: Life Value, the Civil Commons and Social Justice" *Studies in Social Justice* 5(1): 11-61, 2011, p.17) In line with my academic studies over the past decade, I would have placed myself in the ideal position of an external observer and determined what role morality has been playing *vis-à-vis* the most regular aim displayed by human beings, both individually and collectively: to lead a tolerable life. Now, referring to the civil commons would give a description of morality that focuses upon its life-enhancing function. It would be a description of morality from the *outside*. Another description is also possible, however, that focuses upon the feelings of outrage, remorse, shame, distress, empathy, pleasure, pain, as well as the calls of duty and the spontaneous sense of what is right and what is wrong that populate at least *my* experience of morality—*inside*. All these emotions, the related beliefs, the reasoning processes that they set in motion, the subsequent acts of will and the corresponding physical actions that one imagines and hopes to materialise constitute the domain of morality as *felt being*, or *lived personal experience*.

It is primarily within this domain that Blaise Pascal develops his reflections on morality, which, despite his enduring fame as a scientist and a thinker, have received very little attention by modern Anglophone ethicists, who have written instead endless volumes on the epistemology of his wager or *le pari* ("the machine", 680)[1]—itself a piece of apologetics and an early example of game theory. They have labelled Pascal a 'philosopher of religion' and pretty much left him there, as marginal as religion itself seems to be these days.[2] Yet, Pascal did have a moral philosophy of his own and one that can help us answer the question 'what is morality?' from the perspective of lived personal experience.[3] It is not an easy one to detect, for it is scattered across his unsystematic maxims, short reflections and aphorisms, themselves scattered across a number of differing manuscripts. Reconstructing and outlining it here today is the chief aim of my paper.[4] Knowing that some of today's participants are greatly interested in French philosophy, literature and culture at large, Mike himself included, I hope you will appreciate my effort.

Pascal's Moral Philosophy

According to Pascal, morality is behaviour consistent with the correct apprehension of moral value, i.e. goodness, through "the heart, which perceive[s] wisdom" (339). The *heart* [coeur] is the faculty that feels or senses good and bad or, in other words, it is the moral *sense*, perhaps an organ of perception, analogous to hearing (41) or seeing—hence Pascal's writing in the same passage about "the eyes of the heart" (cf. also 804 [from the Manuscript Guerrier, not Copy B]). And if the eyes can see many things, so does the heart deliver much more than just the immediate apprehension of moral truths or values, whether 'explicitable' (e.g. "homicide is wrong", 450) or not, since *all* forms of knowledge rely upon first principles that cannot be rationally demonstrated, but only *intuited*:

We know the truth not only through our reason but also through our heart. It is through the latter that we know first principles, and reason, which has no part in it, tries in vain to challenge them. The skeptics, who have only this for their object, labor uselessly. We know we are not dreaming, however powerless we are to prove it by reason. This inability demonstrates only the weakness of our reason, and not, as they claim, the uncertainty of all knowledge. For knowledge of first principles, such as space, time, motion, number is as firm as any we derive from reasoning. Reason must use this knowledge from the heart and

instinct, and base all its arguments on it. The heart feels that there are three dimensions in space… Principles are felt, propositions are proved; all with certainty, though in different ways (142).[5]

Analogous remarks appear in his 1658 *Art of Persuasion* (Harvard: Harvard Classics, 1993-2013 [1909-14]), where Pascal distinguishes between knowledge that enters the heart through the spirit, and knowledge that enters the spirit through the heart.[6] Perhaps the heart should be better described as a skill than a faculty, indeed one relying upon long-internalised skills, such as seeing or hearing; this is certainly a difficult issue to resolve, given the ambiguity of many passages in Pascal's work. However, the actual crux of Pascal's emphasis is the following: sane human beings grasp and believe in the existence of, say, space, time, extended bodies, moral wrongfulness, and upon them build their sciences, whether these eventually reflect adequately the original intuition or not.[7] "Ethics" itself, albeit "special", is, for Pascal, a "universal science" (598).[8] What is important in it, is to rely upon correct intuited principles, which we may have experienced in childhood if we had good enough a natural disposition (157-9, 527), and before education, local customs[9] or excessive faith in discursive or demonstrative reason could lead us astray (97-8, 132, 171): "Wisdom leads us back to childhood" (116).[10]

It is important to highlight that the heart's sentiments combine emotional, intellectual and volitional elements. We may separate them *in abstracto*, but they are joined in actual experience.[11] These sentiments are "internal and *immediate* feeling[s]" (360; emphasis in the original), but they are also forms of comprehension, insofar as they engender certain beliefs and interpretations (287), and they prompt us into action, including successive discursive or demonstrative rational processes (662). As Pascal famously asserted: "*The heart has its reasons*, which reason does not know." (680; emphasis added) Typically, philosophers have emphasised the negative part of this statement. However, the positive is at least as important. Pascal was an intuitionist and believed sentiments to be the springboard of morality, but he was no sentimentalist or, to use a 20th-century label, no emotivist. "Religion", as he writes, "is not contrary to reason" (46). Echoing old scholastic wisdom on this matter, Pascal states that "[t]he principle of morality" is "to think well" (232; cf. also 106, 117). Pascal does not posit an impassable contradiction between blind subjective bodily passion on the one end, and cognising objective disembodied reason on the other. Rather, he tries to reveal how different types or levels of belief, certainty and

knowledge, wisdom included, can be acquired through our different faculties, one of which, the heart, also characterisd as "instinct" (187), can grasp fundamental truths that discursive or demonstrative reason cannot grasp.[12] Indeed, science itself would not be possible if we were not trustful enough in our intuitions (cf. also 455). Thus, Pascal condemns "Two excesses. Excluding reason, admitting only reason." (214).[13]

True to his intellectual hero, Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-430), and to Augustine's motto "*credo ut intelligam*",[14] Pascal sees the limits of human reasoning and believes our sentiments to be able to spur (142 cited above), integrate (e.g. 287) and, when necessary, substitute our discursive or demonstrative reason (e.g. 662). A famous mathematician and physicist, Pascal reminds himself nonetheless to "write against those who delve too deeply in the sciences. Descartes" *in primis* (462). There are much more important subjects than the scientific ones, such as "the study of man" (566), to which science can contribute nothing, for it cannot address the ultimate questions of our existence (57). The strictly rational conceptual tools of science are inadequate: "The heart has its order; the mind has its own, which consists of principle and demonstration. The heart has another. We do not prove that we should be loved by displaying in order the causes of love. That would be absurd." (329).[15] Thus, gifted with intuition, a humble child may attain moral truths that an adult, even the keenest scientist or theologian, fail regularly to grasp (13). As Pascal puts it: "The greatness of wisdom… is invisible to carnal or intelligent men. These are three different orders. Of kind." (339). The most intelligent philosopher's reason may demonstrate, while the libertine's embodied will may desire; but the sage's heart loves, allowing for forms of understanding that escape reason. After all, to expect that one faculty or one mode of reasoning suffices for all possible domains of experience and investigation is a foolish form of "tyranny" (92).[16] For Pascal, there are "different kinds of right thinking: some in a certain order of things, and not in other orders, where they talk nonsense" (669).[17]

Let me emphasise once more that Pascal is not advocating irrationalism, rather a form of understanding that does not rely primarily upon abstract conceptual expression (e.g. Descartes' ethically "useless" rationalism, e.g. 445), logical reasoning (e.g. the "corrupt" Jesuits' casuistry attacked also in his *Provincial Letters*, e.g. 498; 770 [from the Manuscript Périer, not Copy B], 800 [from the Recueil Original, not Copy B]) and algorithmic computation (e.g. his own calculations of utility for the libertine's sake, 680). As difficult to

pinpoint as it may be–for he never offers more than a sketchy phenomenology of the heart in action (cf. 87, 544)–Pascal's account of moral experience entails an embodied rationality that is intuitive rather than discursive or syllogistic, as well concomitant and intertwined with emotions and willfulness, and capable of grasping objective truths about the world. As Pascal writes, "We know this in a thousand things" (680).[18]

Immediate, intuitive apprehensions of good and bad are not the end of Pascal's moral philosophy. Rather, they are its beginning. *In primis*, there is the issue that we might be mistaken in our apprehensions, which may then require correction, as when we hear 'cabbage' instead of 'baggage' inside a noisy place, or claim to have seen Woody Allen when in fact we had seen Mike. Yet this is not an issue that Pascal is interested in *as such*. His focus is moral and apologetic, not epistemological. As Richard Rorty would possibly put it, it is *relevance*, not rigour, that which guides Pascal's endeavour (cf. *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* Cambridge: CUP, 1990). Pascal wants to help his fellows to lead a better life, not to get entangled into technical debates. Indeed, Pascal cautions us against over-rationalisation as a path leading away from our intuitions' potential clarity: "Reason acts slowly, and with so many perspectives, on so many principles, which must be always present, that it constantly falls asleep or wanders, when it fails to have its principles present. Feeling does not act in this way; it acts instantaneously, and is always ready to act. We must then put our faith in feeling, or it will always be vacillating" (661). Consistently, he warns his readers against people who no longer have any "common sense", such as "academics, students, and that is the nastiest type of man I know." (662)

Pascal is much more intrigued by the fact that despite our possible immediate grasp of moral value, human behaviour is all but consistent with it. Even moral philosophers, who might be inclined to making morality an important feature in their lives, fall prey of professional pride, pettiness and resentment. A devout Catholic, Pascal was well aware of the endless list of sins that human beings are capable of. How can we sense what is good and bad and, between the two, opt for the latter? Pascal's penultimate answer to this crucial ethical question lies in his account of *imagination*, which reshapes and reinterprets the immediate givens of the heart. And this is *bad*. Far from extolling the virtues of this faculty, which Romantic and post-modern philosophers have done aplenty in later centuries, Pascal worries about the imagination's "dominant" role within the human psyche (78) and its ability to distort in self-serving fashions the data of sentiment, which is particularly prone to

being twisted in over-intellectualising minds: "I am not speaking of fools; I am speaking of the wisest, and they are those whom imagination is best entitled to persuade. Reason may well protest; it cannot determine the price of things." (Id.)

Reason does not fix values within and around us; imagination does. Appealing to our "proud" and selfish thirst for power, knowledge and pleasure, "imagination… has established a second nature in man" and "disposes of everything. It creates beauty, justice, and happiness, which are the whole of the world." (Id.) Instead of allowing the humble acknowledgment of our helplessness and imperfection, which is grounded in our feelings (689) and is rationally as undeniable as our mortality (e.g. 195-8, 686), imagination leads each person to attribute an overwhelming amount of value upon herself and "makes [her]self the center of everything" (494), when it is quite obvious that she is not (cf. also 509-10). Far from the exaltation of *amour-propre* or "self-love" that will characterise much French and Scottish Enlightenment moral philosophy, Pascal writes:

The nature of self-love and of this human self is to love only self and consider only self. But what will it do? It cannot prevent the object it loves from being full of faults and wretchedness. It wants to be great and sees itself small; it wants to be happy, and sees itself wretched; it wants to be perfect and sees itself full of imperfections; it wants to be the object of men's love and esteem and sees that its defects deserve only their dislike and contempt… No doubt it is an evil to be full of faults; but it is a still greater evil to be full of them and to be unwilling to recognize them, since this adds the further evil of a deliberate illusion. (743).

The power of imagination can be so deep-reaching that we may no longer be able to distinguish between sentiment and the fantasies that imagination—also called "fancy"—delivers in order to please our self-love:

All our reasoning reduces to giving in to feeling. But fancy is similar and opposite to feeling, so that we cannot distinguish between these two opposites. One person says that my feeling is fancy, another that his fancy is feeling. We should have a rule. Reason is proposed, but it is pliable in every direction. And so there is no rule (455)… It is a nothing that our imagination enlarges into a mountain: another turn of the imagination makes us discover this without difficulty (456)… We need a fixed point in order to judge… The harbour decides

for those who are on a ship. But where will we find a harbour in morals? (576)

In the midst of such uncertainty and confusion, which are epitomised by the madness of human love affairs (cf. "Cleopatra's nose", 31-2, 228), given that intuition itself can become as unreliable a source of belief as reason is, tradition can come of use and help us. When something is not "demonstrable" and "doubting" leads nowhere, "submission" becomes reasonable (201; cf. 203-13). In Pascal's case, that means submission to religious tradition, and specifically to the Catholic one (cf. "Luther: everything outside the truth." [791] {from the Recueil Original, not Copy B}); in this sense, then, "all morality is concupiscence and grace" (258).[19] "Religion is such a great thing", as Pascal writes, also because it grants "[c]omprehension of the words 'good' and 'evil'." (709-10). Submission to religious tradition means, in essence, to follow "[t]wo laws" that "suffice to rule the whole Christian Republic better than all political laws" i.e. to love God and to love one's neighbour, as per Matthew 22:35 (408); "charity" or love "in morals" being able "to produce fruits against concupiscence" (458) and turn the energy of potentially sinful "passions" into "virtues" (500; cf. 759 [from the Manuscript Périer, not Copy B]).[20]

Still, even within religion does imagination make moral life difficult: "Men often take their imagination for their heart, and they believe they are converted as soon as they think of being converted." (739); they can therefore remain "duplicitous in heart… neither fish nor fowl" (451); their "blinded" minds leading to quarrels, schisms and sectarianism that "destroy… morals" (447-8); their misplaced self-confidence making them "sinners, who believe themselves righteous" (469; cf. 753 [from the Manuscript Périer, not Copy B]), "corrupt the laws" of "the Church" (558), and "do evil… completely and cheerfully… out of conscience" (658). Consistent with his picture of the human being as an erring wanderer prone to error yet also capable of greatness, Pascal offers no easy path to wisdom, which may be perceived at times, even patently exemplified in saints and sages, yet still eludes us in spite of our best efforts to grasp it and make it truly ours.

Furthermore, according to Pascal, imagination is the first step in a process of moral self-deception, which reasoning can take farther by: (A) adding the uncertainty of sceptical considerations to the distortions of the imagination; and (B) making religious self-correction ineffective. We may even be most thoughtful and honestly good-willed, but without divine grace there is little likelihood of success. The good may still escape us—even the brightest

and most celebrated minds among us can fail. As Pascal remarks, there are "[t]wo hundred eighty kinds of supreme good in Montaigne" (27; cf. also 16, 714).[21] Starting a theme that will play an important role in the moral philosophy of 20th-century French existentialists, Pascal deems self-deception the main springboard of immorality, not our inability to perceive what is right or wrong, or our incapacity to comprehend what is good and what is bad. Quite the opposite, according to Pascal, we would appear to have the faculties needed to perceive and understand all this; but we also possess another, imagination, which, combined with our passions and with self-love in particular (e.g. 699; 744 [from the Manuscript Périer, not Copy B]), distorts our perceptions and understanding to the utmost degree.[22] More than religion itself, then, we need God's help: His grace alone can save us, "enlighten" us, and help us make proper use of the faculties that we are endowed with, and upon which we rely in order to lead a good life, religious life (335).

Conclusion

Reading a classic is always a worthy endeavour, especially if it offers opportunities for genuine philosophical meditation. However, there are some more specific reasons why I think that rediscovering Pascal may be advisable for today's Anglophone ethicists.

First of all, his moral conceptions and his celebrated literary style highlight the importance in human morality of sentiments. This is no minor issue, for the impact of sentiments upon people's actual behaviour tends to be much stronger than that of abstractions or complex reasoning.[23] And yet philosophers have been pursuing relentlessly the path of abstraction and complex reasoning, leaving that of sentiment to others. Now, if we wish to engage in meta-ethics alone, such a division of labour may be fine. But if we want to change the world a little, whether as educators or public intellectuals, then some familiarity with the realm of sentiments may be a boon, since we may aim at "impassioning" rather than just "instructing", as Pascal would word it (329; cf. also 496, 702).

Secondly, moral intuitionism has been on the rise over recent decades because of its recurrent empirical substantiation in psychology (e.g. J. Haidt (2001), "The Emotional Dog

and its Rational Tail" *Psychological Review* 108:8, 14-34). Still, as far as I know, the only philosopher who has taken seriously Pascal's notion of a different, heartfelt understanding—embedded, embodied, united with sentiments—and built an ethics upon it was Max Scheler (1874-1928). Amongst contemporary Anglophone intuitionists, Pascal is as absent as Scheler himself, who has long lost the enormous popularity that he enjoyed in the early 20th century. Yet Pascal's moral philosophy is based upon the notion of intuition and constitutes an attempt that treads upon the tight rope set between rationalism and sentimentalism, and one that could be mined for insights and for the enduring rhetorical power of his writings.

Thirdly, Pascal's approach is relevant because it makes the ground of moral value *independent* of the individual, who can only apprehend it for what it is, lest her imagination is so corrupt as to distort apprehension. In that case, Jesus Christ, that is, revealed religion is the fixed point of equilibrium that Pascal opts for (e.g. 570). Since the global affirmation of industrial society, we live in the first age in human history in which our species has become a threat to its own survival, as another religious-minded ethicist, Hans Jonas (1903-1993) underscored repeatedly in the 20th century (cf. *The Imperative Responsibility* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984 [1979]). Pascal's moral philosophy is relevant in this respect because, like Jonas', it reminds us of the possibility that the ground of moral value may not be individualistic, relativistic, or even anthropocentric. The risk of species-wide annihilation may reveal something much more objective, such as planet-wide life-conditions and eco-system-wide life-needs, which we can only acknowledge and comply with, lest we prefer perishing to living, hence destroying the fundamental precondition for all preferences. As such a reminder, Pascal's moral philosophy can then serve as a token of civil commons. And there I am, again: civil

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[1] All references are by fragment number as they appear in the latest complete English translation of the 1976 Sellier edition of the so-called "Copy B" of Pascal's thoughts, that is, the second copy prepared for his sister and least likely of having undergone third-person reordering (*Pensées*, edited and translated by Roger Ariew, Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett, 2005). When preparing this paper, I have also made use of the original French and

related Italian translation of Pascal's thoughts by Adriano Bausola contained in *Pensieri* (Milan: Rusconi, 1993).

[2] A valuable and possibly unique recent exception is constituted by: William D. Wood (2009), "Axiology, Self-deception, and Moral Wrongdoing in Blaise Pascal's *Pensées*" *Journal of Religious Ethics* 37(2): 355-84; the first footnote in Wood's essay contains also a brief account of the negligible record of Pascal studies in modern Anglophone ethics.

[3] Pascal's religious focus is as much a result of his moral philosophy as his moral philosophy is the result of his religious focus: "Man's true nature, his true good, true virtue, and true religion, are things that cannot be known separately" (12).

[4] The main difference with regard to Wood's own commendable 2009 attempt is my further avoidance of strictly epistemological and theological considerations, to either of which Pascal's moral philosophy is regularly reduced. Also, I attempt hereby to provide more numerous references to relevant fragments in Pascal's *Pensées*.

[5] Pascal's emphasis upon intuition *vis-à-vis* first principles is analogous to Aristotle's *epagoge* in connection with the fundamental laws of thought that cannot be obtained through any set of syllogisms but that underpin them all nevertheless (*Anal. Post.* II, 99b-100b; *Meta*. 980a-981a).

[6] This is not to be confused with Descartes' distinction between empirical and innate knowledge. Rather, Pascal wishes to separate knowledge that we can reach through explicit reasoning processes of demonstration, whether deductive or inductive, and the indemonstrable fundamental principles that make them possible.

[7] Henri Bergson, probably, would be sceptical that they do so (cf. *Time and Free Will* London: Allen, 1910 [1889]).

[8] Given the regular use of "wisdom" rather than "knowledge" in connection with the moral considerations expressed in his *Pensées*, I would venture to argue that this different object is one of the reasons why "ethics" is said to be a "special" science.

[9] Customs, for Pascal, are very powerful, to the point of establishing causality itself (661), though theyr are neither absolute (e.g. 527) nor certain (e.g. 94-6).

[10] Some human beings, according to Pascal, are fortunate enough as to be able to attain religious faith through the same mode of apprehension: "As if reason alone were capable of teaching us! Would to God, on the contrary, that we never had need of it, and that we knew everything by instinct and intuition. But nature has refused us this good, giving us instead very little knowledge of this kind… That is why those to whom God has given religion by intuition of the heart are very fortunate and, in fact, properly convinced" (142). The least fortunate, instead, who are devoid of a piously "incline[d] heart" (412; cf. also 443, 448, 450, 646, 717) or have been hardened (580) or corrupted to the extreme point of cynical disinterest for the most important things, such as the fate of our immortal soul (2, 5), may have to think through Pascal's wager or "machine" and determine whether it is advantageous to lead a pious life rather than a selfish one (680).

[11] Pascal's account is reminiscent of Mihail Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 2002 [1958]); perhaps morality is an eminent example of tacit knowledge that is difficult to make explicit and cannot be turned into a neat system of axioms, theorems and corollaries.

[12] On repeated occasions (e.g. *Gesammelte Werke*, Bern: Francke Verlag, 1971-97, volume V, p.104) did Max Scheler praise Pascal and his spiritual mentor Augustine for attempting to overcome Western thought's long-standing prejudice that grants epistemic objectivity and evidential value to rational proofs alone, ignoring sentiment and religious revelation or, worse, condemning them as subjective and dangerously irrational.

[13] The notion of a golden mean between too much and too little of something is a recurrent theme in Pascal's thoughts and it applies, *inter alia*, to the effect of age on judgment (25), thinking (25), the distance from an object of observation (25), the speed of one's reading (75, 601) and the constitution of virtue (645). Whether it can be attained, however, is doubtful, given the dual nature of man (cf. especially 145-67, 230-4, 690, 707-8; 753 [from the Manuscript Périer, not Copy B]), who is a "thinking reed" cast between two opposed infinities (i.e. meaninglessness and all-embracing thought), experiencing opposed tendencies (e.g. fear and courage, pain and pleasure) and possessing two opposed natures

(i.e. animal and angelic). Jesus Christ alone seems capable of embodying opposites successfully (e.g. 736; 749 & 771 [from the Manuscript Périer, not Copy B]).

[14] "I believe in order to understand"; cited in Perry Cahall, "The Value of St Augustine's Use/Enjoyment Distinction to Conjugal Love" *Logos* (8)1: 117-28, 2005, p.117; under this perspective, Pascal's heart can be seen as opening a hermeneutical horizon, which embraces much more than just the knowledge that can be rationally demonstrated.

[15] This is another notion that Pascal derives from Augustine, i.e. the "order of love" [*ordo amoris*].

[16] One generation after Pascal, Vico would describe reason's hypertrophic disregard of bodily and emotional components of life and related understanding the "barbarism of reflection" (*The New Science*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1948[1744]). Today, faced with the notion of a particular mode of reasoning (e.g. scientific 'Method', *homo oeconomicus*' self-maximisation) being regarded as the only one possible, we would speak of cultural or disciplinary imperialism.

[17] There is no lack of vagueness and ambiguity in Pascal's writings. For one, "heart" itself is not used only as the term denoting our faculty of intuition, but also more loosely as referring to will or desire (182, 536, 681-2; cf. also 544 in which "the will" is said to be the human faculty that "loves"), mere feeling (210), and a person's soul or character (especially in connection with the Old Testament's use of it, e.g. 309, 311, 378, 504; cf. also 707). Furthermore, it does not help that Pascal stresses so often the opposition between heart and reason, as though they were irreconcilable enemies at "war" with each other (29; cf. also 144, 164, 203, 414, 503, 514)—and here we get truly to the negative part of the cited famous statement about heart's "reasons".

[18] Whether in matters of mathematics, love, or religion, intuition anticipates, grounds and eludes whatever subsequent reasoning we may attempt to build upon it. As morals are concerned, Pascal believes logical reflection to be inadequate within the domain of the intuitive spirit for fine things, or "*ésprit de finesse*", as opposed to the logical spirit of geometry, the "*ésprit de géometrie*". Whilst the former is subtly acute, delicately nuanced, highly personal, and mixed in its being both cognitive and affective, the latter is forcefully

trenchant, rigorously explicit, methodically interpersonal and allegedly purely rational. These two forms of comprehension are not mutually exclusive in absolute terms. For example, a mathematician may sense analogies or truths and conjure thereof new hypotheses, which he can test according to standard geometric methodology. Moreover, explicit knowledge may be internalised to the point of becoming intuitive, as with the acquisition of a skill (531; cf. Polayi, *supra*). Still, Pascal knew that these two forms of comprehension could subsist separately. A mystic, for one, could cultivate the former to the point of becoming unfamiliar with the latter: "Those who are accustomed to judge by feeling do not understand matters involving reasoning. For they want first to penetrate at a glance, and are not used to looking for principles." (622) On their part, persons relying upon logical reasoning can become so removed from their own heart and the realm of intuition that they end up quite ignorant of them both and incapable of ascribing any order or intelligibility to them: "And others, on the contrary, who are accustomed to reason from principles and being unable to see at a glance" (Id.)–one is reminded here of hardcore orthodox economists, who no longer perceive the blatant immorality or ugliness of the self-maximising conduct that they deem rational and commendable.

[19] Pascal does seem to allow for cases of commendable moral virtue in non-Catholic and non-Christian settings, e.g. "the Jewish religion" (276; cf. 692-6, 715).

[20] Christ's two laws go to the very heart of human behaviour towards oneself and others, hence they can make the eradication of vice fairly effective, since "[t]here are vices that take hold of us through other ones, and that, when the trunk is removed, are carried away like branches". (457)

[21] Humbly, Pascal remarks: "It is not in Montaigne, but in myself, that I find everything I see in him." (568)

[22] Wood (2009) argues convincingly that the imagination's detrimental deceptions are, for Pascal, one of the consequences of the Biblical fall, i.e. the ultimate cause of immorality. For Pascal, having tasted perfection before the fall, we are condemned to sense and seek truths that, however, escape us (e.g. 25, 62, 90-1, 165-6, 180-1).

[23] Abstraction and complex reasoning are relied upon in somewhat particular

circumstances, such as bioethical committee’s deliberations about technology-driven dilemmas and adjudications by courts of justice. Under normal circumstances, mothers, teachers, priests, novelists and TV stars affect people’s sentiments to a much greater degree than any ethicist or judge, shaping *a fortiori* people’s moral and immoral behaviours. As Richard Rorty noted in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* did much more to let Americans see the true horror of slavery than all liberal philosophers since John Locke’s day were ever capable of.

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