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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
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Each volume in this series of companions to major philosophers contains specially commissioned essays by an international team of scholars, together with a substantial bibliography, and will serve as a reference work for students and non-specialists. One aim of the series is to dispel the intimidation such readers often feel when faced with the work of a difficult and challenging thinker.

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New readers and non-specialists will find this the most convenient and accessible guide to Pascal currently available. Advanced students and specialists will find a conspectus of recent developments in the interpretation of Pascal.

NICHOLAS HAMMOND is Senior Lecturer in the Department of French, Cambridge University, and Director of Studies in Modern Languages at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge.

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CHRONOLOGY

1623	Born at Clermont-Ferrand, 19 June
1626	Death of his mother, Antoinette Begon (1596–1626)
1631	Moves with his father Etienne (1588–1626) and sisters Gilberte (1620–87) and Jacqueline (1625–61) to Paris
1631–40	Educated at home by his father, moves in various scientific and literary circles
1640	Pascal family moves to Rouen, where Etienne is placed in charge of taxes. Publication of Jansen’s <i>Augustinus</i>
1641	Marriage of Gilberte to Florin Périer
1645	Dedication of a calculating machine, first devised to help his father in his work, to the chancellor, Pierre Séguier
1646	Etienne breaks his thigh after slipping on ice, and is converted, along with his family, by two brothers who care for him and who follow the spiritual teachings of Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, abbot of Saint-Cyran
1647	Moves back to Paris, meets Descartes on two occasions, and publishes the <i>Expériences nouvelles touchant le vide</i> , his first work on the vacuum. Has first contact with Port-Royal
1648	Publication of a further piece on the vacuum, <i>Récit de la grande expérience</i>
1649–50	Goes with family to Clermont-Ferrand to escape the Fronde, the period of civil unrest in Paris, in May 1649. Returns to Paris in November of the following year
1651	Death of Etienne. Entry of Jacqueline into Port-Royal as nun. Writes his <i>Préface sur le traité du vide</i>

Chronology

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- 1651–4 Frequents worldly circles and works on mathematics
 1653 Pope Innocent X condemns the ‘five propositions’
 believed to be found in Jansen’s *Augustinus*
 1654 Writes his *Traité du triangle arithmétique*. On 23
 November has a mystical experience known as his
 ‘night of fire’, recorded in the *Mémorial*
 1655 Goes on retreat to Port-Royal des Champs. His
 conversation with one of the spiritual directors, Sacy,
 is recorded by Sacy’s secretary Fontaine. Possible date
 of composition of *De L’Esprit géométrique*. Possible
 date of composition of *Ecrits sur la grâce*
 1656 Start of his *Lettres provinciales*, defending Antoine
 Arnauld and then attacking the Jesuits
 1657 Final of his *Lettres provinciales*
 1658 Works on the cycloid. Presents plan of his apologetic
 project at Port-Royal des Champs
 1659 Falls ill
 1660 Writes *Trois discours sur la condition des grands*
 1661 Nuns at Port-Royal, including Jacqueline, forced
 to sign anti-Jansenist formulary. Jacqueline dies
 4 October
 1662 First omnibus service instituted by Pascal in Paris.
 Falls ill in the spring and dies on 19 August
 1670 Posthumous publication by Port-Royal of Pascal’s
 Pensées

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ABBREVIATIONS

Throughout this book references to Pascal's works are made in parentheses in the main body of the text. References to the Complete Works (*Oeuvres complètes*) will be from the two-volume Pléiade edition by Michel Le Guern (Paris: Gallimard, 1998–2000), by volume and page number, e.g. *OC* 1, 235. All references to the *Pensées* will give the Lafuma and Sellier numberings, e.g. L 177/S 208.