

Pascal, Pensees

The difference between the mathematical mind (*esprit de geometrie*) and the perceptive mind (*esprit de finesse*): the reason that mathematicians are not perceptive is that they do not see what is before them, and that, accustomed to the exact and plain principles of mathematics, and not reasoning till they have well inspected and arranged their principles, they are lost in matters of perception where the principles do not allow for such arrangement. . . . These principles are so fine and so numerous that a very delicate and very clear sense is needed to perceive them, and to judge rightly and justly when they are perceived, without for the most part being able to demonstrate them in order as in mathematics; because the principles are not known to us in the same way, and because it would be an endless matter to undertake it. We must see the matter at once, at one glance, and not by a process of reasoning, at least to a certain degree. . . . Mathematicians wish to treat matters of perception mathematically, and make themselves ridiculous . . . the mind . . . does it tacitly, naturally, and without technical rules.