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An Examination of the Foundations of Love: A Comparative Study of Pascalian and Aristotelian Perspectives

Abstract: This article attempts to explain what love is. It compares two perspectives on love. Drawing on Blaise Pascal’s “Discourse on the Passions of Love” and Aristotle’s “Nicomachean Ethics”, two conceptions of love are analyzed (focusing on selected aspects). The author addresses topics such as: love and ambition (two main passions that don’t coexist well and weaken each other), man and pleasures, self-love, love and action, and love and reason. Among the conclusions drawn from this analysis, it is worth emphasizing that love and reason are inseparable; love cannot be faked. True love, therefore, is not a blind impulse, but a passion mediated and deepened by reason. Pascal’s reflection leads to a radical reformulation of the concept of love. It should not be understood simply as something that happens, but as a complex activity involving the highest human faculties.

Keywords: Blaise Pascal, Love, Passion, Thoughts, Mind, Emotions, Instincts, Rational, Irrational.

Introduction

Love is a fundamental principle that initiates, binds, and regulates the multiplicity of relationships in the world. From its most simple form as evident in the family through to the complex reality as evident among various foreign, political and international bodies. It is this fundamental human passion that acts as the driving force operating in almost all human endeavours¹. Whoever acts or moves towards a goal, an object or an end does so because he has been pushed by love to act towards that said end in view. This notion of acting because love has pushed us into action may sometimes be overlooked due to the fact that,

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¹ Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, Rome, December 25, 2005, no. 2.



actions that are done by human beings may be considered as being done out of the will, and the rational choice of the individual in action. Viewed from this perspective, love has no place or role in the sequence of events leading to the execution of the action. This is the point when many modern and contemporary persons may be tempted to undervalue and negate the role and the importance of love in all the actions that are carried out in daily lives.

Preceding the will and rational choice is the fundamental act of love which initiates the entire process. But on what does this love stand; what is its foundation? What are the pillars that keep it firm? This is the knowledge that this article seeks to clarify and to demonstrate in the operations of human activities especially in contemporary society. In reality, without much doubt, the notion of love and its foundational principles have been dominantly interpreted, reinterpreted and misinterpreted. This has placed this fundamental human power in an illusion in modern day society, evident, primarily in the marital life, in the family life, in the communal life, in the relationships that are witnessed in the religious, professional and occupational, political, cultural, national, socio-economic and political structures².

With the “Discourse on the Passion of Love” by Blaise Pascal, placed side-by-side the Nicomachean Ethics of Aristotle, the concept of love will be analysed along some thematic structures in view of pointing out the foundations of human relations. This comparative approach has been chosen in this article to make Pascal stand on the shoulders of Ancient Giants (Aristotle specifically) to solidly and interactively establish the truth about human existence established in two different eras of human history – one being ancient (Aristotle) and the other being modern (Pascal). Despite the many themes that could be deduced from the primary sources cited above, some few will be projected here to help the focus of this discussion. The secondary sources of information will be books and documents that have spoken on the same theme of love in the course of human history. These include philosophical texts, Biblical texts, and religious texts and declarations. These works have been consulted because they have been among the strongest voices promoting and advocating the theme of love in the history of human existence.

Blaise Pascal and the Discourse on the Passion of Love

Blaise Pascal, born (19th June, 1623 – 19th August, 1662) at Clermont-Ferrand, France³ was one of the great thinkers in the modern period who lived for a very little while, yet, utilizing to a maximum degree his talents and the genuineness of the faculties of the mind, left an eternal influence on the generations

² Ibidem.

³ F. Giffi et al., *Il Testa Filosofico; Storia della Filosofia: Autori, Opere e Problemi*, Edizioni Scolastiche Bruno Mondadori, L'Età Moderna 2 (Rotolito lombardo s.p.a. di Pioltello, 1992), 554.

that came after him. Great was his ingenuity, such that “at the age when the other men had just begun to be born, he had finished running the cycle of the human sciences and had turn his face to religion”⁴. Losing his mother at a tender age, his father, Etienne Pascal suspended all his public professions and moved to Paris with Pascal and his two other sisters – Gilberte and Jacqueline. His father dedicated his time to personally educate his children, especially, Blaise Pascal. “He was never trained in theology or the philosophy of the schools, and his exclusively domestic education focused initially on classical languages and mathematics. The decision to educate Pascal at home was motivated by the fact that he suffered from very poor health for most of his life, beginning at the age of two”⁵. In the absence of his mother, his sisters and a family hired-maid named Louise Delfault made significant contributions to his upkeep.

In the accounts of his sister Gilberte, the young Pascal was prohibited by his father from the studies of Geometry. But the young Pascal built for himself the subject which caused him to be considered at the age of twelve to participate in the discussion of the Mersenne Academy⁶. He lived in a period of great political turmoil both in France and other parts of Europe. “France had declared war on Spain in 1635, and this intermittent campaign lasted for most of Blaise Pascal’s life”⁷. These political and theological misunderstandings both at the international and local level contributed to a larger extent on the thoughts and ideas that were raised by this young mind. That which is referred to as Pascal’s first conversion is attributed to his contact with the Deschamps brothers who introduced him to Jansenism at the age of twenty-two. On “the night of 23 November 1654, Pascal had a dreamlike or ecstatic experience”⁸ which will be accounted as his second conversion. It was this that contributed, altered and refocused his intellectual pursuits and interests, causing him to shift from his mathematical and scientific pursuits to a more religious and theological pursuits. With his *Provincial Letters*, he came to the defence of Antoine Arnauld (1612–1694) and the Jansenist theology⁹.

Pascal did not publish any works during his relatively short life on earth. All that are known to be the writings of Pascal are posthumous publications in a notebook in which he recorded his thoughts which were aimed at coming to the defence of Christianity. The *Pensées* is the most widely known and celebrated collected of his works¹⁰. The *Discourse on the Passion of Love**, which is the main concern in

⁴ Gioffi et al., *Il Testò Filosofico; Storia della Filosofia: Autori, Opere e Problemi*, 554.

⁵ D. Clarke, *Blaise Pascal*, in: *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. E.N. Zalta (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2015), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2015/entries/pascal/> (accessed: November 26, 2025).

⁶ Gioffi et al., *Il Testò Filosofico...*, op. cit., 554-555.

⁷ Clarke, *Blaise Pascal*, op. cit.

⁸ Ibidem.

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ Ibidem.

* The Authorship of Blaise Pascal has been strongly disputed among scholars. Some, while maintaining that the work was written during his days of active social life and others refuting

this article is believed to have been written during his active social life. Along the other works of Pascal, this work is believed to have been published in 1662¹¹.

The Foundations of Love

This section is focused on the notion of love, departing from the Pascalian perspective, and justified on the perspective from ancient writings by Aristotle. The reflections of the elements to be discussed in other writings will also be cited to support the arguments. This part of the discussion has been organized under various themes to aid the reader's easy understanding of the central concepts raised and supported by these discourses.

Our point of departure is that which is characteristic of the human nature – his rationality as reflected in the opening words of the “Discourse of the Passion of Love” by Blaise Pascal.

Man as a Rational Animal; what renders him happy and what not

From the onset, Pascal makes the emphatic assertion that “man is born for thought”¹² and adds quickly that; “therefore he is not a moment without it”¹³. It is the pure thoughts that will render him happy. But this happiness will be present only if he could maintain the pure thoughts. To support this claim at the beginning of this discussion is an allusion to the observation that; in the case of animals without the rational powers, life is defined by perception. In rational men, life is defined by the power of perception or thought. A power is defined by reference to the corresponding activity, which is the essential thing; therefore, “life seems to be essentially the act of perceiving or thinking”¹⁴.

While maintaining this claim, Pascal raises a probable hindrance to his initial affirmation asserting that; the human person is not able to maintain them (pure thoughts) because they weary and oppress him. This weariness and oppression arise because the pure thoughts make a uniform life to which it is difficult for man to adapt himself, and this is so because man is sometimes agitated by those deep passions and vivid sources of which he feels within his heart¹⁵. The

this claim entirely but retaining that it was written by another writer and then merged into the editorial collections of the works of Pascal. The latter group attribute their claim to the fact that, the subject (romantic love) and sentiments (that love exalts the soul) are uncharacteristic of the writer and would seem to be distantly out of his range of interest and expertise. The former have also pointed out that; the style of the work is distinctively Pascalian and some of the ideas contained in it; such as the distinction between the “geometric” mind and the spirit of the “finesse” are distinctly his own.

¹¹ Pascal, Blaise, *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, n.d., <https://iep.utm.edu/pascal-b/> (accessed: December 1, 2025).

¹² W.F. Trotter et al., *Blaise Pascal; Thoughts, Letters and Minor Works*, (P.F. Collier and Sons, 1910), 417.

¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 9, 1170a16-19.

¹⁵ Trotter et al., *Blaise Pascal*, op. cit., 417.

definition of passions in a recent religious document would be of help in this dimension. Passions are “emotions or movements of the sensitive appetite that incline us to act or not to act in regard to something felt or imagined to be good or evil”¹⁶.

Passions are among the three things which according to Aristotle are found in the soul (passions, capacity and states of character). By passion is meant “appetite, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendly feeling, hatred, longing, emulation, pity, and in general the feelings that are accompanied by pleasure or pain”¹⁷. The initial argument of Pascal, I believe, underscores the fact that, the ability to keep and entertain pure thoughts is what accounts for human happiness. Said in other words, human sadness and sorrow arise from the diabolical thoughts, ideas, imaginations that he cultivates and maintains in his mind. This is a strong fact because many are the struggles of a person in thought than in action.

Love and Ambition – the two main passions

“Love” and “ambition” are the two main passions that are best suited to men. Between these two there seems not to be a good rapport, for they have little connection and mutually weaken each other. In whatever situation of the mind, only one of these two is found. When it happens that the two are found together, they are partially effective¹⁸. Blaise Pascal establishes the fact that; these two passions appear to be with men throughout their lives; they show up very early and proceed even onto death. They seem to be more heightened to the young, but diminish gradually as one advances in life. This is however, not always the case¹⁹.

A striking assertion by Pascal is that; “the life of man is miserably brief”²⁰. He goes on to affirm that; even though this is generally computed the very moment one enters into the world, he would instead compute it when the human person begins to reason, which does not happen until when a person is twenty years of age²¹. So, for Blaise Pascal, life does not begin until twenty years. He goes back to the two types of passion and asserts that; the happy life is the one that begins with love and ends with ambition. For him, great minds appreciate and welcome tumultuous life, but the mediocre abhors it²².

The Mind-Body Interaction; We are conditioned to Love

Pascal from this point enters into one of the key and longstanding debates in the history of philosophy – the mind-body problem; the interaction between

¹⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC, 1763).

¹⁷ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 1, 1094a1-3.

¹⁸ Trotter et al., *Blaise Pascal*, op. cit., 417-418.

¹⁹ Ibidem, 418.

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ Ibidem.

²² Ibidem.

the mind and the body. To cite the words of Pascal, he says; “The more mind we have the greater the passions are, since the passions being only sentiments and thoughts that belong purely to the mind, although they are occasioned by the body, it is obvious that they are no longer anything but the mind itself, and that thus they fill up its entire capacity”²³.

The line of the argument needs to be maintained to understand what Pascal is trying to assert here. He had already asserted that; man is born for thought and there is never a moment when he does not undertake this exercise. The passions, as already established above, hinder the pure thoughts. And here he argues that, “the more mind we have”, that is to say, the higher or stronger the thinking, “the greater the passions”²⁴. By way of implications, if the passions weary and oppress pure thoughts, then he who actively engages in this process will experience much of the oppression. This will confirm an argument he makes not long ago that; “A tumultuous life is pleasing to great minds, but those who are mediocre have no pleasure in it; they are machines everywhere”²⁵. In the sense of the mind-body interaction, Pascal establishes that; the passions, which are mainly sentiments and thoughts, are being occasioned by the body²⁶. The explanation of Pascal seems to reflect the fact that knowledge begins from the senses and proceeds into rationality.

On the necessity of love, Pascal affirms that; we are forced to love²⁷. And so, love is something that should be felt. It is therefore not necessary to love, for it is already existent and innate. Our discussions about love, according to Blaise, is a deception. The more defined the mind, the more defined the passion and the greater the love²⁸. That is to say that a greater mind loves ardently than a mediocre mind. Blaise establishes that; there are two kinds of minds – the geometrical mind and the imaginative mind. Whereas the former is slow, rigid and inflexible, the latter is supple and pays keen attention to the various pleasing qualities of what it loves²⁹. According to Pascal, “From the eyes it goes to the heart itself, and from the expression without it knows what is passing within”³⁰. Allusion to this fact can be traced back to Aristotle who already in antiquity had explained that; “the pleasure of the eye is the beginning of love. For no one loves if he has not first been delighted by the form of the beloved”³¹. What I am convinced about in these ideas expressed in this regard is that; when this outside representation is present in other people, we are able to perceive with the eyes, for, the eyes are the interpreters of the heart. But it is only those interested in them who can

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ Ibidem.

²⁶ Ibidem.

²⁷ Ibidem.

²⁸ Ibidem, 418-419.

²⁹ Ibidem, 419.

³⁰ Ibidem.

³¹ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 9, 1167a3-5.

understand the language. This is a truth that may be spoken of such human relations and interactions as friendship, marriage and all forms of companionship.

On the Capacity to Love – It is both Innate and Communal

Pascal continues with the discourse thus; man is born with the capacity to love. The knowledge of love is thus innate, and it develops as the mind is proportioned. The mind impels us to love what appears to us as beautiful without ever being told³². This notion is already existent in Aristotle who asserts that; “not everything seems to be loved but only the lovable, and this is good, pleasant, or useful; but it would seem to be that by which some good or pleasure is produced that is useful, so that it is the good and the pleasant that are lovable as ends”³³. Pascal further affirms this truth that; who can doubt after this whether we at- In the world for anything else than to love?³⁴ This resonates more in the teachings of the Catholic Church which alludes to the fact that the vocation of man in the world is nothing other than to love³⁵.

From these lines of Pascal, it can be deduced that; it is love that drives every action of the human person, and it is never excluded from or extinguished in anything he does. The human person, by nature is a communal and social being as implied in Pascal. As Aristotle had rightly claimed; it will be strange to see the supremely happy man in solitude³⁶, for, “no one would choose the whole world on condition of being alone, since man is a political creature and one whose nature is to live with others”³⁷. By its nature, love, is not born to stay within the human individual but extends beyond the human person. In his words, Pascal asserts that; “Man does not like to dwell with himself; nevertheless, he loves; it is necessary then that he seeks elsewhere something to love”³⁸.

Being a nature that finds its existence within him, it always checks a conduit through which to make itself expressed or recognized³⁹. This, inarguably is rooted in Biblical and Christian doctrines which encourages the love of one another, and doing everything to and for one another⁴⁰. Again, living together is not only for the sake of reproduction, but also for various purposes of life in which human persons living in their communities throw their peculiar gifts into the common stock⁴¹. Pascal further deliberates that; this search for love is found in beauty in the otherness. However, since the human person is the most beautiful creature ever created by God, he must search within himself first to discover this

³² Trotter et al., *Blaise Pascal...*, op. cit., 419.

³³ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 8, 1155b17-22.

³⁴ Trotter et al., *Blaise Pascal...*, op. cit., 419.

³⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC, 2331).

³⁶ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 9, 1169b17.

³⁷ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 9, 1169b17-20.

³⁸ Trotter et al., *Blaise Pascal...*, op. cit., 419.

³⁹ Ibidem.

⁴⁰ Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:29-31 (*The New Revised Standard Version; Catholic Edition*).

⁴¹ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 8, 1162a16-24.

beauty and then look externally for what corresponds to the beauty within⁴². This Pascalian notion is solidified by the Aristotelian notion which claims that; “people cannot live together if they are not pleasant and do not enjoy the same things”⁴³.

Why do different people love different things?

This truth about love is impressed in our souls by nature, and we need nothing to know it. This is more felt than expressed⁴⁴. What then causes the difference in the pursuits of the objects of love and beauty by individuals? To this Blaise explains; “Although this general idea of beauty may be engraven in the innermost part of our souls with ineffaceable characters, it does not prevent us from being susceptible of great differences in its individual application”⁴⁵. Not only do we wish for beauty, but also desire. The desire being spoken of here, I am convinced is found in the various circumstances that surround us. Whatever beauty anyone seeks outside is originally found first inside the person. That which we pursue are different from one another. That which may be worth pursuing to one person may be entirely different from that of another. The image of that which we desirably pursue already exists deep down within us. The circumstances that surround us, however, may also occasion this desire or pursuit.

Whatever the differences might be, the *good* is what is to be pursued in love; because, “that which is good without qualification is also without qualification pleasant, and these are the most lovable qualities”⁴⁶.

Man is born for pleasures

From this discourse, Pascal begins a new argument that “Man is born for pleasure”⁴⁷. This expression of Pascal should not throw us into the maze of astonishment. This is because, as Aristotle had mentioned already in antiquity; “what is pleasant is the activity of the present, the hope of the future, the memory of the past; but most pleasant is that which depends on activity, and similarly this is most lovable. It is thought to be most intimately connected with our human nature”⁴⁸. This, I believe can be understood to imply that pleasure is not to be confounded with a vicious constitution. This is simply because, for the human person, “the life according to reason is best and pleasantest, since reason, more than everything else is man”⁴⁹. Therefore, for man to give himself to pleasure, he follows his reason. In this pursuit however, rises the passions in us.

⁴² Trotter et al., *Blaise Pascal*..., op. cit., 419.

⁴³ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 8, 1157b22-23.

⁴⁴ Trotter et al., *Blaise Pascal*..., op. cit., 419-420.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, 420.

⁴⁶ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 8, 1156b25-27.

⁴⁷ Trotter et al., *Blaise Pascal*..., op. cit., 420.

⁴⁸ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 9, 1168a13-15; Bk. 10; 1172a20-21.

⁴⁹ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 10, 1178a6-9.

Pascal is convinced that; the pleasing and the beautiful are the same thing. There must be a point of agreement to which the disposition of the body is a necessity. But why does it sometimes seem that this point of agreement is not reachable? Because men have taken pleasure in setting for themselves highly elevated standards which are not reachable⁵⁰.

Self-Love; a strong foundation of love and human relations

There is a fount of self-love in us which makes it possible of being represented outside of us⁵¹. This idea from Pascal at the first glance may be viewed with a mental eye of pessimism. But I think Pascal's claim is true based on the fact that, the man who does not succeed in loving himself finds it difficult to love others. This is because, what he does in love is nothing other than a projection of his inner state. It could therefore be established that a man's relations with his neighbour proceeds from his relation with himself. In every good relation, each party wishes good for the other and works all the more towards that goodness. This, as Aristotle affirms, "is true of the good man's relation to himself (and of all other men in so far as they think themselves good)... his opinions are harmonious, and he desires the same things with all his soul"⁵². Therefore, since each of these characteristics belongs to the good man in relation to himself, and he is related to others as to himself, for, the other is "another self" and "to love is to will the good of another"⁵³. Self-love, evidently thus, is thought to be the foundation of every good human relation. It is not selfishness as sometimes it may be randomly perceived.

The Proportion of Love; the need and regard for the other

Pascal goes further that; man is an "imperfect thing" and always needs a second to be happy⁵⁴. This search for the second is always found in the equality of condition. Because this equality of condition guarantees liberty and the opportunity to manifest his wishes easily. It is not the case in an unequal condition which often results in tyranny⁵⁵. This raises the question of; "Is the giving of love and the receiving of love supposed to be equal, unequal or in various degrees of proportion?" Aristotle had already responded to this question when he explained that; this, is dependent on the nature of the relations. In relations that involve the inequality between parties, for example between an elder to a younger (mother and son; superior to subordinate), the virtue and the function of each of these is different, and so are the reasons for which they love. As a result, each party neither gets the same from each other, nor ought to seek it. Therefore, in relations

⁵⁰ Trotter et al., *Blaise Pascal...*, op. cit., 426.

⁵¹ Ibidem, 421.

⁵² Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 9, 1166a1-14.

⁵³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC, 1766).

⁵⁴ Trotter et al., *Blaise Pascal...*, op. cit., 421.

⁵⁵ Ibidem.

implying inequality, the love also should be proportional with respect to the parties involved⁵⁶.

Aristotle goes deeper into this point emphasizing that; love must not be for utility. Those who love each other wish well to each other and in that respect in which they love one another. “Those who love each other because of utility do not love each other for themselves but in virtue of some good which they get from each other. So is it with those who love because of pleasure, because, they find the other to be pleasant. This good that they seek in this regard is a good *for themselves only* and does not consider the other; not because of whom the loved person is, but in so far as he is useful or pleasant”⁵⁷. This is pure selfishness and these relations are easily to be dissolved.

When man is fastidious in any quality of his mind, he is so in love. This fastidiousness depends on a pure, noble and sublime reason. Women like to perceive fastidiousness in men, and this is the most vulnerable point where to gain them. This is because they empty their entire selves, and leave a void to be occupied by another⁵⁸. This affirmation of Pascal goes back to support his claim that women are those who properly sustain love⁵⁹. More to that, this reason of Pascal also explains why women are the most vulnerable in whatever relationship⁶⁰. In love, there must be nothing of force, neither must there be nothing of slowness⁶¹. “Respect and love should be so well proportioned as to sustain each other, without love being stifled by respect”⁶².

Love and its perfection by the Intellect

As we have more intellect, we find more original beauty⁶³. This claim of Pascal tends to establish the fact that; the growth of the intellectual faculties and their qualities reveal to us that which is real beauty; that is to say the true beauty. This phenomenon liberates us from our illusions and brings us to the light of the reality. Here, Pascal’s idea seems to be more Platonic in his Allegory of the Cave, whereby, Plato advances the claim that, through education; a perfection of the intellectual faculties, one is liberated from the bonds of the chains to which he has been tied from birth, and coming out from the cave of bondage sees the realities of that which he once saw or perceived as shadows⁶⁴.

But this is not necessary in order to be in love, Pascal continues. Because, when one loves, he finds but only one. But attachment to the same thought

⁵⁶ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 8, 1158b12-25.

⁵⁷ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 8, 1156a6-16.

⁵⁸ Trotter et al., *Blaise Pascal...*, op. cit., 421-422.

⁵⁹ Ibidem, 420.

⁶⁰ Ibidem, 422.

⁶¹ Ibidem, 426.

⁶² Ibidem.

⁶³ Ibidem, 422.

⁶⁴ Plato, *The Republic*, VII 514A – 516C; ed. G. Reale, *Platone; Tutti Gli Scritti* (Bompiani, 2023).

wearies and destroys the mind of man. So, for the pleasure of love to be permanent and solid, it is necessary to know and be conscious of the fact that we love. When one loves without telling, it has both its pains and joys. We put much efforts into pleasing the person whom we esteem⁶⁵. It can be deduced from this argument that; when love does not assume a reciprocal state, it is easy to come to end since the sole actor will become so exhausted. Love must have a reciprocal effect. However, depending on the grade or the level of the parties involved, the grade of reciprocation may differ.

In antiquity, Aristotle threw more light on this dimension of the reciprocal effects of love, but with much focus on the relation of lovers. He argues that, In the relation of lovers, the lover sometimes may complain that he or she has not received in return the excess of love given, while the beloved may complain that the lover who formerly promised everything now performs nothing. Such things do happen when the lover loves the beloved for the sake of pleasure, while the beloved loves the lover for the sake of utility. When both do not possess the qualities expected of them, the relationship collapses. This is because each does not obtain the things expected from the other with the motives of their love. The love was not dependent on the person *himself* or *herself*, but the qualities the other person thought he or she possessed. "For what each in fact wants is what he attends to, and it is for the sake of that that he will give what he has"⁶⁶.

Love and Action

For love to be firm and solid, it needs an eloquence of action, carried out by both the eyes and the right conjecture of action. "Love is like activity, being loved like passivity; and loving and its concomitants are attributes of those who are the more active"⁶⁷. Love causes a change in us, for it makes us appear differently from what we were to ourselves before. "The longer the way is in love, the greater is the pleasure that a sensitive mind feels in it"⁶⁸. Pascal points out two types of love based on two types of minds – the Refined Minds and the Gross Mind. The former gives long hopes; it loves longer with much enjoyment. The latter cannot long resist difficulties. It loves quickly, with freedom and sooner ends. Love has effects. The first effect of love is to inspire a profound respect. That which we love, we venerate and see nothing more in the world as being greater than it. When one wanders in love, it is an injustice to the mind.

Love and Silence

An interesting claim of Pascal in love is about silence. He points out that; there is the necessity sometimes of silence in love, for, there is a kind of silence that is deeper than language and vivacity of action. This silence gives room for

⁶⁵ Trotter et al., *Blaise Pascal*..., op. cit., 422-423.

⁶⁶ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 9, 1164a2-22.

⁶⁷ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 9, 1168a19-20.

⁶⁸ Trotter et al., *Blaise Pascal*..., op. cit., 424.

reflection. When one is in love, he feels no need for another thing. This is because the mind is full of the object of love, and there is no longer any care for what the world says. This forgetfulness of everything and attachment to our love make qualities spring up that we initially did not have; for example, the miser who loves becomes liberal and forgets that he had a contrary disposition. This is understandable in relation to passions from the perspective that, there are some passions which contract the soul and makes it stagnant and there are others which expand the soul and makes it overflow⁶⁹.

Love and Reason

Discoursing on Love and Reason, Pascal posits that, love and reasons should not be set in opposition to each other, because they are the same. Reason cannot be excluded from love; they are inseparable. Souls that are in love must act to become brilliant in new ways. “The external excitement must correspond with the internal, and this manner of living is a marvellous road to passion”⁷⁰. It will therefore be just to affirm from this perspective of Pascal that one cannot fake love or pretend to love.

Concluding this Discourse on the Passion of Love, Blaise Pascal argues that, the truth of passion is to be considered as a serious truth. Whereas Love must have ardor, activity, prompt and natural warmth, Passion must be concealed, be slow and flexible. Being far from the object of love causes us to say many things, but irresolute when it is closer. Love is not to be hazardous, lest we risk losing everything. Ardent love creates a novelty when the beloved is seen. The absence of the beloved creates a void. He who delights in the form of another does not, for all that, love him, but only does so when he also longs for him when absent and craves for his presence. For lovers, the sight of the beloved is the thing they love most, and they prefer this sense to others because on it love depends most for its being and for its origin⁷¹.

A Synthetic Analysis and Critique

At the heart of his reflections is a dual conception of the human mind. On one side are “pure thoughts,” that is, that state of clarity and contemplation which, according to Pascal, constitutes man’s true happiness. It is no coincidence that in *Pensées* he states: “All man’s dignity consists in thought”⁷². On the other side, passions emerge, which interrupt and disturb this state of equilibrium. Interior life thus appears as a constant tension between calm and turmoil. However, this opposition should not be understood in purely negative terms. Pascal, in fact, does not reduce passions to a simple error or defect of human nature. On the

⁶⁹ Ibidem, 424-425.

⁷⁰ Ibidem, 425.

⁷¹ Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. 9, 1167a5-8;1171b29-33.

⁷² Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. L. Lafuma, Paris 1963, 347.

contrary, he observes that “the more spirit one has, the more passions one has”⁷³, suggesting that passionate intensity is proportional to intellectual capacity.

This statement overturns one of the most deeply rooted clichés: the idea that rationality is necessarily opposed to emotion. In Pascal, the exact opposite occurs: it is precisely the depth of the intellect that makes the depth of feeling possible. Among the passions, he identifies two fundamental forces: love and ambition. They tend to conflict, occupying different moments of existence. However, this tension does not imply a denial of the passions, but rather the need to regulate them. To understand the nature of love, Pascal analyzes its genetic process. It begins with sensory perception – “love begins with the eyes”⁷⁴ – continues through the emotional involvement of the heart, and finally reaches its fulfilment in the mind, where the experience is elaborated and understood.

In this sense, love is never purely passive. It involves essential cognitive activity. As Pascal states in one of his most famous insights: “The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know”⁷⁵. On the ethical level, Pascal identifies some fundamental conditions of authentic love. First, self-love: “Self-love is the greatest of all flatterers”⁷⁶. Second, reciprocity, a necessary condition for the stability of the bond. Furthermore, he warns against forms of love based exclusively on utility or pleasure. Finally, the most radical aspect of his reflection emerges in the redefinition of the opposite of love: not hate, but the absence of thought. In this sense, we understand the famous statement: “Man is but a reed... but a thinking reed”⁷⁷.

True love, therefore, is neither blind nor purely instinctive. It is a passion mediated by reflection, deepened by understanding, and stabilized by the activity of the intellect. From this perspective, thought does not impoverish the experience of love, but rather grounds and strengthens it.

This is a vision developed in the 17th century, but still capable of profoundly questioning our conception of love and human nature today.

Undoubtedly, it is very difficult to assert that these words of Pascal are not philosophical in the strict and the pure sense of the word. The arguments and the wisdom revealed in these pages I have analysed have revealed clearly the deepest thoughts of an erudite and his reflection on human nature and human existence. This is exactly what philosophy seeks to do. However, the first criticism that could be raised in relation to this work has already been addressed in the opening explanations of this article. The second greatest issue has to do with the issue of Pascal being a philosopher. It is in the light of such an imminent problem that at the beginning to this article I dedicated an extensive part to his biography. I know the prime question that will be raised upon seeing such a long biography will be: “What is the purpose of this long biography?” This is exactly the point for which

⁷³ Ibidem, 136.

⁷⁴ Trotter et al., *Blaise Pascal...*, op. cit., 419.

⁷⁵ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, 423.

⁷⁶ Trotter et al., *Blaise Pascal...*, op. cit., 421.

⁷⁷ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, 200.

I have dedicated a greater part to his biography, to argue on the firm foundation that; indeed, Pascal is not shown at any of his gathered works to be a philosopher. He was a mathematician and geometrician. However, to base on this argument to deny him a place in the register of philosophers will be very fragile and fickle.

Even, if confirmed as such (mathematician and geometrician), it cannot be denied that, he was a great thinker and his works are deep philosophical reflections as we have seen in this “Discourse of the Passion of Love.” The most surprising of all is how a modern scholar could write such thoughts which are almost in exact pattern with what an ancient philosopher had written many years back. It may be argued on probability that, he might have read Aristotle on a more personal level, even if he never specialized in philosophy. If it is so, then we will not be wrong to add him to the chat of philosophers as his arguments are founded on strong philosophical foundations.

Hunter argues vehemently on this fact when he was trying to take on the critics of Pascal, he notes that: “Voltaire had portrayed Pascal as a distinguished geometer and literary stylist, but one who lacked a true philosophy”⁷⁸. He goes on to stress that: “over the years, other observers have concurred. Recently, a distinguished scholar who has done much to further our understanding of Pascal concluded that he considered philosophy as a futile business and did not want to be a philosopher”⁷⁹. Hunter further makes another observation about the critics of Pascal on this same subject-matter and posits that: “Others come to a similar conclusion from the opposite direction. They think that philosophy excluded Pascal. They adopt a philosophical standpoint – say the metaphysical naturalism – and find that from that point of view it is difficult to take Pascal seriously. Dogmatic naturalism, rather than careful study of Pascal’s writings, is the likeliest explanation of Pascal’s cameo appearance in Bertrand Russell’s *History of Western Philosophy* as the man who “sacrificed his magnificent mathematical intellect to God”⁸⁰.

But the words of the same author are very impressive in this assessment of the Pascalian ideas that have been pursued in this study. The plan in this work has therefore been to lay before the reader Pascal’s view about philosophy, Love, the world and the human condition, exhibiting in the course of doing so the exciting way in which Pascal transformed philosophy as he saw it, restoring it to a shape in which each man and woman has a duty to practice, and in which Pascal hoped it would be immensely attractive to his reader⁸¹.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident from the above discussion that, Man is born for thought, and pure thoughts bring happiness. But maintaining pure thoughts is

⁷⁸ G. Hunter, *Pascal the Philosopher: An Introduction*, Toronto 2013, 4.

⁷⁹ Ibidem.

⁸⁰ Ibidem.

⁸¹ Ibidem.

difficult because passions disturb them. There are two main passions: love and ambition. They don't coexist well and weaken each other. They appear early in life and last until death, but are stronger in youth. For Pascal, life is short; it starts at age 20 when reason begins and a happy life begins with love and ends with ambition. Passions are sentiments and thoughts of the mind, occasioned by the body. The more mind (intellect) one has, the greater the passions. Great minds enjoy tumultuous lives; mediocre ones do not. We are forced to love; it is innate and must be felt. Love begins with the pleasure of the eye and goes to the heart. Man is social; he seeks love outside himself because he cannot be happy alone. The capacity to love is innate and communal. We love what is good, pleasant, or useful. The general idea of beauty is innate, but individual applications differ due to circumstances. Man is born for pleasure. Pleasure is not vice; it is according to reason, which is essential to man.

Self-Love is the foundation of human relations: one must love oneself to love others properly. Each person is an "other self"; love is willing the good of another. Man is imperfect and needs others for happiness. Equality of condition is ideal. Love should be proportional in unequal relationships (e.g., parent-child). Love should not be for utility or pleasure alone but for the person. More intellect reveals true beauty. Love requires consciousness and reciprocity to be permanent. Love requires eloquence of action. Silence in love allows reflection and can bring out new qualities. Love and reason are inseparable; one cannot fake love. Passionate love must be concealed and flexible. Absence creates longing; presence is most cherished.

True love, therefore, is not a blind impulse, but a passion mediated and deepened by reason. It is precisely through understanding, reflection, and intellectual exploration that the experience of love acquires depth and duration. Pascal's reflection thus leads to a radical reformulation of the concept of love. It should not be understood simply as something that happens, but as a complex activity, involving the highest human faculties. Blaise Pascal has led us into understanding the deepest reality of all these elements which form the foundation of love.

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