

# “The Waiting Game. The Connection Between Human Nature and Faith.”

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## Introduction:

We as human beings use reason to save us from making rash decisions. We are able to make sensible judgments regarding certain situations and more importantly we are able to think logically. Are there limits to our reason? Can this reason help push man to not have such bad natural inclinations? Can it prevent us from being greedy or jealous? When thinking about certain passions that man has, the question arises: is there a way to maintain a higher standard in man's life, or will he succumb to wretchedness? These questions all lead back to the one puzzling thought—human nature. Both Blaise Pascal in *Pensées* and Michel De Montaigne in *An Apology for Raymond Sebond*, discuss the role of human nature in man and faith in God. They both analyze what causes man to have such a wretched human nature and what man can do in order to save himself from this wretchedness. The question this thesis will explore is: how is one drawn to faith and what is the role of reason in finding faith. The solution that both these authors come to is that man needs to turn to and praise the one single being, God. They both present certain ways in which man finds religion, either by looking to Jesus Christ or looking within one's self. However true this statement is, it is centered on the notion that man needs to have faith in his life. This idea then becomes very trivial to those men who do not have faith or believe in God. Therefore, a second question arises: what happens to the people who have not found faith? How can their wretched human nature be saved, if these people have not found God? While both Pascal and Montaigne believe a man needs to have faith, they both come to a conclusion in that man cannot rely solely on reason to come to faith. We as human beings need to possess something else greater. Therefore what is the greater? Is it God? For these two authors their conclusion is, yes it is God, he is the only savior for man's natural inclinations to not be overpowered by desires. But, is this the answer we as human beings accept?

The main ideas presented by these two authors offers an insightful look into human nature. Within this thesis, I have structured the paper to examine the main arguments that each author presents. I will go into depth on Pascal's views on human nature, examining why he believes human nature to be wretched. Then I will look into Montaigne and his views of human nature. Montaigne considers, human nature to not be higher than beasts. Building on these ideas, I will investigate the main issue of my thesis that is examining the place of reason in faith and how faith is the savior for man's low human nature. Reason is a key concept for these authors; however, I will show that even reason is not enough to draw man towards God. Both Pascal and Montaigne agree in God being the savior to man's wretchedness; however, what is interesting about this thought, of God being the ultimate savior, is how these authors come to this conclusion. Pascal and Montaigne believe reason is not enough to lead man to faith. I will examine why Pascal believes this and the importance in which reason has an effect on human nature. Following this I will address Montaigne's view on reason and how he looks at reason. I will finish by addressing the role of faith. For both these authors, God is the ultimate end goal. I will examine how both Pascal and Montaigne come to see God as the only way man can be saved from his low human nature. Lastly I will address another point that interests me greatly: what could the answer for the people who have no religious views or connection to faith? How can these people with their wretched human desires be saved if they do not have faith? This last part of my thesis will address these key important questions and hopefully will come to another answer. It is important to note that while I have raised many questions regarding religion, I will be focusing on Christianity because Christianity is the focus for Pascal and Montaigne. However the questions I raise does not solely relate to Christianity, but for the purposes of this thesis, I have focused on the teachings of Christianity.

## Human Nature:

Blaise Pascal was a great mathematician, physicist, and philosopher and when creating his *Pensées*. The main idea for the book was to go into detail about the contours of his position on faith. Human nature helps distinguish this path to faith. Pascal addresses this topic of human nature in great detail. He considers the nature of humankind to be corrupt and selfish because he attributes vanity to our own humankind. Pascal states, “That something so obvious as the vanity of the world should be so little recognized that people find it odd and surprising to be told that it is foolish to seek greatness; that is the most remarkable (Pascal 5).” Peoples do not recognize their own vanity as a major issue, and because of this, humans are not faulted for boasting about themselves. As a result they continue to think highly of themselves. These people find it odd when others tell them it is not right to seek greatness, because they feel greatness is already in them. However, Pascal argues that people are worthless and should not find it odd or surprising: humankind is foolish to think that they can seek greatness. To support this conclusion, Pascal says, “Anyone who does not see the vanity in the world is very vain himself (Pascal 8).” He follows this with a rhetorical question asking who does not see it. He concludes the only people who do not see this worthless world are young people—who he considers to be wretched because they live in diversions. Pascal makes statements regarding how humankind only does certain things to boost their own self-gratification. Pascal states, “We do not care about our reputation in towns where we are only passing through. But when we have to stay some time we do care (Pascal 7).” People are more prone to worrying about the appearance of themselves towards others and thus do certain things for their own self-gratification. Another example of man doing things only for his own selfish purposes comes in Pensé 77, “Curiosity is only vanity. We usually only want to know something so that we can talk about it; in other words, we would

never travel by sea if it meant never talking about it, and for the sheer pleasure of seeing things we could never hope to describe to others (Pascal 21).” Pascal is right when saying curiosity is vanity because people only care to know information if they are allowed to discuss it later on and boast about it. This is accurate in everything people do. We only do things if in the long run there is something that furthers ourselves. Human kind has come to believe in the notion that their own self worth and gain is of the utmost importance.

Pascal next talks about how man has fallen from his own greatness. “Man’s greatness is so obvious that it can even be deduced from his wretchedness, for what is nature in animals we call wretchedness in man, thus recognizing that, if his nature today like that of the animals, he must have fallen from some better state which was once his own (Pascal 30).” Thus, Pascal is saying that as human beings we should be higher than animals, but what we equate in animals today we call that nature and in man, we call that wretchedness. Concluding that man has fallen a great distance from being great. To further this, Pascal goes on to show how man is considered to be wretched. “Some people have been more inclined to conclude that man is wretched for having used his greatness to prove it, while others have all the more cogently concluded he is great by basing their proof on wretchedness (Pascal 31).” Here are two cases in which people have come to the conclusion of man being wretched, and the first case gives a more clearly premise because since man has fallen from his greatness, he once was great and uses that knowledge to prove he is great and therefore is considered to be wretched. The way that Pascal uses wretchedness here shows how far man has fallen. With all these examples of man’s low human nature and his wretchedness, it raises the question if the same can be said for Montaigne?

Michel De Montaigne was a 16<sup>th</sup> century French author, who wrote *An Apology for Raymond Sebond*. In this literary acclaimed work, Montaigne critically analyzes Christian

religion. Montaigne examines man's human nature and especially the views of man's human nature in the world. He concludes that faith in God is the only way man can achieve a greater human nature. Montaigne too, believes human nature to be low; however, his stance of human nature is a bit different than Pascal's. Montaigne believes human nature to be just like beasts. He mentions, "We ought to note the parity between us (us being man and animals). We have some modest understanding of what they mean: they have the same in us, in about equal measures. They fawn on us, threaten us and entreat us — as we do them (Montaigne 17)." Montaigne provides the basis for his argument by asserting the equality between man and animals. Man should not considered himself higher than animals because there are certain qualities that man possesses in which animals can possess as well.

Montaigne's next argument is to reveal how low human nature is in man. Like Pascal, he begins by declaring, "Man is a wretched creature, subject to calamities (Montaigne 54)." Man's nature is so wretched that it can do great harm or cause great problems in one's life. Following this, man's nature is selfish as well. Montaigne addresses this issue by tying corruption and religion. He uses a simile to compare the way mankind abuses religion to fit man's own personal needs, "Think whether we do not take religion into our own hands and twist it like wax into shapes quite opposed to a rule so unbending and direct (Montaigne 6)." There are times when people use religion so easily for their own selfish agenda, and this should not be the case because religion is something sacred. It is not easily supposed to be bended but people do in fact do this for their own selfish needs. Montaigne concludes, "all are alike in using religion for their own violent and ambitious schemes, so like each other in managing their affairs with excess and injustice... (Montaigne 6)." The example Montaigne presents here has to do with the rulers in France and how most rules have made the people doubt that they are ruling with the people's

best interest at heart. Therefore if there is a ruler who has a selfish nature, then that leads to them leading with injustice. In conclusion this this leads to the idea that even with a sense of religion in ones life, man takes this religion and does as he pleases with it and proves humankind to be selfish at heart.

Likewise another great example that Montaigne brings up in order to prove man's selfish human nature is:

Let us confess the truth: pick out of, even from lawful, moderate army, those who are fighting simply out of zeal for their religious convictions; then add those who are concerned only to uphold the laws of their country and to serve their King: you would not have enough to form one full company of fighting man. How does this happen that so few can be found who maintain a consistent will and action in our civil disturbances? How does it happen that you can see them sometimes merely ambling along, sometimes charging headlong — the very same men sometimes running our affairs by their violence and harshness and at other times by their lukewarmness, their softness and their sloth? It must be that they have been motivated by private concerns, by ones due to chance; as they change, so do they. It is evident to me that we only willingly carry out those religious duties witch flatter our passions (Montaigne 7).

Montaigne is asserting that there are a small number of men who are actually fighting for purposes other than their own agenda—this number of men would not even be enough to fill a company. He rightfully questions why it is certain men—those who hold military positions, who patrol the streets of the city, who are supposed to be soldiers protecting the citizens: that either walk lavishly into battle, or sometimes charge head first? The simple answer is because these men's own selfish needs are coming before the city's needs. These men do either or depending on what is in it for them, how will they prosper from the outcome. possess them to do either one. These men have their own private concerns and these concerns are what shape their everyday duties. This situation that Montaigne makes present in man reveals to us man's agenda, which benefits man and man only. It also brings the idea of how man only carries certain religious aspects that *he* is most passionate (not what is necessarily good for the city). Thus Montaigne is

reaffirming that man is selfish at heart. Man's human nature causes him to want whatever suits him best.

Montaigne proceeds to dive further into displaying man's low human nature by stating, "Man is the most blighted and frail of all creatures and, moreover, the most given to pride (Montaigne 16)." Mankind is not only weak, but also the most destructive of all creatures. Yet, he is the most prideful creature. As human beings, we pride ourselves on our greatness and qualities. Thus, having too much pride can cause man to be destructive.

This creature knows and sees that he is lodged down here, among the mire and shit of the world, bound and nailed to the deadest, most stagnant part of the universe, in the lowest storey of the building, the farthest from the vault of heaven; his characteristics place him in the third and lowest category of animate creatures, yet, in thought, he sets himself about the circle of the Moon, bringing the very heavens under his feet. The vanity of this same thought makes him equal himself to God; attribute to himself God's mode of being; pick himself out and set himself apart from the mass of other creatures... (Montaigne 16).

This insightful quotation reveals to us Montaigne's inner thoughts regarding man. Montaigne asserts that man is stuck here on earth, coupled with all the worst possibilities that the world has to offer man, and is nowhere near reaching the heavens. Man's certain characteristics place him in this third category of living creatures, tossed in with all the swampy grounds and shit within the world. We human beings are considered to be living in the lowest story of the building along with animals. We are in the basement, not the pent house suite. However there seems to be light in this quotation. Montaigne changes gears and allows for man to have one positive characteristic: thought. Man has the ability to logically think through situations, but this ability takes over man and possess him to believe he is above the Moon, and the heavens are the ground that he walks upon. Man thus attributes himself equal to God; he picks himself out and sets himself apart from other creatures. Montaigne next questions man's understanding. He wants to know how man from the power of his own understanding could give man the knowledge over

other creatures. He states, “When I play with my cat, how do I know that she is not passing time with me rather than I with her (Montaigne 17)?” Montaigne is asserting, that man can think, he has thoughts, and he has an understanding, but there is no way for man to understand the capabilities within animate creatures. Montaigne claims that it could be that our pets are the ones taking time to play with us. We rely on our cognition to place ourselves higher than our pets or other animals. Thus, just because we possess thoughts and understanding, it is not enough to say we understand the capabilities within animals. Possessing thoughts is not enough to place ourselves above animals, nor equate ourselves equal to God.

Since Montaigne has argued that man’s human nature is like that of beasts, his next aim is to distinguish how man and animals are considered to be similar. He states a rhetorical question, “After all, what aspects of our human competence cannot be found in the activities of animals (Montaigne 19)?” Montaigne answers his own rhetorical question by discussing certain qualities man and animals have in like, such as characteristics in justice and duty. Montaigne addresses the fact that we as humans are neither above animals nor below them (Montaigne 24). This is true because Montaigne presents logical facts regarding certain animals and their ability to use reason. He says “animals employ the same method and the same reasoning as ourselves when we do anything (Montaigne 25)” —Animals, just like us, have reason. For example, taking man, he is able to distinguish plants that are both useful for life or medication, and there are those who cannot distinguish this. We then say that it is a sign of knowledge that man can distinguish this based on skill and reason. Thus man has, knowledge, skill and reason. However, Montaigne presents a case that goats of Candia can be seen picking out a certain type of plant, which helps with wounds, when the goats are wounded (Montaigne 28). Another key example Montaigne addresses that plays on the logical and reasonable side to beasts is how blackbirds,

ravens, magpies, and parrots can all be taught to speak. “We recognize in them a capacity for making their voice and their breadth subtle and pliant enough for us to mould and restrict them to a definite number of letters and syllables. That capacity witness to an inward power of reasoning which makes them teachable — an willing to learn (Montaigne 28-29).” This ability within these birds to learn how to speak words comes from a logical part inside of the birds. This ability to reason, gives them the willingness to learn. These examples prove animals too have reason in therefore man is not better than animals.

Furthering his comparison of humankind to animals, Montaigne argues that animals can even portray some justice. “Animals who serve love and protect those that treat them well and who attack strangers and those who do harm show some resemblance to aspects of our own justice (Montaigne 36).” Humans love and so do animals. Not all animals do this, but the animals that do these things, have a characteristic of being just. That is what man strives to do constantly—another point added to why humankind is like that with animals. Montaigne’s last important comparison between the two is that animals too can show duties to each other in the service of life. The animal that Montaigne presents to convey this, is the whale. The whale never travels without a tiny fish, swimming ahead of it. It never goes anywhere without it, always allowing it to be the leader. Mostly everything that is in front of a whale is swallowed up and eaten, but this tiny fish is able to retire there in a safe, confined space. When the next day comes, the fish swims out of the mouth and the whale follows. This companionship and safe haven that the whale creates for this little fish is a duty the whale wants to do (Montaigne 44). This relates to how man has a duty to his family or friends and how man carries out its duty everyday, therefore showing no difference between animals or man because the whale’s sense of duty to the fish is similar to man’s sense of duty to his family. When looking at all these examples that

Montaigne presented, it is obvious that human nature can relate to animals— that human nature is no greater nor less than animals.

Looking at the description of human nature and how both Pascal and Montaigne discuss it, there are certain distinctions and similarities between the two. The similarities are easy to see: that they both believe man's human nature to be low. Pascal addresses man to be selfish at heart and at times wretched. Montaigne does the same. He believes too man is wretched and he goes about this by bringing in examples of the ways man is selfish by corrupting religion at times. However, the distinction between the two is quite evident, with Montaigne's arguing that man's natural inclinations are on the same level with beasts. Montaigne's argument for this is nothing in which we see Pascal addressing, so it is interesting to look at how Montaigne comes to this. He gives great examples of how animals can use reason just like human beings. Another great distinction between the two authors is how much detail Montaigne presents about the severity of the lowness of man. He compares man to being like animals and if we as human beings know we are placed on the same level as them, on the lowest part of the universe, then there is no other way to agree with what Montaigne is asserting—we human beings are similar to beasts. "Beasts are born, reproduce, feed, move, live and die in way so closely related to our own that, if we seek to lower their motivation to raise our own status above theirs, that cannot arise from any reasoned argument on our part. Doctors recommend us to live and behave as animals do... (Montaigne 35)." Here there is no possible way for human beings to not be similar to beasts. They have so many similar qualities, to us, and our human nature is therefore like that of beasts and not higher.

## Reason:

One dominant faculty that has manifested itself in the ideas of human nature is reason. This faculty comes at the further extent of another faculty, imagination, but nonetheless in order to understand the views of Pascal on this matter, one would need to understand both imagination and reason. For Pascal, imagination is a key concept that not only helps distinguish human nature, but also connects well with his arguments about reasoning. It is interesting to look at these two concepts and see how Pascal fits them together. First lets look at imagination. Imagination dominates reason and is truly the better of the two. In Pascal's eyes, imagination is, "the dominant faculty in man, master of error and falsehood... (Pascal 9)." He calls it a force that dominates over reason and thus has created a second nature in man—the first nature, I believe is faith in God. Imagination makes people, "believe, doubt, deny reason, it deadens the senses, it arouses them... (Pascal 9)." Imagination creates all these emotions and at the same time can make the senses seem less important. Pascal's main argument for imagination being so grand is that it is everything, "it creates beauty, justice and happiness... (Pascal 11)." Through Pascal's eyes, nothing can be more fitting then to hold imagination over reason. Imagination will always seem to be above reason and prevail over reason because people will use their imagination, and will come to the conclusion in their minds that imagination is better then true reason. Pascal gives this example of putting the greatest philosopher on a plank that is wide. If there is a very steep rock or cliff below, the philosopher will look to reason on what he should do. Reason will convince him that he should be safe, and this guy being a great philosopher should know how to rely on his reason in a situation like this. However, the philosopher's imagination will take hold of his mind, because it is an arrogant force, which dominates reason (Pascal 9) and thus the

philosopher will use this logic to come to the conclusion jumping might not be so bad (Pascal 10).

Following this, reason compared to imagination is the worst thing possible for human nature because in the views of Pascal, “nothing shows him the truth, everything deceives him (Pascal 12).” Then what makes up these truths is sense and reason in which these concepts are mutually deceptive. Thus reason and the senses can show man nothing. Pascal states that reason and senses are not genuine and both are deceptive to man. He gives an example of looking at the mind of supreme judge of the world. The mind of this judge is not independent from loud noise or chatter that may be happening. It does not take a huge cannon’s roar to arrest the judge’s thoughts; instead maybe a minor noise of a pulley will get the judge to take notice. From this, we can deduce that the judge’s reasoning is not too sound and the judge is incapable of giving sound advice. There is maybe a fly buzzing around his ear not giving him good advice and if the judge were to look for the truth, all we would have to do is drive away the bad fly that is paralyzing the judges reason and disturbing his intelligence to help the world (Pascal 14). The example helps further Pascal’s ideas about reason. Reason sometimes will not be a helpful tool to a judge or even a ruler and this is where reason is deceptive to man—it can fault man and not be logical when making decisions. Pascal believes, “the senses are distributed by passion, which produce false impressions (Pascal 13).” These false impressions comes from Pascal’s train of thought: nothing that results in the process of the mind, not imagination or reason is helpful for human nature, nor are the senses good. Here reason is follows behind imagination, however this is all in regard towards human nature.

After looking at reason as it pertains to imagination and human nature, there is another sense of the word reason—there is a reason that pertains to faith. Pascal has shown us there is

certain things reason cannot do for humans through imagination. However reason in terms of faith can be insightful. Pascal states, “We know truth not only through our reason but also through our heart (Pascal 28).” Here Pascal brings up reason a more positive outlook. Pascal states that the knowledge of the first principles is as solid as any other concept derived through reason. Thus affirming that there are certain knowledge’s that can be acquired through reason (Pascal 29). From this new way of reasoning, one can more explicitly find the religion of Christianity. Pascal states, “One of the ways in which the damned will be confounded is that they will see themselves condemned by their own reason, by which they claimed to condemn the Christian religion (Pascal 54).” Pascal is asserting that the people who are ill natured and damned are the people who use their reasoning to condemn the Christian religion. The Christian religion in the eyes of Pascal is what he believes to be the faith that one needs to have good human nature, “By accepting a Christian way of life, he has gone outside himself, abandoning at last the prison of self-love for the freedom of charity to others (Pascal xxvii).” Pascal fully supports that the Christian religion is the only faith that can help man’s wretched human nature. He explicitly believes that once man has found Christianity, he will no longer have that self-love within himself, but will indeed have a better human nature because he will care for others.

There are two different types of reasoning that Pascal offers. The first one would be reasoning through the mind. In *Pensé* 110 Pascal address both the different reasoning in the eyes of God. “The way of God, who disposes all things with gentleness, is to instill religion into our minds with reasoned arguments and into our hearts with grace, but attempting to instill it into our hearts and minds with force and threats is to instill not religion but terror (Pascal 54).” God, the almighty being, has one main job and that is to instill religion into peoples mind and their hearts. God is able to achieve this by using reason. He instills reason into our arguments and we could

equate this type of reasoning with reasoning through the mind. Then he uses reasoning through the heart and with this type of reasoning God is trying to instill grace into our hearts. Here we can see both the types of reason being at work with religion. Together a person who has good human nature will have both of these qualities. However, Pascal offers a little caveat: only a God who is gentle will help bestow these two qualities into us. Pascal mentions that if God is to instill religion through the mind and grace through the heart, by using force and threats, it will not be religion, but instead terror.

Reasoning through the heart seems like a complex concept. Whenever the heart is brought up into any logical talk, it can only mean emotions. The heart is a passionate organ in which trying to reason through it can only mean; one is trying to reason through their emotions. In Pascal's eyes, he takes reasoning through the heart and conveys that it can help human nature come to religion as well. Pascal states, "That is why to those whom God has given religious faith by moving their hearts are very fortunate, and feel quite legitimately convinced, but to those who do not have it we can only give such faith through reasoning, until God gives it by moving their heart, without which faith is only human and useless for salvation (Pascal 29)." Here we have two people. One that fully believes God has moved her hearts and therefore has full belief in God—she needs nothing to convince her otherwise. There is on the other hand another person, who does not have faith in God, and thus she needs faith given to her through reason. This can only be achieved when God can move these people's hearts. Reasoning through the heart in this example reveals that it is this type of reasoning that can draw someone to religion as well and more importantly faith in God.

Now that we have addressed the two different reasons, we can look further in how these reasons apply to God. It was mentioned before that reason through the mind and heart can help

get one closer to religion, but the important question is, can reason draw one to God? In Pascal's eyes, reason through the mind cannot get us directly to God, "The metaphysical proofs for the existence of God are so remote from human reasoning and so involved that they make little impact, and, even if they did help some people, it would only be for the moment during which they watched the demonstration, because an hour later they would be afraid they had made a mistake (Pascal 57)." There are certain concepts in which even reason alone is not enough for human kind. A human mind cannot reason that God exists. If there is the case that the human mind used reason to find out there existed a God, it would only be for a short period of time. Consequently an hour later, the thought would all vanish away because there are limits of reason within human kind. Therefore because of these certain limits, people would second-guess themselves and not feel confident in what they had thought an hour before. It is only through the heart that human kind can perceive God, and not through reason. "Faith is: God perceived by the heart, not by reason (Pascal 127)." To have faith and faith in God for that matter is to have it through the heart. Everyone can reason, everyone has the ability to reason, but on certain issues, like faith and God, one cannot rely on reason.

In Pensée 160, Pascal describes another distinction that can be made between reason through the mind and reason through the heart.

There are only three sorts of people: those who found God and serve him; those who are busy seeking him and have not found him; those who live without either seeking or finding him. The first are reasonable and happy, the last are foolish and unhappy, those in the middle are unhappy and reasonable (Pascal 52).

The first group can be considered both the reasoning from the heart and reasoning from the mind and these people have indeed found God. The middle group are the people who are the ones trying to find God and have not found him. This group represents the heart reasoning to try and find God, but the mind not reasoning to finding him. The mind has the desire to find God, but has not

gotten there. This middle group is unhappy because their heart has not found God yet, but still reasonable because there are reasonable in their mind. Later on in Pensé 427, Pascal brings these two groups back up and states,

Let them leave such impiety to those ill-bred enough to be really capable of it; let them at least be decent people if they cannot be Christians; let them, in short, acknowledge that there are only two classes of persons who can be called reasonable: those who serve God with all their heart because they know him and those who seek him with all their heart hearts because they do not know him (Pascal 132-133).

The beginning of this quote is referring back to the that third group of people who live to not seek God at all and Pascal is hoping that even though these people are not Christians, they are good people. However, with this Pascal wants these certain type of people to understand that there are two other groups and they are the ones stated before. These examples show the importance of reasoning and more than just that, reasoning through the mind and reasoning through the heart to come to faith. When that has been achieved, then faith leads us to God.

Lastly to further prove that that human kind cannot know God through just reason, Pascal states,

We know God only through Jesus Christ. Without this mediator all communications with God is broken off. Through Jesus we know God. All those who have claimed to know God and prove his existence without Jesus Christ have only had futile proofs to offer. But to prove Christ we have the prophecies which are solid and palpable proofs. By being fulfilled and proved by true events, these prophecies show that these truths are certain and thus prove that Jesus is divine. In him and through him, therefore we know God. Apart form that, without Scripture, without original sin, without the necessary mediator, who was promised and came, it is impossible to prove absolutely that God exists, or to teach sound doctrine and sound morality. But through and in Christ we can prove God's existence, and teach both doctrine and morality. Therefore Jesus is the true God of men (Pascal 56).

Without Jesus, there is no reasonable way that one can communicate with God. It is only through Jesus that we can go on teaching and preaching about God's existence. For those that have said

they known God without the mediator have false reasons to believe this and cannot establish creditable proofs for God. Along with knowing Jesus, one must have to know the scripture, the original sin, and the process of the mediator coming down to the people. Without these, it would be impossible to establish that God exists along with belief in Jesus Christ.

Pascal presents the “wager” to explore how humankind does not need to use reason to come to faith. This wager is all about having self-interest to believe in God, “either God is or he is not (Pascal 122).” This is the question that Pascal uses to help prove that reason cannot help decide one option or prove either choice to be wrong—it is more than just reason that can help man. “Reason cannot make you choose either, reason cannot prove you wrong (Pascal 122).” It is true that reason is not the sole purpose to finding God, however reason is also not at fault for not being able to find God. Looking at the wager, a choice must be made and Pascal goes on to state the things worth losing, “You have two things to loose: the true and the good; and the two things at stake: your reason and your will, your knowledge and your happiness; and your nature has two things to avoid: error and wretchedness (Pascal 123).” What is at stake when we do actually make the wager is our reason behind making it. If it is right and if our reason is sound. Our will is at stake because once we commit to the wager, we are in, and there is no turning back. Our knowledge is at stake because this wager is a bet, so we bet something we feel comfortable of knowing, but it could be wrong. Happiness is at stake because we may not enjoy the end result. However with all this negative effects, there are positive aspects, which deal with our human nature. Our human nature when making this wager will be free of error or wretchedness because we are making the wager; we are giving into to faith and betting on God. Pascal then states that there are two cases in regards to calling the existence of God, “if you win you win everything, if you lose you lose nothing (Pascal 123).” Besides what was stated before,

no great physical harm will come from losing the wager—it seems to be all more mental. This wager brings to light how reason is not the sole purpose to believe in God, although we could use reason to make the bet on either choice. However true that is, we should still look at reason in this wager as more of a stepping stone to position humankind on the right track towards God. Pascal ends the wager with saying, “if you are unable to believe, it is because of your passions, since reason impels you to believe and yet you cannot do so. Concentrate then not on convincing yourself by multiplying proofs of God’s existence but by diminishing your passion (Pascal 124).” By diminishing our passions, then maybe we will start to believe in God. This happens from man realizing his faults within himself—greed or jealousy. Being able to diminish these passions will help man come to God. It follows that when our mind starts to believe in God, then our hearts will follow. The results from partaking in this wager are fulfilling. Pascal states, “You will be faithful, honest, humble, grateful, full of good works, sincere, true friend ... (Pascal 125).” All these traits are acceptable in human nature and they come from making this wager. They have come from taking this faculty reason and trying to use reason to understand if we believe in God. Making this wager proves that human nature can be better with the help of faith in God but not through reason. Now it will be interesting to look how Montaigne views reason.

Looking at reason for Montaigne, he is more straightforward. Montaigne actually gives us a definition of reason: “By reason I always mean that appearance of rationality which each of us constructs for himself — the kind of reason which can characteristically have a thousand contrary reactions to the same subject and is like a tool of malleable lead or wax: it can stretched, bent or adapted to any size or to any basis; if you are clever, you can learn to mold it (Montaigne 144).” Montaigne believes reason to a characteristic that can be different in every situation. Just like that of lead or wax, it can be shaped in different ways depending on the condition. He gives

a great example of something that fits this definition of reason: a judge. A judge has to be careful to not have inclinations towards his friends, a relation, a beauty, or an enemy, or even an a small impulse— “a chance impulse which leads us to favor one thing rather than another, or which enables us to choose, without any sanction or reason, between two identical objects...

(Montaigne 144).” A slight inclination can hinder the judge’s judgment and cause him to make an unlawful decision. However is this reason still enough to help man’s low human nature? Can reason help man get to faith?

Montaigne’s account of reason comes from the knowledge of the philosophers. He thinks there is more to reason than just what the philosophers have stated and that man especially should always possess reason when trying to understand a subject. He states,

We want to find out by reason whether fire is hot, whether snow is white, whether anything within our knowledge is hard or soft. There are ancient stories of the replies made to man who doubted whether ice is cold — they told him to jump into the fire — or to the one who doubted whether ice is cold — they told him to slip some into his bosom: but a reply like that is quite unworthy of the professed aims of philosophy. Philosophers could have spoken in this way only if they had left us in a state of nature, simply accepting external appearances as they offer themselves to our senses, or if they had left us to follow our basic appetites, governed only by such modes of being as we are born with. But they themselves have taught us to make judgments about the universe; they themselves have fed us with the notion that human reason is the Comptroller-General of everything within and without the vault of heaven; they themselves say that it can embrace everything, do everything and is the means by which anything is known or understood (Montaigne 116).

Philosophers have taught man that reason is the center of man’s understanding. The simplicity of the answers of just jumping into a fire or slipping ice down into one’s bosom are just not good enough replies. We as human beings are too keen to accept external appearances than reason. If man were to accept what the philosophers believed, he would not give these simple replies, but in fact would go into depth of his reasoning. He would say, “What they must tell me is whether I

really and truly feel what I think I feel; and if I do feel it, they must go on and tell me why and how and what: let them tell me the name, origin, connections and frontiers of heat and cold and what qualities are found in the agents and patients of heat and of cold (Montaigne 116).” What man is supposed to do is use his reason and ask the more fruitful questions regarding the topic. He will ask questions that will lead him to a better understanding of what is going on using. By using his reason (not what the philosophers have stated) man can and will fully grasp the root of what is heat and cold.

However Montaigne asserts that for philosophers, this logic on reason is the touchstone and this touchstone is one “full of falsehood, error, defects and feebleness (Montaigne 117).” This is because reason tangles us up so much. Montaigne argues then that reason cannot run-wild and but that it has to have limitations. He says, “We are right to erect the strictest possible fences around the human mind. In the march of scholarship or anything else the mind must needs have its footsteps counted and regulated; you must supply artificial hedges and make it hunt only within them. We rein it in, neck and throat, with religion and laws, customs, precepts, rewards and punishments... (Montaigne 137).” Man’s reason has restrictions on it and furthermore puts the restrictions on the concepts in which man reasons through. Thus it restricts religion as well, thus reaffirming that reason cannot help man find God.

Following reason, Montaigne address another concept, senses. Montaigne proclaims that the senses, “they are the proof as well as the main foundation for our ignorance (Montaigne 170).” This is interesting to make note of because after this Montaigne into more detail about senses.

Knowledge is conveyed though the senses: they are our Master. Knowledge beings with them and can be reduced to them. After all, we would have no more knowledge than a stone if we did not know that there exists sound, smell, light, taste, measure, weight, softness, hardness, roughness, colour, sheen, breadth, depth. They form the foundations

and principles on which our knowledge is built. Indeed for some thinkers, knowledge is built on sensation. Anyone who can force me to contradict the evidence of the senses has got me by the throat: he cannot make me retreat any further. The senses are the beginning and end of human knowledge (Montaigne 170).

Here the importance of senses in relation to knowledge is clearly stated. If human beings did not have any senses, we would be like inanimate objects. These senses are what help give human their first principles on knowledge. Senses can be considered to be two-fold. They are “the sovereign regent of knowledge, and yet, in all circumstances, uncertain and fallible (Montaigne 175).” Senses can be the foundation of man’s knowledge, or it can lead to man making mistakes or being erroneous which can lead to also being the foundation for mans ignorance. Making a full circle we can see how Montaigne looks are senses in regard to man, but now it is important to look at senses in regards to reason.

Montaigne declares that in everyday situations, we can see that senses have mastery over our reason. The senses force us to receive impressions, which we know to be false. The example Montaigne gives deals with sight. He asks, ‘Why do those who have feely agreed to cauterizations and incisions for the sake of their health find they cannot stand the sight of all the preparations, of the surgical instruments or the actual operation (Montaigne 177)?’ Here we can see that the visual scenes takes over the mind. People cannot physical take the visual effects of seeing the surgical weapons that will cut them open, even if this surgery is needed for health. “Sight does not share in the pain (Montaigne 177).” The sense of sight is all too powerful for the mind, thus showing that senses have mastery of reason.

## Faith:

One question that has been asked in light of the views of man’s human nature: is what can help save man from not having such a wretched human nature? What can help pull man out

of his desires of his natural inclinations? From the views of what Pascal believes, he stresses the idea in which faith is a huge component to answering the questions above. Pascal accomplishes this task by first establishing his stance on religion. He believes in true religion and address how to achieve this type of true religion. Pascal opens with,

If all things have a single principle, a single end – all things by him, all things for him – true religion must then teach us to worship and to love him alone. But, as we find ourselves unable to worship what we do not know or to love anything but ourselves, the religion which teaches us these duties must also teach us our inability and tell us the remedy as well. It teaches us that through one man all was lost and the bond was broken between God and man, and that through one man the bond was restored (Pascal 67).

Pascal's version of a true religion will be a religion that teaches people to worship and love God alone, it will teach people the duties of themselves and to know their inabilities and how to fix them and it will teach them the story behind God and how God came to be. This religion that can accomplish all of this, will be this sense of true religion. He notes, "Man's greatness and wretchedness are so evident that the true religion most necessarily teach us that there is in man some great principle of greatness and some great principle of wretchedness (Pascal 46)." It is only through having religion, can man first establish his sense of self worth in this world. This religion is the foundation for Pascal's thesis regarding human nature.

Pascal goes on to discuss that in other religions, they regard nature as incorrupt or permanent, but these other religions have been unable to avoid two vices—pride and sloth, the twin sources of all vice. The only solution would be to give in through being a coward or escape through pride. However, no matter how much these vices recognize a man's excellence, they will always underestimate his corruption within himself because the people would have to avoid sloth, but then dive deeper into pride. Pascal gives an answer to these problems, "The Christian religion alone has been able to cure these twin vices, not by using one to expel the other

according to worldly wisdom, but by expelling both through the simplicity of the Gospel (Pascal 68).” Christianity is for Pascal the only religion that addresses these vices and in a way of speaking, Christianity has dealt with them in a fashionable manner—taking the vices and getting rid of them all together by words of scripture, the Gospel.

Establishing a true religion means knowing that God actually exists. Pascal has done this already and now it is time to turn to actually believing in God. Having God’s will is an important because as it is stated, “Gods will has been to redeem men and open the way of salvation to those who seek it, but men have shown themselves so unworthy that is right for God to refuse to some, for their hardness of heart, what he grants to others by a mercy they have not earned (Pascal 50).” Believing in God and following his way will earn you redemption and grant you the way to being saved. “Man is not worthy of God but he is not incapable of being made worthy. It is unworthy of God to unite himself to wretched man, but it is not unworthy of God to raise him out of his wretchedness (Pascal 74).” From these views, it is from God, who saves man from his low natural inclination. It is seen that God is the only way man can be saved from his wretchedness. There are some men who do not follow God and from what Pascal has offered, God has every right to refuse them if they are not willing to conform to his following. It is from these people that believe in him and seek him, and in return. God gives them certain knowledge of himself and shows certain signs to those who indeed seek him. For those people who do not believe or seek God, he hides himself from them (Pascal 50). The people who do indeed follow God will have the chance of being saved from their own terrible characteristics.

Montaigne addresses the same argument as Pascal by saying; that in order for man to be saved from his wretched human nature, he must have faith. “ In a matter so holy, so sublime, so far surpassing Man’s intellect as it the Truth by which it has pleased God in his goodness to

enlighten us, we can only grasp that Truth and lodge it within us if God favors us with the privilege of further help, beyond natural order (Montaigne 3).” God is the only person that can enlighten man on truth and it is only if God favors man that then those people will be guided through their life. Thus their human nature could be saved. More specifically, Montaigne states how man needs God.

If we held fast to God by means of a lively faith, if we held fast to God by God, not by ourselves; if our footing and our foundation were divine: then human events would not have the power to shake us which they do have; our fortress would not be for surrendering to feeble a battery; the love of novelty, the constraint of Princes, the good luck of one party or rash fortuitous changes in our own opinion, would have no power to shake our beliefs or modify them. We would not let our faith be troubled at the mercy of some new arguments or by persuasion... (Montaigne 4)

Once man holds fast to God only by God and not anything else, then man has truly found God. Thus once man has God within him, certain events that happen within man’s own life will not be such a problem—these events will not have the power to shake man. If man has religion and more importantly if he has God, nothing can trouble man or his religion. Therefore his petty desires and passions that man has will be less if God is in his life.

Lastly, Montaigne puts God on a high platform. God is the all-powerful being and the only way man can be saved from his wretched human nature. “You are subjected to limits: restrict yourself to them, not God. He is not one of your equals; he is not a fellow- citizen or a companion. He has revealed a little of himself to you, but not so as to sink down to your petty level or make himself accountable for his power to you. The human body cannot fly up to the clouds — that applies to you (Montaigne 95)!” Here Montaigne distinguishes the difference between man and God, consequently revealing how petty man is and how God is never man’s equal.

Likewise, Montaigne argues that man needs to be obliged to God and God alone because he will give man eternal blessings. Montaigne states that God alone can tell man this and show him faith,

It is not a lesson we have been taught by Nature or Reason. Anyone who makes repeated examinations of himself, internally and externally, as a human being, with human powers but bereft of the divine privilege of grace; anyone who sees Man as he is, without flattery, will find no quality or faculty in Man which is not redolent of death and dust. The more we attribute, grant and refer to God, the more Christian we act (Montaigne 131).

Reason cannot help man come to find faith nor can nature. Any man, who is deprived of divine grace and looks of himself as a highly functional human being, will indeed have no faculty of God's grace within him and will be succumbed to death. It is only from looking within one's self internally and externally, by truly looking into man without flattery; thus can man refer to God. Likewise it is only with referring to God, that can help man be more Christian. Therefore revealing how man can come to God and only through God, will man's wretched human nature be saved.

## Conclusion:

What can help man's low human inclinations if he does not believe in God? Is there a way that this type of man without religion can have his human nature not be so wretched? Personally when thinking about this question, it have come to some conclusions. I believe, that for those who have not yet found God, but are looking for him, they are in this sense of a waiting game. Waiting for God to show himself to them, and until this happens, they have to just wait. Patience is key for those who have not found God yet and only through waiting can they find God, thus believing him, thus their human nature will not be so wretched. In my introduction I suggested that if reason cannot help man find faith, then there must be something greater within

man. It raises the question: how do we as human beings go from seeking God but not having found him? Pascal states that it is only through the mediator Jesus Christ. Without Christ, there could be no possible way man can find God. Montaigne states that is only by looking deep within ourselves. One would have to look internally and externally within themselves and would have to look past their faculties. By doing all this, it is a start to finding God. Essentially these two ways to find God are not a passive waiting, therefore in our waiting game the people who have not found God yet do not experience a passive waiting either. They are trying to find God, but whatever the reason may be, they are not able to—so they actively wait. They are actively waiting because they are trying to reason through their mind that God exists. These people reason through their heart that God is exists, but they cannot reason through their mind to seek him. Therefore they are waiting and trying to come to this reasoning through their mind to find God. When i step back and think about this argument, I would have to agree what Pascal has stated and agree that this middle group is actively waiting. People can be in this waiting game and still be actively searching for God and that shows these people in this middle group are still hoping God is there, They still are willing to have faith during this waiting game.

There is another group of people that needs to be addressed, namely those who live their lives without even caring to find God. This group of people has truly stumped me because these groups of people are not necessarily in this waiting game, but just do not believe at all. With that being said, for this group I believe that if they do not care for looking and searching for God, and they do not care for an afterlife. Therefore if they do not believe in an afterlife, then their wrongdoings in their present life and their wretched human nature have no affect on them. No one can be saved and thus their consequences only happen to them throughout their lifetime. This last group, Pascal states they are “foolish and unhappy (Pascal 52).” I would have to

disagree with Pascal because I believe this last group is not unhappy, and that they live terrible lives, but they just believe they are not in ignorance of their lives. Pascal and Montaigne would say this last group is ignorant because they do not even realize they are missing God. I believe that it is not that they do not realize they are missing God, but that they just do not care. Then what follows is not unhappiness within their lives but a life lived completely without a care of consequences in the afterlife. The non-believer's wretched human nature has no ability to be saved from God because they probably will not even suspect they have a wretched human nature. When thinking about this waiting game that people go through, I can get behind it only if we are able to clarify some questions. How long would one have to be waiting? Does one have to diminish their passions and hopes in order to make room for God? To conclude I believe that there cannot be an amount of time in which one can be assigned and once that is completed then they have found God. If that were the case, then finding God and having faith would seem not in our power to control. That bothers me because with faith, that is something that everyone should have control and power over, so when these people who have not yet found God are waiting for him, no set time can be allotted to them, but on their own time will they believe to overcome this waiting to achieve finding God. The next question, I look back to what Pascal has stated. He believes that man does need to diminish their passions and desires. I would agree because passions and desires are what give man his natural inclinations to want more than what they have; thus man's human nature is wretched. If man is able to control his passions and desires, then that might make his human nature less wretched thus being able to man to have more room in himself for God.

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