

Reading Group: Blaise Pascal and His Heirs

Fridays at noon: February 4 and 18; March 4 and 25; April 8

In addition to introducing Pascal to you, and encouraging you to read his *Pensées*, I am eager to introduce a few thoughtful readers of Pascal who have worked in his lineage and who have played a central role in shaping my own thinking about modernity and about how to live well in our late-modern context. While this list could include others, the three who have impacted me most profoundly include Flannery O'Connor, Leszek Kolakowski, and Merold Westphal.

This will be a genuine reading group, and it will take some effort and some time. Please do not expect to read the assigned readings in the fifteen minutes before each meeting. Expect to settle in with a hot beverage and give these authors the couple hours (or more) that each one deserves. As always, we will provide copies of the readings on the shelves at the top of the stairs at Pascal's Coffeehouse, but I do encourage you to purchase a copy of the Penguin edition of Pascal's *Pensées*. We are making it available at the coffee bar for \$12.00. It will be the best twelve-dollar investment you will ever make.

- Blaise Pascal, from the *Pensées* – February 4
 - vi. "Greatness" #105-118
 - vii. "Contradiction" #119-131
 - xi. "APR" #149
 - xii. "Beginning" #150-166
 - xiv. "Excellence of this Means of Proving God" #189-192

- Flannery O'Connor – February 18
 - From *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose*
 - "The Fiction Writer and His Country" (pp. 25-35)
 - "Novelist and Believer" (pp. 154-168)
 - From *The Complete Stories*
 - "Revelation" (pp. 488-509)

- Leszek Kolakowski, from *Is God Happy? Selected Essays* – March 4
 - "Anxiety About God in an Ostensibly Godless Age" (pp. 183-195)
 - "Why a Calf? Idolatry and the Death of God" (pp. 201-210)

- Merold Westphal, from *Overcoming Onto-theology* – March 25
 - "Overcoming Onto-Theology" (pp. 1-13, 21-24)

- Blaise Pascal – April 8
 - From the *Pensées*
 - viii. "Diversion" #132-139
 - ix. "Philosophers" #140-146
 - x. "The Sovereign God" #147-148
 - xiii. "Submission and Use of Reason" #167-188
 - From *The Provincial Letters*
 - Letter xviii (conclusion, pp. 201-208)