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Imagination as Power of the Soul

Review of the volume *Pascal. Doctrine of Figures of Imagination*, authors Gérard Bras and Jean-Pierre Cléro, published by Lumen Publishing House, Iaşi, 2018

Antonio SANDU[1]

[1] Professor PhD Hab., Faculty of Law and Administrative Sciences, Stefan cel Mare University from Suceava, Romania,

Abstract: The Romanian reader of philosophy knows Pascal in general through his anthropological reflections, of which the most famous is the one that gives man the status of a thinking reed. The French philosophers Gérard Bras and Jean-Pierre Cléro bring to attention an important contribution of Pascal's philosophy to the development of European modernity, the problem of imagination figures, raised by authors at the level of Pascalian philosophical doctrine.

Keywords: *Jean Pierre Clero; ethics of care; imagination; person; philosophy, Pascal.*

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Introduction

The Romanian reader of philosophy knows Pascal in general through his anthropological reflections, of which the most famous is the one that gives man the status of a thinking reed. The French philosophers Gérard Bras and Jean-Pierre Cléro bring to attention an important contribution of Pascal's philosophy to the development of European modernity, the problem of *imagination figures*, raised by authors at the level of Pascalian philosophical doctrine. The whole work of the philosopher is recovered from the perspective of imaginary hermeneutics. In the opinion of the authors, it is precisely the imaginary that is the key to understanding the unity of the various disparate elements of the work of the great French philosopher, which are apparently relatively disjunctive, his mathematical thinking, the mystical theological mystery, the preoccupations for physics with those for philosophy. For Pascal, imagination is a power of the intellect that penetrates into all levels in which reason, or the heart, seeks its references. Because *imagination* is a power of identification, which makes imagination transcend and also penetrate into all ontological levels. The imagination as power of mankind itself is a deceptive queen. The imaginary is the deceptive power, the illusion that does not allow the truth to be distinguished from falsehood (Bras, Clero, 2018). The deceiving cracker of imagination for Pascal, the authors tell us, is given by the fact that falsehood and truth have an eminent power in the construction of the imaginary.

Imagination as power of the soul

Imagination is seen by Pascal as a *power* in the sense of power of the soul to reconfigure the world. The two main potentials, judgment and will, for Pascal, are the gates through which the world penetrates human spirit, while the heart is the gate through which the Godhead penetrates. Imagination interferes with the heart, often confusing between the two potentials. Imagination is accused of confusion between the essential and the apparent. The most rewarding enemy faced by imagination is reason. Reason asserts its claim to give meaning to the world, making it intelligible, radically claiming that this way of seeing the world, as rational intelligible, is the only one. Imagination challenges precisely this uniqueness of the intelligible, and its guiding claim to the sensible. Imagination is the framework in which thinking can occur, reason being inclined to justify what imagination has already configured in consciousness. Imagination is not a power of knowledge, but the foundation of the possibility of knowing.

Imagination as an ordering of things

Pascal prefigured the Kantian distinction between work and phenomenon. Sensitive certainty of the existence of a chair is related to the idea of a chair, imagination being the one that orders the sensory experience by selecting the categories of objects that fit the concept of the chair, and reclaiming them as such. The idea built on the basis of the representation of the image of a chair may also include idealizations and figurative meanings, which do not necessarily have a sensitive co-responsibility. The shift from sensible to *intelligible* is mediated by imaginative, creating objects with appearance of reality, but without the presence of directly identifiable material.

"Imagination puts order in the sensory data, proposing a schematic of it that becomes an orderly material for the intellect that gives it a name, and reason then puts order in the possible sense of this notion that can enter into different contexts" (Bras, Clero, 2018).

The excess of imagination, or the moment when in his constructive effort, the *imagination misses the object,* can turn it into a *craftmanship of untruth* (Bras, Clero, 2018), while the *good dosage* of reason, imagination and faith - in the process of ordering the world. The sensitive object, and the representation of the object, for example a seat and a seat image, are both part of the semantic category of the seat, the action talking about the same object called a chair, although the representation of the seat no longer preserves the properties of the represented object - support. Imagination is the one that mediates between the levels of reality, such as the sensitive object and its representation, finally generating the idea of a chair. The possibility of escaping by faith from universal to intelligible is through faith, which is associated with imagination as the figurative of incomprehensible. Pascal discovers the logic of the heart, which connects the human being with the Divinity. The logic of the heart goes beyond the mathematical level of the world order, because it makes the shift from sensible to intelligible, mediating the connection between Man and God. Imagination is that power that gives strength to the heart in its endeavor to order the world on the transmendental vertical axis. The figures of imagination are thus the bond between the mind and the heart, both configuring the world to comprehend it.

Conclusions

Records are part of an attempt to establish a sensitive world order, and set it up in front of conscience, while faith does the same thing for transcendence. Conscience can refuse faith, just as it can choose to refuse

records, in both situations, the consequences can be disastrous for the individual. Both the evidences of the sensitive world and the deeds of faith are conceived by imagination, since both reason and faith work with facts that are either above the sensitive or inconceivable experience, but configurable by the imaginative.

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