Montaigne & Melancholy

The Wisdom of the *Essays*

NEW EDITION

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Foreword by Marc Fumaroli

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Montaigne addressed himself to these matters. He had to, if his work was to have validity. Rational theism is impossible if there are no universals. Christian Nominalists do make Christian doctrines irrational, since they insist that such doctrines exist independently of reason. They are matters for faith alone. On the other hand, Christian Realists tend to devalue the material world, preferring spiritual reality to unstable material things. They place souls not only above bodies – everyone did that – but immeasurably far above.

From the earliest times attempts had been made to reconcile Plato and Aristotle. Divisions between Platonist and Aristotelian, Realist and Nominalist, are not always stark and sharply defined, but Montaigne could not avoid taking up positions. He wanted to know an individual person: himself. He also wanted to know what natural philosophy had to tell Man about wise living and wise dying.

He 'assayed' himself in order to find out.

CHAPTER TEN

Assays and Resolutions

1. The footloose soul

Montaigne contrasts assays with solutions: 'If my soul could only find a footing, I would not be assaying myself but resolving myself' – *je ne m'essaierois pas, je me resoudrois* (III. 2, p. 21).

No final resolution of the problem of identity is, in human terms, possible: the world is compounded of constant and age-long change (*une branloire perenne*). Even great natural features such as the Caucasus and huge man-made buildings like the Pyramids are not exempt. Man, more volatile, changes from moment to moment. What one calls constancy is merely a slower rate of change – a body blow aimed at Stoics for whom constancy is the principal virtue.

Montaigne cannot portray absolute being, only his becoming-and-passing-away – *Je ne peins pas l'estre, je peins le passage.*

These themes, developed at the beginning of his chapter on repentance (III. 2), take up what was said even more powerfully at the conclusion of the apologia for Sebond:

> 'the whole of human nature is always in between birth and dying, so that it gives only a dark appearance and shadow of itself, an uncertain, weakly opinion.' (II. 12, pp. 366-7; quoting from Plutarch).

Since the gulf separating man from the Being of God is absolute, to cross it man needs a miracle; God must go beyond the order of things and lend him a hand. Plato's ideal forms are not part of the natural order of things. Even if they do exist, the mass of

mankind has no contact with them.[1]

In matters of truth and human psychology Montaigne was no Platonist. His *Essays* had to do without his soul's reminiscences of spiritual forms, without Platonic glimpses of them in ecstatic revelation, without hints from spirits or from daemons. Even poetic ecstasy gave pleasure, not privileged truth.

2. No help from words

None of Plato's approaches to knowledge afforded any certainty to Montaigne. His own emphasis on flux and change put him on the side of Heracleitus and Cratylus. The French language was prone to change, but so were all languages, to a greater or lesser extent. He conceived of language in an Aristotelian way: as a

[1] Heracleitus' teaching that all is in a state of flux was best known from Plato's complex dialogue the *Cratylus*, in which the rival theories of flux and permanence are discussed, sometimes whimsically. Renaissance interpreters variously believed that Socrates held one or the other of the opposing views or even both of them at once. Ficino in his commentary on the *Cratylus* explains that Socrates applied the doctrine of permanence to the supercelestial world of Forms (or Ideas) and the doctrine of perpetual flux to everything in this sublunary world. Montaigne firmly limits his natural philosophy to sublunary matters, restricting them therefore to the world of constant flux. The Heracleitean doctrine of flux is faced by commentators on Aristotle, who accept that, if literally everything is in a state of flux, then knowledge is impossible. Montaigne, by using the adjective *perenne* to explain the tottering 'Perennial' seesaw movements of all worldly things, attaches his reflexions to this train of thought. Fonesca, for example, (on *Metaphysics* III, cap. 5, cols. 895-6) considers that the *perennis fluxus rerum omnium* applies to *quantitas* (material properties) but not to *qualitas* (whatever pertains to form). If that is so, form is stable, and so potentially knowable, whilst matter is unknowable, since it endlessly flows from change to change. Antonio Scaynus treats the subject in his *Paraphrases de Prima Philosophia Aristotelis* (Rome, 1587, p. 56f.). He asserts that Plato misunderstood his master, misapplying to the moral sphere of Socratic definitions the flux which Socrates had restricted to material objects. At all events, certain knowledge concerns permanent form not flowing matter. Montaigne accepts that he can only portray *le passage* (Man in his changing state) not what was traditionally called the 'quiddities' of Man. If he could discover the nature of the Being of Man (his *essence*) he could describe what it was like (its 'quiddity'). At this stage at least he had no such pretensions. Montaigne's inclusion of the Pyramids as examples of change is not original to him. Erasmus, in his commentary on the 38th Psalm, *Dixi custodiam*, makes the same point, incidentally showing how consonant with Christian doctrine Montaigne's concern with perennial flux can be. (Cf. Erasmus, *Opera Omnia*, 1703-06, vol. 5. coll. 448F-450F and col. 461E: 'Where now are the pyramids of Memphis? ... Nothing is stable, except that which the spirit of Christ builds up within us.')

matter of convention, not as a divinely vouchsafed means of conveying truths. There is no place whatever in the *Essays* for truth-revealing etymologies. Proper names as a possible source of revealed truth are important to Platonists, but not to Montaigne. It is precisely in the chapter on names that Plato gets short shrift; some alleged derivations of French names are condemned as being 'as bad and as crude' as Plato's!

Names are simply 'pen-strokes common to a thousand men'. How many people are there 'in all races, who have the same name and surname?' Montaigne reinforced this in his last version:

> (C) And in different races, centuries and countries, how many? History has known three Socrates, five Platos, eight Aristotles, seven Xenophons, twenty Demetriuses, twenty Theodores – and guess how many history has overlooked! (A) What is there to stop my ostler from calling himself Pompey the Great? (I. 46, p.359).

Wherever Platonism and Neoplatonism flourished there were those who looked for divinely placed truth veiled in proper names. This was at least as true in Montaigne's time as in any other. He did not seek truth about himself in his own name; nor did he seek truth about others in theirs. He was just not interested in names. He did not admit them as possible sources of divinely certain knowledge. We know his father was called Pierre – but not from the *Essays*, where the fact is not even worth mentioning.[2]

The revolution worked by Montaigne can be seen by comparing him with Pantagruel. No Socratic daemon came to

[2] On what they took to be the authority of Socrates in the *Cratylus*, most Renaissance Platonists attached importance to etymologies as a way of getting at the true nature (the *etymon*) of the object named. Some however interpreted the *Cratylus* differently. Petrus Calanna, for example, may be cited to represent this view. In his *Philosophia Seniorum Sacerdotia, & Platonica* (Palermo, 1599, p.72), he asserts that, in the *Cratylus*, 'Plato said that knowledge is not to be looked for from names or from their properties, since they are in a state of flux ... knowledge is to be studied from Ideas and sought from them. The Peripatetics [the Aristotelians] neglect our philosophy and laugh at these necessities, confuting them as useless and superfluous since, they say, things ... can be known from their quiddities and definitions.' As a sceptic Montaigne is neither a Platonist nor a thorough-going Aristotelian: he does not believe that he can find knowledge from Platonic forms nor from Aristotelian or scholastic definitions and quiddities.

prompt him as it did Pantagruel; no 'divine' Socrates ever gave him 'superhuman' knowledge; no words bear for him the stamp of veiled divinity and convey religious truth to those privileged to know their true origins; no proper names are God-given prophecies or divinely ordained labels, providentially attached to people who truly correspond to what they mean; no serried ranks of authors vouch for arts or sciences revealed to man through their inspired genius; no enraptured judge is defended by the celestial Intelligences; no judge receives the gift of prophecy, making him 'beside himself'; no hero receives from God the special 'gift of wisdom' ... Almost all that made the Pantagruel of Rabelais's maturity heroically wise in his genial splendour is dropped by Montaigne into the bin of error.

Rabelais and Montaigne present us with worlds belonging to different orders of reality. To pass from the *Tiers* and *Quart Livres* of *Pantagruel* to the *Tiers Livre* of the *Essays* is to relive an intellectual revolution.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Metaphysics

1. Experience

Montaigne chose to end the *Essays* with a deep bow towards Aristotle, the 'monarch' of the New Way, as well as with many a laugh at those who claimed to follow him. The chapter on experience, which brings the long inquiry of the *Essays* to a close, starts with a resounding echo of one of the most famous of all Aristotle's authoritative statements:

> There is no desire more natural than the desire for knowledge (*Il n'est desir plus naturel que le desir de connoissance*) (III. 13).

That is a vital commonplace of scholastic and humanist philosophy. What Aristotle wrote (in Cardinal Bessarion's Latin version) was *omnis homo natura scire desiderat* – 'every man naturally desires to know'. That contention and its close association with all empirical knowledge mean that even mere beginners could have placed the concerns of *De l'experience* in their philosophical context. A schoolboy knowledge might have sufficed. Montaigne is evoking the opening words and immediate preoccupations of Aristotle in the first chapter of the first book of the *Metaphysics*.

Montaigne, like Aristotle, plunged directly from this to reflexions on empirical knowledge. Men seek knowledge:

> We assay all the means which can lead us there. When reason fails, we try experience (III. 13, p. 360).

In Bessarion's version as, indeed, in philosophical usage

generally, the word used is *experientia*: both experience and experiment.

Aristotle and Plato held that 'experience produces art; inexperience, fortune'. That puts inexperience in the same category as human reasoning in its ineffectual chanciness; Montaigne had ended an earlier discussion of the uncertainty of human judgment by suggesting that human deliberations actually depend not on logic but on fortune. The final version went farther, finishing up with the challenging assertion that Plato was right: both men and their discourse are largely matters of *hazard* – of mere chance (I. 47, p. 368).

As far as natural inquiries are concerned, if human reason joins inexperience, then empirical knowledge is left holding the field. But Montaigne now proceeds to reduce experience to inexperience too. In this way virtually the whole of what passed for rational thinking or empirical enquiry becomes haphazard chance.

Aristotle asserted that a man who is able to extract a single universal judgment from a series of 'experiences' has produced an art (*techne*; *ars*). Through an association of ideas almost inevitable then, Montaigne first refers this *ars* to the art of medicine, the usual name for which was simply 'the Art' (*Ars* or, by a corruption of the Greek, *Tegne*). Throughout the *Essays* medical men are mocked and their mystery termed *leur art*. Law is associated with medicine, since common law and case law are based upon inductions made from numerous *experiences*.

The ancients placed empirical knowledge below reason, but valued it when reason ran out. Montaigne agreed that it was 'more feeble and less worthy'. In the end he allowed it perhaps just a little more validity than hazardous reason. Yet one of the many delights of the *Essays* is their concern to show the infinite variety of human beings and human situations. Montaigne dwelt on the limitless variety of it all. But where there is literally infinite variety there can be no certainty: no two patients are ill in exactly the same way; no one legal case corresponds to another in every respect. Some praised the ancient jurisconsult Tribonian for breaking up Roman law into gobbets in order to restrict the discretion of judges. (The expression for this was *tailler leur morceaux*, 'to cut their slices'.) Montaigne condemned him: his gobbets are useless. We are dealing not with what is numerous but what is infinite. No example overlaps any

other sufficiently for definite conclusions to be made. No art can be drawn from infinite variety.

Some try to still philosophical disagreement by glossing the ancients, but experience shows that glosses and interpretations only increase the doubt: 'All I can say is that you can feel from experience that so many interpretations dissipate the truth and break it up. Aristotle wrote in order to be understood.' If he did not succeed, lesser men will not manage it for him.

Infinite doubts result from infinite cases. Infallible books are no answer: 'there is no book in the world, human or divine' where the glosses eliminate the difficulty. There are more books about books than anything else (III. 13, pp. 363-5).

One fruit which Montaigne did draw out of his experience is the wisdom of scepticism:

> (B) It is from my own experience that I acknowledge human ignorance which is, in my judgment, the most certain faction in the school of the world.

Those who will not accept this conclusion on his authority may do so on that of Socrates, '(C) The Master of masters' (III. 13, p. 375).

At no point did Montaigne ever allow finality to arts or sciences based on experience: 'Relationships drawn from experience are always weak and imperfect.' In other words, experience may lead a man of sound judgment to probable opinions: it will not lead him to certainty.

2. Words

Ancient philosophy consists in words. Macaulay summed it up in his essay *On Lord Bacon*: 'Words, and more words, and nothing but words, had been the fruit of all the toil of all the most reknowned sages of sixty generations ... The philosophy of Plato began with words and ended with words' (*Critical and Historical Essays* III, 1844, pp. 383, 386).

Montaigne anticipated this verdict: 'Our disputations are verbal ones' – a judgment which must be interpreted in the light of his contempt for such trivial merchandise. He made the point by reminding his readers of elementary steps in grammar and philosophy. Philosophy thrust you back to definitions –

definitions were needed to describe Platonic forms or to characterise the species and genera of Aristotle. One of the best-known definitions was that of Man. Plutarch cited it in his treatise *On many friends*: 'it is all the same if you say Man, or mortal and reasonable animal' – in Amyot's French: '*c'est tout un que homme, mortel et animal raisonnable*' (*Oeuvres* I. 31). Montaigne put it to good use in a passage calling upon schoolboy memories of Priscian the ancient grammarian:

> Our disputations are verbal ones. I ask what is nature, pleasure, circle or substitution. The question is about words; it is paid in the same coin. – 'A stone is a body.' – But if you argue more closely, 'And what is a body?' – 'Substance' – 'And what is substance?' and so on; you will finally drive the answerer back to the end of his vocabulary-book. We change one word for another word – often for one less known. I know what a man is better than I know what is meant by animal, mortal or reasonable (III. 13, p. 366).

Priscian had said it all before, with the bland seriousness of the grammarian explaining a platitude. To define anything that can be defined we put forward a plain substantive and supply adjectives:

> For example: 'What is an animal?' – 'An animated substance'. Or vice-versa: 'What is an animated substance?' – 'An animal' – 'What is a man?' – 'A rational and mortal animal'. And vice-versa: 'What is a rational and mortal animal?' – 'A man'.

Priscian added that you may do the same for all definitions, including those describing the properties of genus and species with regard to those 'general and specific forms which exist intelligibly in the divine mind' before they go forth into bodies (*Opera*, 1527, XVII, ii, p. 1180). The entire passage of Priscian is cited in some source-books. (In the *Lexicon philologicum* of Matthias Martinus it stands alone under the heading *Forma in Deo Ideae*). For Priscian, definitions are ways of determining the nature of those ideal forms in the divine mind which, he held, give rise to genus and species.

So definitions ought to help us to understand what the species Man is. For Montaigne, however, they do not. The nouns and adjectives which may be used to define man do not help us to know ourselves or others better.

Quite independently of Montaigne, Sanchez used the same argument to devastating effect in that sceptical little book, *Quod nihil scitur*. Either it was an argument that was going the rounds, or else two very original Christian sceptics hit on it at about the same time.[1]

Words were at best a secondary matter for Montaigne. For him, a good education formed not a grammarian or a logician but a gentleman. Teach a child 'things'; words will follow only too easily. 'Following' is what words are made for. Some people – like Quintilian – sought after fine words. We should do the contrary. Montaigne sought – and found – no help from words as such (I. 26, pp. 221-5).

Of course he venerated words when used in speech as trustworthy tokens for the honest exchange of ideas and opinions; of course he savoured them as an artist and as a lover of poetry. But he was impatient with the kind of reader who lingered over his style at the expense of what he had to say:

> (C) I am well aware that, when I hear anyone confine himself to the language of the *Essays*, I would prefer him to hold his peace. That is not so much a matter of raising up words as of thrusting down sense ... (I.40, p. 325).

3. The end of Man

Renaissance authors associated ideas in ways which now seem strange. We have to rediscover links and associations which were once evident enough to those within Renaissance culture.

For example: Montaigne's chapter on lying is largely taken up with a study of memory and forgetfulness. This seems whimsical, even perverse. But Quintilian put memory and lying together: 'Every liar had better have a good memory.' This was so well

[1] Sanchez's position in the dedication 'To the Reader' of *Quod nihil scitur*, (Lyons, 1581, p. 3) is close to Montaigne's: 'It is inborn to man to know how to wish; it is granted to few to wish to know, and to even fewer to know.' Sanchez exploits the *Animal rationale mortale* definition of Man on two occasions: (a) 'You say that you are defining a thing, not a word, with that definition *Animal rationale mortale*. I deny it. For I doubt again over the word *Animal*, about *rationale* etc.' (p. 2); (b) 'And that is not enough. Not being content with simple words, in order to make the matter more difficult' they 'use for *Man* the term *Animal rationale mortale*, which is more difficult than what we started with' (p. 5).

known that Rabelais used it in a minor work; Montaigne uses it in the same way.

We must consider Montaigne's echo of the opening words of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* in the same light. The phrase has a history of its own as a vital step in a well-known argument from natural reason proving the reality – indeed, the necessity – of an after-life. 'All men naturally desire knowledge' was used to prove that the 'end' of Man is not to be found in this world but in the next. Major versions go back to Socrates, Cicero and Scotus, but the argument was in wide currency and can conveniently be followed in Pedro Fonseca's *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics* (1599, I. 73): Nature does nothing in vain. That is not in doubt; nevertheless 'all men naturally desire knowledge', yet 'experience shows that man's appetite cannot be satisfied by any one of this world's goods, nor by any combination of them'. Therefore only the world-to-come can offer hope of satisfying the thirst for knowledge with which Nature has endowed all individual human beings. In that way it can be seen that the desire for knowledge was not given by Nature in vain.

Such chains of argument were available to those who had no Latin. They could read it in Rabelais, who expounded the argument succinctly, though with his tongue in his cheek since he was no Scotist but an evangelical who intended his faith in the after-life to be based on a surer foundation than scholastic theology. Such arguments fall appositely here, nevertheless. Rabelais jumped with agility from the opening phrase of *Metaphysics* to the Biblical proof that the end of Man is life in the world-to-come, where, at last, he will be 'satisfied'. This notion of 'satisfaction' is found in all the authors treating this problem, including Montaigne. It is of the essence of the argument. Rabelais wrote:

> The ancient philosophers who concluded that our souls are immortal did not have any argument to prove it or persuade of it other than the indication of an emotion within us, which Aristotle described (Lib. I *Metaphysicorum*), saying that all humans naturally desire to know – *tous humains naturellement desirent sçavoir* – ; that is to say that Nature has produced in Man a yearning, appetite and desire to know and to learn ... But, as men cannot come to perfect knowledge in this transitory life – for 'the eye is never satisfied with seeing nor the ear satisfied with hearing' (Ecclesiastes 1) – and as Nature has done nothing without a cause nor given an appetite or desire for anything which cannot be obtained (otherwise that appetite would be either frustratory or depraved): it follows that there is another life after this one, in which that desire will be satisfied (*Almanach pour 1535*).

In which case, adds Rabelais, you ought to echo St Paul's *cupio dissolvi* so that 'your souls may be taken from this dark prison and joined to Jesus the Christ'. It is as 'King David said (Psalm 16): I shall be satisfied, when I awake in thy glory' (Text in *Pantagrueline Prognostication*, Droz, pp. 45-6).

Montaigne makes the same points as cogently but more discursively. He likens the pursuit of knowledge to the sport of kings:

> (B) It is only individual weakness which makes us satisfied with what others or we ourselves have already discovered in this hunt for knowledge. A cleverer man would not be satisfied. There is always room for someone to follow on afterwards (C) – indeed, for ourselves too – (B) always another way to follow.

The next sentence hammers the point home with the force of tradition. No hope is held out for a final understanding of anything in this life:

> There is no end in our inquiries. Our end is in the other world (III. 13, p. 364).[2]

[2] Arguments such as these were also used to explain Cicero's statement in *De officiis* – itself linked to *Metaphysics* 1. 1, i – 'We are all attracted and drawn to a zeal for learning and knowing' (I. 6. 18). Cf. Xystus Betuleius in *De officiis*, with commentaries by Erasmus, Xytus Betuleius, Amerbach, Franciscus Maturantius, Calcagnini etc. (Paris, 1562), p. 23r: 'Socrates in the *Phaedo* seized upon this argument in favour of immortality, that the desire for knowledge and wisdom is natural to men, but, since this is achieved in this life by very few, or rather, by none, there is, without doubt, a future state so that this desire may be fulfilled elsewhere.' Amerbach (p. 23v) points out that 'Aristotle taught the same thing' as Cicero 'when he said: All men naturally desire knowledge'.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Contemplation

1. Satisfaction for the soul

The argument that Man's end lies in the next world did not exclude another arising from similar preoccupations. Many Scotists and others taught that Man was endowed with a natural and innate appetite for the 'enjoyment' of God. The numerous opponents of these teachings did not believe that such an innate appetite (if it did exist) could belong to the world of fallen nature; they emphasised the inordinate lack of proportion between such an appetite and the only means of satisfying it: God. Gulfs such as that cannot be crossed by natural means: they call for special grace. Ecstasy can be a means of giving man a foretaste of the joy he may experience from God's presence in the world to come; but such ecstasies will be rare and always provoked by supernatural means.

Questions such as these hung on interpretations of the opening sentence of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* with which Montaigne begins *De l'experience*. He might therefore be expected to touch on such questions too. He does, beginning like Aristotle, reaching the conclusion that there is no end to our inquiries (since Man's end is in the next world) and then closing the *Essays* as a whole with reflexions linked to privileged ways of enjoying a foretaste of heavenly bliss. He avoids being partisan, but his conclusions are far more Thomist than Scotist. A theologian of a Thomist bent would conclude that the natural desire to contemplate God is totally ineffectual and can only be satisfied through privileged grace. That is precisely the conclusion which Montaigne is to lead us to.

Montaigne wrote glowingly about contemplative rapture, especially in the final version of the *Essays*. There he became loud in praise of contemplation – for a handful of chosen mystics. An important addition on this theme was written in the margin of the chapter 'On Solitude' (I. 39, p. 318).

Montaigne contrasted two sorts of men: those who physically withdraw from the world (like Cicero) but who fail to turn their gaze 'outside the world', still clinging to its values and judgments; and those who seek true religious solitude, 'filling their hearts with the certainty of divine promises.' The latter look out of this world to the world-to-come, contemplating God, 'an object infinite in goodness and in might':

> The soul finds matter there to satisfy (*ressasier*) its desires in perfect freedom.

The verb *ressasier* links this assertion with the train of thought set off by the original echo of Aristotle, since (as many insisted) man is 'not satisfied (*non satiari*) by this world's goods'; he will be satisfied only by the glory of God.[1]

2. Asceticism

The saintly few can have a foretaste of this 'satisfaction' in their ecstatic contemplations. Contemplation of this sort is marked, in the *Essays*, by constancy and fierce asceticism: 'affliction and pain are profitable' to such contemplatives; they use them to acquire 'eternal health and joy'. For them death becomes desirable, 'a passing over to so perfect a state'. Constant ascetics can live with their bodies tamed by discipline; long custom softens the harshness of their discipline; carnality is held in

[1] In his long discussion on *Metaphysics* 1.1, Fonseca raises the question, 'Does man naturally have an appetite for an intuitive knowledge of the divine nature'. In Question 2 (col. 72E. f.) he expounds the ideas of those who answer, Yes. The fourth of those reasons is that 'we know from experience that man's appetite is not satisfied (*non satiari*) by any one of the world's goods nor by any combination of them'. He can only be satisfied by the Supreme Good, a clear, intimate and familiar knowledge of God. Fonseca's own reply is given in Section 2 ('The true explanation of the question', (col. 74B.f.) and in Section 3 ('The Removal of the arguments of the adverse party'). Just like Montaigne, Fonseca insists that this desire to be satisfied can only be slaked by means outside of Man's power (col. 74). There is no proportion between Man and his 'End' in the next world and therefore no natural means of Man's achieving that End; the strength to do so comes 'from the grace of God alone' (col. 145).

check by not being exercised. Only contemplation such as this is worth taming the body for. This alone, of all ecstasies, is held up for admiration:

> (C) Only this end, of another life blessedly immortal, loyally deserves our renunciation of the comforts and sweetnesses of this life of ours. Whoever can set his soul ablaze with the fire of this living faith and hope, really and constantly, builds in his solitude a voluptuous, delicate life beyond any other form of life (I. 39, p. 319).

This ascetic contemplation combines several key ideas: 'living faith and hope' echo the Gospels; constancy echoes the Stoics; pleasure and delight provocatively attributed to such a life – *une vie voluptueuse et delicate* – proclaim their source in Epicureanism.

In his colloquy *Epicurus*, Erasmus, partly following Lorenzo Valla, had confronted his readers with a similar paradox; the real Epicureans are rare Christian ascetics. They alone know solid joys and lasting pleasure.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Church

1. Authority

The mass of ordinary Christians cannot and should not aspire to such heights. They should lead an ordinary life in this world, obeying the Church in every detail. Montaigne professed his complete submission to the Church of Rome. These professions increase in number and intensity in the final version. The chapter on prayer shows what an abyss there was between him and the *Eglise réformée*, which took the Bible not the Roman Catholic Church as the basis of religious certainty.

It is in this chapter that Montaigne most specifically claims that the *Essays* are 'unresolved fantasies', seeking truth not laying it down. The church authorities alone have the right.

> (A) to regulate not only my actions and my writings but even my thoughts. Their condemnation will be as acceptable as their approbation; (C) myself finding it execrable if anything has been said by me, ignorantly or inadvertently, against the ordinance of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church, wherein I die and wherein I was born (I. 56, pp. 408-9).

The *Roman* attached to *Catholic* avoids ambiguity. All churches claim to be Catholic. That is why slick lawyers told you, if you were subjected to questioning about your faith by hostile authorities, to say that you were a Catholic. By insisting on his *Roman* Catholicism, Montaigne left the reader in no doubt about the identity of the Church to which he gave unqualified allegiance.

Montaigne took care to submit himself in public to the authority of his Church even before approaching what he called

'(C) the only prayer which I make use of everywhere' – the Lord's Prayer, the 'prayer prescribed and dictated to us, word by word, by the mouth of God', thanks to 'a special favour from the divine Goodness'.

It may be the Lord's Prayer, but its use and interpretation are subject to the Church. Hence the hesitation: 'I am not sure whether I am mistaken, but ... ' (I. 56, pp. 408-9). The words of Christ-as-God need interpretation. The increased protestations of orthodoxy derive in part from criticisms made of aspects of this chapter when Montaigne submitted the *Essays* for comment to the *Maestro del Palazzo* in the Vatican. He withdrew little, but strengthened and clarified much. The Church authorities were apparently quite happy about it all.

For some readers, this makes Montaigne suspect. Yet from the outset he condemned those who presumed to judge the Church and her teaching by their own standards or by natural reason. To judge God and his ways by human standards is stupid. Take the case of miracles. To know what is or is not a miracle by human reason you would have to know 'the bounds of the will of God and of the power of our mother Nature'. But the 'power of Nature' is 'infinite'. So to judge miracles by the standards of mankind is madness (*folie*), as the title of Chapter 27 of Book I states. Montaigne had come to believe that no point of doctrine should be conceded to schismatics or protestants. Apparently minor concessions, which he had once thought not to matter, turned out to be vital: 'We must either submit ourselves totally to the authority of our ecclesiastical polity or have nothing at all to do with it.' Christians have no right to decide on their own 'how much obedience they owe the Church' (I. 38). But without her catholicity, her universality, the Church is nothing. The true Church is not local or national and does not vary from place to place or from time to time. Only protestants or schismatics chop and change. Truth is one and the same everywhere and for ever.

As he wrote in another context: 'the ultimate perfection is to add constancy' (II. 2, p. 18).

Montaigne is the authentic voice of post-Tridentine rigour. There is no room for compromise of any kind over religious truth.

2. The body and the Church

The Roman Catholic Church found a place for joyful contemplation; it was as a privileged ecstasy for privileged souls. The mass of Christians must come to terms with their bodies. Montaigne had no patience with those who would try to make all Catholic Christians into saintly contemplatives.

> Those who, in recent years, have wished to build up for us so contemplative and non-material a religious exercise should not be astonished if there are those who think that it would have slipped and melted through their fingers if it did not keep a hold among us as a mark, sign and means of division, of faction, rather than for itself (III. 8, p. 186).

That can hardly be a condemnation, as some editions say, of 'leaders of the Reformation'. Montaigne would not have classed them as 'factions among us' nor dubbed them 'contemplatives'. He is condemning a party within his own Church, associated with an *exercice de religion* which did not give the body its due. These exercises did not work; but they did mark their devotees out as partisan. A faction was trying to foist on to the Church an excessively spiritualised soul-centred worship. (The context does not seem to fit the Jesuits and Loyola's spiritual exercises.)

It was not only ordinary sensual men who found such immaterial extremes excessive: so did celibate Sorbonne theologians. Rabelais and others had turned the wine drunk at high table and gaudy into a proverbial saying: *vin théologal*. Montaigne defended the *Magistri Nostri*: having spent their mornings working seriously and conscientiously, they deserved to dine well. In that way first soul and then body have their due. A good conscience makes a good sauce (III. 13, p. 420). Where most Christians are concerned, the right thing to do is to avoid giving comfort and satisfaction to only one of our two constituent parts.

3. Sebond's ecstasy: the risk of heresy

This conclusion is in keeping with Montaigne's growing distrust of ecstasy and spiritual rapture. Ecstasies are at the root of the Church's experience, but they are subjects of concern and scrutiny, since important heresies derive from claims to ecstatic revelation and from claims of enthusiasts to have found union with God. In the early Church there had been Montanism; in the

mediaeval and Renaissance Church, Beghardism. These heresies were still felt to be very much a danger – enemies accused Erasmus of both of them. Particularly to be watched was any claim that the soul was made 'one' with God. A privileged soul may seek a kind of union with God, but not assimilation – union, not an absorption which would make it 'one' with a God who absorbs its identity.

Montaigne knew this; without warning he recast an interesting passage in his version of Sebond's *Theologia Naturalis*. By doing so he avoided praising even true ecstasy in terms which time had made open to suspicion. Sebond wrote:

> Oh! How close man comes to God! What assimilation, what unity, what goodness of God!

God's word goes straight from his heart to the heart of Man:

> And since there is nothing nearer to God than his Word, he completely draws the heart and soul of man to God whence he came, and makes the heart of man one with the heart of God.

In Montaigne's version all talk of assimilation, unity and oneness goes; this censoring of possibly heretical excesses took place well before the *Essays* were begun, and serves to remind us that Montaigne had a sophisticated theological awareness of the dangers involved when ecstasy got out of hand.[1]

[1] *Theologia naturalis*, chapter 216: *Ecce quanta propinquitas hominis ad Deum, quanta assimilatio, quanta unitas, quanta Dei bonitas, quia verbum quod exit, immediatemente de corde Dei, intrat cor hominis. Et nihil propinquius Deo quam verbum eius, ideo totaliter trahit cor hominis et animam ad Deum, unde exit, et facit cor hominis unum cum corde Dei.*

With that compare Montaigne's rendering (*La Theologie naturelle*, Paris, 1569, p. 251v): 'Voyez la bonté de nostre createur, & l'estroicte societé qu'il daigne dresser avec l'homme. La parole qui part de son coeur et de sa bouche entre en nostre coeur & en nostre ame: d'autant qu'à mesme qu'elle part de luy, elle emporte avec soy son coeur, son intention, & sa volonté, & vient loger en nous, ainsi honorablement accompagnée, il advient qu'elle moyenne un tres-heureux & tres-salutaire meslange & conjonction du coeur de nostre createur avec le nostre, et de nostre volonté avec la sienne. Et attendu qu'il n'y a rien de si près à Dieu que sa parole, il s'ensuit encore, qu'eschauffant & embrazant nostre coeur & nostre ame d'une saincte amour, elle les esleve & pousse contremont jusques à Dieu, duquel elle est partie, & les attache & coust à sa saincte divinité d'un noeud inviolable.'

A rendering as cautiously free as that betrays a keen awareness of the possibly heretical implications of Sebond's doctrine at this point.

Montaigne was not the kind of philosopher who 'practised dying' in ecstasy; nor was he the kind of Christian who sought religious strength, comfort or knowledge from enthusiastic ecstasies outside the direction of the Church. For him, the Church reigned supreme. Natural reason was fallible; experience was too; revelation needed the Church to interpret both meaning and application.

What Montaigne wanted to know was what Man is – and he wanted to know it from human sources and natural reason; the Church could not help him. He found his answer in his own highly original, indeed revolutionary, use of form and matter as conceived by Aristotle. He was helped to his conclusions by his deep distrust of ecstasy. If man is body and soul – i.e. matter and form – should we not keep them both together if we want to know what Man is? If Man is form and matter, firmly wedded one to the other, psychological knowledge alone is just as inadequate as purely physiological knowledge.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Whole Form of Man

1. Physics or metaphysics?

The Church resolved problems about God and man raised by natural reason – in the *Essays* or anywhere else. Its power to resolve was not limitless. The Church established universities and afforded a large place within them to human inquiry. The moral system by which men lived was not an ecclesiastical monopoly. The four cardinal virtues are Justice, Prudence, Fortitude and Temperance; they do not derive from the Bible, from the Fathers or from Councils of the Church, but from Aristotle. They were taken to be 'natural' – ultimate moral platitudes, not open to doubt. The Church recognised them and added three theological virtues (Faith, Hope and Charity).

The Church had no power to decide whether or not there were inhabitants in the New World; that had to be decided empirically. But the Church did decide whether or not the inhabitants, once discovered, were fully human.

Montaigne conceived of philosophy, much as the Romans did, with a bias towards practical ethics. He wanted to get on with the job of living – and learning how to die (II. 10, p. 102). To do that he had to find out more about Man.

Aristotle's *Metaphysics* made it plain that the mere accumulation of experiences does not amount to knowledge and so cannot, of itself, lead to wisdom. Montaigne did not expect to find conclusions anywhere in Aristotle's writings, but he made good use of his philosophy; not only does *De l'experience* start off with its echo of *Metaphysics* I. 1 but arguments known from Books I, III and VII of *Metaphysics* form the background of his own argument. Yet Aristotle was, after all, only a learned author. 'Authors' are indeed held up in honour, in contrast to the

glossators and commentators who seemed to have the contemporary stage to themselves (III. 13, p. 365); but no man has final authority. Men are *autheurs vains et irresolus* – empty authorities who resolve nothing.

The trouble is that even good authors can only tell you about their own experience – and such experience is outside ourselves. Something may be learned from outside experience, but it will not take you far. To be useful, experience must be our own inside experience:

> Whatever fruit we may glean from experience, that which we draw from outside examples will hardly contribute much even to our elementary education, unless we profit from the experience we can have of ourselves; that is more familiar to us and certainly enough to teach us what we need (III. 13, p. 371).

Then, with what amounts to a punch-line in a chapter written with a sustained concern for Aristotle's writings, Montaigne brings the section to a close:

> I study myself more than any other subject. That is my metaphysics; that is my physics (*C'est ma metaphysique, c'est ma physique*) (III. 13, p. 371).

Every man is his own Aristotle.

2. Forma mentis

Montaigne did not say that he never studied Aristotle but that his study of even the *Physics* and *Metaphysics* took second place to his study of himself. To study yourself need not be limiting: quite the reverse. For Montaigne it leads firmly back to the forms of Aristotle and scholastic theology and then on to Man himself.

Montaigne deepened his wisdom by a study of his character. In Greek, the word *character* meant the die-stamp on coins; it was also used to describe groups of different people having, as it were, the same stamp. In Latin *character* was rendered by *forma* which had a wider sense, being used both for a group and for individual people with the characteristics of that group. This sense of *forma* merges into the *forms* of Aristotle, into form as distinct from matter and into soul as the form of Man. All these senses are found in *forme* as Montaigne uses it.

The form which is 'character' is not the same as complexion or humour. It is more fundamental than that, and closer to *forma* in the expression *forma mentis* – the cast of a man's mind. It is the nearest thing to permanence in man.

Montaigne studied himself, observed himself and brought his reading and experience to bear upon himself. As a result he began to understand better his own form – the character of his own soul – but not until he came to terms with the fact that it was conjoined with his own body, in a union which alone made him a particular man.

The form which he discovered in himself and which gave him some characteristics which, in this world of change, are virtually permanent, he called his master mould, his *forme maistresse*. He discovered that, in his case, it gave him an inclination to doubt and to acknowledge his ignorance. He wrote of surrendering himself 'to doubt and uncertainty and to his *maistresse forme*, which is ignorance' (I. 50, p. 387).

The exact relation of this *forme maistresse* to *forme* as soul is not spelled out, but each man has a form peculiar to himself. No one can change it completely; everyone, if he tries, can examine his own: 'Nobody who listens to himself can fail to uncover a *forme* of his own, a *forme maistresse* which resists education and the storm of passions which oppose it' (III. 2, p. 29).

When Montaigne began his chapter on repentance with two allusions to the notion of form he was preparing his readers for what was to come:

> (B) Others form Man; I give an account of Man and sketch a picture of a particular one of them who is very badly formed ... (III. 2).

But Montaigne came to realise that, badly formed as he was, his was the only form of Man he could ever know at first hand. He was the *only* example of individuation within the human species that he could study. If he could not get to know himself, he would never get to know Man.[1]

[1] Sanchez is more sceptical than Montaigne here: 'I know, you say, that while the same form remains the individual is always the same'. He counters this argument by stressing that the same form does not 'inform' a body in the same way, precisely because of the *perpetua mutatio* of the body (*Quod nihil scitur*, p. 45).

3. Honesty

To get to know the form of himself as a particular man he must first listen to himself. He must then give an account of himself – not a partial one but one which shows him roundly as Man:

> (C) Authors communicate themselves to the public by some peculiar mark foreign to themselves; I – the first ever to do so – by my universal being as Michel de Montaigne, not as grammarian, poet or jurisconsult (III. 2, p. 21).

Montaigne realised that there was far more to knowing a man than simply knowing his profession. He intended to explore, and then convey to the world, his 'universal being'. By his *estre universel* Montaigne means the whole of his being, body and soul. No part of his life can be left out of account if the picture he is sketching is to be a true one. Hence the importance of his protestations of truth. It is puzzling that even some of those who like Montaigne believe that he was a liar.

Montaigne saw how vital truth was for him. Lying is an ungentlemanly vice, but his hatred for it goes beyond that: 'Truly, lying is an accursed vice. We are men, and hold one to another, by speech (*parolle*).' If we knew the 'horror and weight' of lying we would burn people for that rather than for other crimes. Montaigne, of all people, talks of burning in an age when stakes and pyres had seldom been more frequent – a measure of his detestation of the one vice that could sap the very foundations of wisdom (I. 9, p. 40).

> (A) Lying is a villein's vice, a vice which an Ancient paints shamefully when he says that it gives testimony to contempt for God together with fear of men. It is not possible to show more richly the horror of it, its vileness and its disorderliness ... Our understanding is conducted by speech alone; anyone who falsifies it, betrays public society. It is the only tool by means of which we communicate our wishes and our thoughts; it is our soul's interpreter (II. 18, p. 456).

Montaigne's aversion to lying does not mean that everything he wrote may be taken straight. There is his humour for one thing; in that vein he has to be taken with a grain of salt. He suffered from the anguished, suicidal pain of stones in the

kidney; he found arguments, both playful and serious, to help him bear that pain. Some of his arguments here and throughout the *Essays* are akin to rhetorical declamations – a *genre* which leaves an author free to exaggerate and sport with ideas. He frequently argues on both sides of a question or else marshals strong arguments for a case he is later to undermine. He can also be ironical and paradoxical:

> (B) Feeling you to be tense and prepared on one side, I make the case for the other with all the care I can – not in order to bind your judgment but so as to enlighten it.

Readers of Renaissance paradoxes know the importance of context (cf. III. 11, p. 318).

But Montaigne knew that lying or prudent ambiguity were not for him. If he consciously lied we might as well not bother to read him: saying one thing and doing another was no good; 'it cannot apply to those who relate themselves as I do' (III. 9, p. 265).

4. The whole form of mankind

Montaigne has his master form. Others have theirs. What are the links between these particular forms and the form of the species Man? What constitutes common humanity? Is there any way of getting from Man to men, from species to a solid, certain knowledge of 'particulars'? Montaigne suggests that there is not. Indeed his quiet revolution lay in his interpretating the *Metaphysics* in such a way as to turn long-established notions on their heads. He took an Aristotelian commonplace, widely accepted in Latin scholastic philosophy, and eventually started from the other end – the end philosophers wanted to reach. This commonplace concerns individuation within species.

A good way to get at Montaigne's assumptions is through the Latin Aristotle of Renaissance schools and colleges. We find that, to account for the existence of 'particulars' – individuals within a species – Aristotle used the analogy of bronze spheres. Out of a mass of bronze you can make any number of bronze spheres. Bronze is the matter; sphere is the form which moulds it. Bronze spheres are alike in being spherical; they are different in that they are made from particular and individual lumps taken from that mass of bronze. Mankind corresponds to this

analogy but with significant differences.

As a species, Man corresponds to the general notion 'Bronze Sphere'. But a particular man corresponds to 'one particular bronze sphere' – or, as it was normally put, to '*this* bronze sphere', *haec aenea sphaera*.

This is where Aristotle departed radically from Plato. Plato saw an individual man as being composed of matter from this world and of an imprint derived from the form Man in the divine mind. To understand one man, therefore, you had to understand the ideal form of Man. To understand Man your soul could draw on pre-natal memories or else on revelation. These memories and revelations may be your own or other people's; in either case the knowledge conveyed originated outside this world.

Aristotle cut out the divine mind. An individual man is not a 'particular' because of his body (his matter) alone any more than a bronze sphere is a 'particular' because of its bronze (its matter) alone. One bronze sphere is *haec aenea sphaera* in the sense that it is 'this (one particular) bronze sphere': that is, it is one particular case of the form Sphere moulding matter. The whole of 'this sphere', form *and* matter, is the particular.

So too with a particular man. Montaigne is not a 'particular' – an individual man – because of his body alone. He is this particular *man* – one-soul-in-one-body: that is, he is one particular case of the form of the species Man imposed upon matter.

Montaigne did not feel that he had the gift of explaining the elements of a subject – and questions of form and matter were, in all conscience, elementary enough. In the Renaissance, glossed editions of the *Metaphysics* explained it all from the very outset. Montaigne used the word *forme* throughout the *Essays* in ways which show that he largely accepted Aristotle's theory of individuation, but in an idiosyncratic way.

The *Essays* describe one particular man, Michel de Montaigne, but they do not treat him as one odd creature in the void. To this study of himself Montaigne links his interest in the species Man and in human moral wisdom and imperatives. Where this cornerstone of the *Essays* is concerned he is clear and unambiguous, using the appropriate simple, though technical, terms to explain what he is doing. 'You can link the whole of moral philosophy to a lowly private life just as to one made of richer stuff.' This is because (B) 'Every man bears the *forme entiere* (the whole form)

of the human condition' (III. 2, p. 21).

If this assertion is not true, Montaigne's project collapses and the *Essays* make no sense. If it is true, it is arguably the most important sentence Montaigne ever wrote. Not that there is anything unusual in the assertion as such; that the whole form of the human race is to be found in every single man and woman is the teaching of Thomist theology and so, in a special sense, the teaching of Montaigne's Church. We may note the categorical nature of Montaigne's assertion. There is no tentative sceptical hesitation here. This is an issue on which he did not need to keep an open mind. He had found it to be true – with startling and unexpected consequences. And he could find it true by his chosen method of human inquiry, since Aristotle's notion of specific form does not demand any knowledge originating from outside this world.[2]

[2] Useful definitions may be found in Signoriello: *Lexicon peripateticum philosophico-theologicum*. Cf.s.v.*Forma*: 'Form is communicable and universal'. Aquinas' commentary on Peter Lombard's sentences is cited to prove that it is the capacity to be received in many individuals which gives form its property of universality (*atque eo quod 'in pluribus est receptibilis, rationem universalitatis habet'*); 'e.g. *humanitas*, which is the form of Man, can be common to many; hence the differences which proceed from form lead not to a diversity of individuals or to numerical diversity but to a diversity of species'. Although form is itself both *communicabilis* and *universalis*, individuation proceeds from the matter to which it is joined in any given case; 'for example, the *humanitas* in Socrates is proper to Socrates, not to any man, in that it is circumscribed by one set of material conditions not another (*ex eo quod ab hisce, et non aliis conditionibus materiae conscribitur*'. For those who accept this, there is no reason why Montaigne's own form should not be both universal *per se* yet circumscribed by its matter and so proper to him as Michel de Montaigne.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Fair Forms and Botched Forms

1. Aristotle and the glossators

Aristotle gave Montaigne the means of justifying his study of himself. If there were nothing but an infinite number of individual people – if the human race were nothing but infinite singulars and particulars – then nothing could be known about Man in general and no wisdom could be drawn from a study of even a great many particular cases. Aristotle overcame this difficulty by teaching (like Montaigne) that, in the case of all the particular individuals within any species, the whole form of the species is found, in its entirety, in each and every one of them.

Take two particular men – Aristotle calls them Callias and Socrates. Callias and Socrates both have the form of Man. But it is the union of the form Man within their separate bodies which makes each of them '*this* man' Callias and '*this* man' Socrates: 'The whole of this form, together with this flesh and these bones (*tota vera jam talis forma in his carnibus et ossibus*), is Callias, say, or Socrates.'

These men are different because they are moulded out of distinct lumps of matter. They remain of one species because form is indivisible – *indivisibilis est forma*. Every man has this indivisible form within his individual person.

Antonio Scaynus in his commentary on the *Metaphysics* sums it up clearly. There can be no knowledge if singulars remain singulars. But because 'form is everlasting and universal in all eternally existing species', knowledge of singulars can be had from their universal form.

It is at this point that the analogy with bronze spheres breaks down in the case of Man. If you say 'sphere' you can mean either

the species Sphere or this particular sphere. 'That is because individual spheres do not have particular names by which they may be called, whereas in the human species individual men do have particular names: Socrates, for example, or Plato, and so on.'

Each particular man can be identified by a personal name. It does not prevent him from having, in his own self, the entire universal form, Man. 'If he did not, he would not be a man.' That is why a knowledge of particulars can be derived from a knowledge of species and specific forms.

But if that is true, is not the contrary true too? Montaigne saw this with blinding clarity. If he painted the whole of his being, his *estre universel*, as Michel de Montaigne, he could gain access to man as universal in the philosophical sense of that term – access, that is, to that 'universal form' which, when joined to the matter of individual bodies, makes every man and woman (in ways which are teased out in the *Essays*) into a particular human being. In other words he could find out what Man is.

The old analogies are still useful as a way of following what Montaigne was doing. If you wanted to find out about Bronze Sphere as a universal, you would not study only the sphericalness of one or more individual spheres, nor would you study only the bronze: you would study an example or two of the bronze as moulded into spheres, the unity which is spherical bronze. So, too, Montaigne studied more than his form apart or his matter apart; he studied Michel de Montaigne, a person consisting in a form espoused to a body and so enjoying his *essence* – his 'being' as a man:

> (C) It is not my deeds that I am writing down, it is me – my *essence* (II.6, p. 60).

2. Botched forms and individual forms

At this point Montaigne had to tread with care. Aristotle's teaching about forms, interpreted in ways which pleased Nominalists and terrified Realists, had given rise to quarrels so disruptive of Christian unity that the Church had intervened. On 19 December 1513 the decree *Apostolici Regiminis* was promulgated at the Fifth Lateran Council. The Aristotelian teaching that the whole of the form of a species is present in

every individual of that species could mean that there was only one form shared between them all, or that all forms are identical. And since the form of Man, his *humanitas*, is soul, that could mean that there was only one kind of soul – or even only one soul – for the whole of human kind. The Fifth Lateran Council anathematised those who asserted that the intellective soul is 'one in all men' (*unicam in cunctis hominibus*).

Philosophers, Aristotelian or otherwise, were ordered to teach orthodox psychology from their chairs – an extraordinary case of theologians over-stepping limits. The Gallican Church did not accept the catholicity of Lateran V. But Montaigne was wise not to remain ambiguous on such a point.

He found ways of keeping the universality while emphasising the individuality. He himself had a botched form of Man; if he were to be improved he would have to be re-formed – moulded again. Some great men were better forms of Man. But all were forms of Man, not of beasts or angels.

> I can condemn my *forme universelle* and beg God that I be re-formed and that he should pardon my natural weakness. But it seems to me that I should no more call that repentance than that I should call repentance my displeasure at not being an Angel or Cato (III. 2, p. 32).

The point is that angels have a higher form than men, while Cato was one of the best formed men the world has seen. (Although Montaigne does not mention it, Dante thought that Cato was the natural man who could best represent God.)

3. Angels and Cato

Men who live their lives according to the order of Nature must accept that they are not souls. They are more – and less – than that.

Christianity, under the influence of Greece, had hesitated. Rome did so no longer. A man's form (his soul) is akin to an angelic spirit. Unlike an angel it has to learn to live – in this life and for eternity – with a body. In this world at least, the body makes any man akin to the beasts; yet he is not a beast, any more than he is an angel. His human individuality requires, now and forever, both body and soul. So, on those occasions when

Montaigne alludes to human beings as *formes* and *ames* (souls) it is a powerful hyperbole; he is claiming that, as far as these particular people are concerned, their forms are so excellent that the body plays a strikingly subordinate rôle in their individual personality. He himself was quite at home with his status as a man, neither beast nor ethereal spirit. This is why he rarely repents and why, at times, he nevertheless yearns for a total reformation: '(C) my conscience is content with itself – not as the conscience of an angel, not as the conscience of a horse, but as the conscience of a man' (III. 2, p. 23). Angels and horses have an easier time than a man, crawling twixt heaven and earth.

Montaigne called the Younger Cato one of the *sainctes formes*. The beauty of his virtue (which it is the duty of decent men to paint as beautiful as it was) produced transports of admiration – ecstatic wonder: 'It is not unfitting that emotion should transport us under the influence of such holy forms.' Later, Montaigne would keep the respect but moderate the transport.

Socrates too was right to accept his unjust condemnation to death, keeping unsullied 'so holy (*saincte*) an image of the human form'.

Saincte – despite the translations just given – means not holy in a Christian sense but 'worthy of pious admiration'. Montaigne was never tempted to exclaim, like a character in Erasmus nearly did, 'O Saint Socrates, pray for us'. Socrates was not perfect. He was a man who had improved his 'vicious kink' (*vicieux pli*) by reason, and whose virtue was serene and constant. It is as reasonable man that he has the edge even over Cato: Cato 'ravishes our judgment': Socrates 'wins it over'. When great-souled virtue is extolled in poetry, ecstasy is 'not unbecoming' in us readers (*ne nous messieroit pas*). Cato shows how high 'human virtue and firmness can reach'. But even in these cases it is better to be won over than to be enraptured (I. 37, p. 303; III. 12, p. 345). These 'transports' become an obstacle to Montaigne's objectives and are soon to be played down. But even when they have full play, as here, what transports the ecstatic, ravished reader is his own ordinate emotion when confronted by the highest human greatness beautifully portrayed.

4. The soul at home

Here we come back to our ecstasies. The form of man is his soul; it can be quietly at home in its body or off on fantastic jaunts. As we would expect, Montaigne insists on judging a man when he is 'at home':

> (B) Vicious souls are often incited to do good from some outside source; in the same way, good souls may do evil. We should judge them from their settled state, when they are *chez-elles* – at home – if ever they are so (III. 2, p. 28).

A man is at home – *apud se* in Latin – when his soul is in the body. When it is not in the body, the word that springs to mind is *furiosus*, in some sense, good or bad.

By insisting on this, Montaigne justifies his full portrayal of his *estre universel*, his soul-at-home-in-his-body. Anything else would be more, or less, than human.

5. Human brotherhood

Montaigne, studying the whole of his being, his *estre universel*, in the light of his reading and converse, is like a philosopher acquiring knowledge of the species Bronze Sphere by taking one fairly imperfect example – the 'this bronze sphere' that he knows most intimately – and comparing it with a variety of other ones, some of which are in far better shape.

What did Montaigne and La Boëtie talk about in their glorious intimacy? Potentially dangerous notions about the brotherhood of man, for one thing. Such thoughts led La Boëtie to prefer doges and senators to monarchs. These political conclusions arose from thoughts on Aristotelian forms and moulds. La Boëtie wrote:

> Nature, the Minister of God, the Governor of Men, has made us all of the same form, and, it seems, with the same mould, so that we can all mutually know each other as companions, or rather as brothers ... This good Mother Nature ... has fashioned us all on the same pattern, so that each one can see himself and, as it were, recognise himself in the other.[1]

[1] La Boëtie, *De la Servitude Volontaire*, ed. P. Bonnefon, 1892, pp. 15-17: 'La

Armed with such ideas Montaigne could sympathetically understand each and every human being, friend and foe alike. And that included both sexes once he concluded that men and women are 'cast in the same mould' (III. 5, end).

6. The greater forms

Concern with the brotherhood of man can be reductive. In Montaigne's case it was constructively so.

The greater forms can be, in varying ways, debunked and reduced to the common level; Montaigne resisted attempts to level down humanity at its highest. But great men remain great ... men. Cato's greatness was like that of soldiers sallying forth; that of Socrates was stable and constant:

> (B) He was always one and the same; he mounted to the ultimate point of vigour not by sallies but by complexion (III. 12, p. 323).

This raises the question of the temperament of Socrates. His complexion was melancholic. That was never in doubt. Yet was it the kind of melancholy which Ficino found in Aristotle's *Problems*, a special disposition towards divinely enraptured genius, or was it the kind of melancholy which Montaigne championed as his own? He preferred the melancholy which kept the soul at home in the body; according to Ficino's interpretation of the *Problems*, Socrates' melancholy sent his soul soaring aloft in ecstatic rapture and made him prone to enthusiasms brought on by his special daemon. Montaigne had to deal with that. If Socrates had a daemon, he was not simply the wisest form and pattern set before humanity; he was superhuman: a man inspired.[2]

Montaigne tackled the problem in several ways. Often he simply ignored the daemon. Socrates was 'the man most worthy to be known and to be presented to the world as an example'.

Nature, la ministre de Dieu, la Gouvernante des hommes, nous a tous faits de mesme forme et, comme il semble, à mesme moule, afin de nous entreconnoistre tous pour compagnons ou plustost pour freres. [...] Cette bonne mere Nature nous a tous figurés à mesme patron, afin que chascun se peut mirer et quasi reconnoistre l'un dans l'autre.'

[2] Cf. Ficino, *Opera Omnia*, Paris, 1641; I, p. 485, etc.

Happily we know him from the accounts of Plato and Xenophon, 'the most clear-sighted man there has ever been'. The words that are applied to the model of mankind and his character include *vulgaire* (popular) *naturel*, *ordinaire*, *commun*; he brought philosophy down from heaven and set it among men. In his defence against his accusers he used no art nor rare erudition: '(B) He did a great favour to human nature by showing how much it can do by itself' (III. 12, p. 325).

Montaigne's next remark would be surprising – even comic – if he had not prepared us for the brotherhood of man: 'Each of us is richer than he thinks' – we could all be more like Socrates if we tried.

Quite early in his quest Montaigne had tackled the daemon head on. His method, as always, was to examine himself. The daemon of Socrates was 'perhaps a certain thrust of the will' which presented itself to him without awaiting the counsel of his arguments: 'It is likely that, in a soul like his (well purified and prepared by the continual exercise of wisdom and virtue) inclinations such as these, albeit bold and undigested, were nevertheless important and worthy to be followed.' Then comes Montaigne's appeal to common experience, especially his own:

> (B) Everybody can feel in himself some image of such agitations (C) of a prompt, vehement, fortuitous opinion. It is open to me to allow them some authority – to me who allow little enough to human prudence. (B) And I have had some agitations – (C) equally weak in reason yet violent in persuasion or dissuasion and which were more ordinary in the case of Socrates – (B) by which I have allowed myself to be carried away so usefully and so successfully, that they could have been judged to comport something of divine inspiration (I. 11, end).

With that tortuous and reworked sentence Montaigne made Socrates a purer individual than himself but not, as it were, a creature of a different species.

As for the statement that these vehement agitations 'could have been judged' to have some connexion with divine inspiration, it does not contain even the shadow of a suggestion that they ought to be so judged; Montaigne is explaining how even men like Socrates, Plato and Xenophon could not unreasonably make the mistake which they did and so take inner convictions for divine promptings.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Body

1. Wondrously corporeal

Man is body and soul. Platonising Christianity gave the body a low place in the union. Ascetics strove to avoid the 'contagion' of the body; philosophers and theologians advised how to tame the body; saints, like philosophers, practised dying in ecstatic trances during which, as far as it was permitted to do so, the soul left the body behind. But the glummer Platonisers did not have it all their own way. St Francis of Assisi dubbed his stubborn old body Brother Ass. As for the Aristotelians, they held that there is a natural union between body and soul. Some condemned this particular conception of the union of these two elements of man but others developed theories which were not dissimilar. For St Bonaventura there was a *colligantia naturalis* – 'natural mutual bond' between the perfect soul and the perfectible body.

In Christian philosophy Man was often regarded as a union of two main elements. These were variously called body and soul, body and spirit or matter and form. It was also normal, at the same time, to follow St Paul and see man as consisting of three elements in a rising hierarchy of body, soul and spirit. This was a marked departure from the classical trilogy of body, spirit and soul. (All of these senses – including the classical ones – can be found in Renaissance writers.) Montaigne seems content with the simpler concept in which man has two 'master parts': body and soul (or body and spirit).

It was widely assumed that the soul (or spirit) could have a good effect on the body, but that the body could have only a polluting effect on the soul. Montaigne rejected that on the grounds of his own experience: 'it is always Man we have to deal with, Man, whose condition is wondrously corporeal (*merveilleusement corporelle* (III. 8, p. 186).

Erasmus, despite marked Platonising tendencies, had already protested against age-old metaphors for the body which made it no more than the soul's tool, dwelling-place or prison. One of the speakers in his colloquy, *The Religious Banquet*, raised the question quite aggressively: 'Whilst we are amply feeding our souls we must not overlook their *collegae*' (their 'fellows', or 'partners'). When asked who these *collegae* were, he replied: 'Why, our bodies. They are partners of our souls aren't they? I prefer that term to tool or dwelling-place or prison' (*Opera*, 1703-06, I. 680A).

Montaigne went further: the body and soul should be like a happily married couple. For him, as for Sebond, the Christian marriage is a loving, stable union of unequals, each of whom helps the other, each contributing something unique. Man's traditional superiority to woman does not distort this loving union. Mutual love and obligation bring priceless gifts to both. The body and soul remain 'married' until death – and will find each other again in the general resurrection. Death is 'the great divorce' (C.S. Lewis chose that as the title for a book). Paul declared that men should love their wives 'as their own bodies', and Bonaventura drew the conclusion that bodies should be loved as wives (*In Sententias* 3, 4). Montaigne was in good company.

2. Debts to Sebond

Sebond made Montaigne see marriage as an image of the mutual love binding superior soul to lesser body; Sebond drew his inspiration from Raimond Lull. Lull, Sebond and Montaigne all came from the same part of Europe; was there a tradition of such teaching in south-west France, centred perhaps on Toulouse?

We are all *merveilleusement corporels*; the wonder and the vigour of that assertion bear the authentic ring of a personal discovery. Yet it was, in part at least, the flowering of a seed planted by Sebond. In the *Theologia naturalis* Sebond explained that the soul loved both God and its body:

> ... because God coupled the soul to the body and the body to the soul, and bound the body to the soul and made a natural marriage between them.

The soul knew that the body was made for it.

Montaigne turned this passage into French very freely, showing the direction in which his mind was already working: the bond linking body and soul is called 'marvellous' when nothing in the text requires it:

> Now God attached the soul by a marvellous bond, and the body to it, so closely that he made from them a unique partnership and, as it were, a natural marriage.[1]

Sebond (in Montaigne's version) insisted on the close partnership of body and soul and on their 'happy marriage'. Both gained from this. The body is 'enriched', the soul 'embellished'. The powers which the soul gains from its lesser partner are called 'corporeal, carnal and organic' – not in contempt but because they 'are attached to our body, our flesh and our organs.' They 'work through our members'; their 'form and vigour' depend on 'the state and health of those organs' (ch. 105, p. 112r).

The debt to Sebond went deeper. Sebond may have prompted Montaigne to study and love himself as an essential step on the way to truth and the love of God. Using language and concepts derived from Aristotle and scholasticism, Sebond maintained that an individual 'must first love himself *sicut hunc hominem, et non tanquam hominem* (as 'this man', not as Man in general). Montaigne translated this with vigorous simplicity: individual man must love himself 'as John or Peter, not as Man' (*comme Jean, ou Pierre, et non comme homme*). As Tom, Dick or Harry we would say; 'as Michel de Montaigne' is what he says in the *Essays*.[2]

In the end Montaigne became more positive than Sebond about the joys of the body lightened by the spirit, but he never abandoned completely the man who pointed the way to so fruitful a conclusion.

Other influences supported Montaigne in his acceptance of the body, including the mediaeval concept *naturalia non sunt turpia*, 'what is natural is not vile'. He was also influenced by Cicero in Book 4 of *On the Ends of Good and Evil*. Erasmus helped too; he never tired of preaching the dignity of the matrimonial embrace: 'No part of the body is dishonourable; God created all things good and beautiful' (*Opera omnia*, 1703-06; I. 718D).

But most fruitful of all was Sebond's advice near the beginning of his treatise: 'Let a man begin by knowing himself and his nature if he wishes to find out truth about himself.' ... Man is 'outside himself' (*hors de luy*). Let him 'come back to himself and return home ... Let him be brought back and led back home' (*Theologie naturelle* 5v-6r). Sebond does not mean by those words exactly what Montaigne does. But the identity of expression is striking.

Such lessons, suitably adapted, Montaigne never forgot. For him they were yet another way of warning ordinary men against most kinds of ecstasy.

3. Platonists, Averroists, Realists, Nominalists ... and Ascetics

Montaigne avoided tenchicalities. He did not seek quarrels with out-and-out Platonists, with rationalist followers of the Arabian philosopher Averroës, nor with Realists or Nominalists. He owes something to all of them. His debts to Aristotelian scholarship are particularly clear. What he has to say about the composite nature of individual man as body plus soul, for example, fits quite snugly into some of the more influential interpretations of *Metaphysics* 1035b current in his day.[3]

[1] *Theologia naturalis*, chapter 155 (p. 255): '... quia copulavit animam cum corpore, et corpus cum anima, et alligavit corpus animae, et fecit quoddam naturale matrimonium ...' Montaigne (p. 163r of his translation) renders this as: 'Or Dieu l'a attachée au corps d'un lien merveilleux, et le corps à elle si estroictement, qu'il en a dressé une societé singuliere et comme un naturel marriage.'

[2] *Theologie naturelle*, chapter 145, p. 153v; *Theologia naturalis*, p. 238.

[3] Fonseca develops at length the Aristotelian opinions resumed in his Index as *Naturas universales esse suis singularibus*. That is the doctrine underlying Montaigne's assertion that 'chascun porte en soy la forme entiere de l'humaine condition' – which is, indeed, a straight-forward application of it to the human race, each singular (individual person) of which carries within himself the whole form of the human species, *humanitas*. Montaigne at times seems to write as a 'Realist' – as when he asked ironically in the 'Apologia for Sebond': Do you think that God has used up 'toutes ses formes et toutes ses idées en cet ouvrage.' (*Essais*, II. 12, EM, p. 257). One of the parts of Fonseca most relevant to Montaigne is his commentary on *Metaphysics* 1035b (VII. 10. 15), *Homo verò et equus* (Fonseca, III, p. 345), a passage of central importance for Aristotle's anti-platonic doctrine of forms and, I believe, in its Latin version, the basis of

But where does all this leave those Christian saints who do rise above the limitations of their bodies? The full force of this question does not seem to have struck Montaigne until he came to write his final comments on the Bordeaux copy. Had friendly theologians or Roman censors raised the matter with him? If so his reply is coherent and cogent: ordinary men are, indeed, body and soul conjoined and ought to remain so. God's grace may modify this truth, enabling a few souls to treat their bodies' necessities with benign neglect. But even they do not lose all contact with humanity nor humanity with them. They can be appreciated imaginatively by that vast majority who are not touched by special grace. Even *l'homme moyen sensuel* may catch a momentary glimpse of the joy that is granted to a constant few.

The chapter on the Younger Cato begins with a disclaimer: Montaigne does not judge all men by his own limitations. In the final version he strengthened it, taking quite a few words to do so. He himself was 'engaged', he said, 'to one form'. He did not, 'like everybody else', bind others to that form; he was more inclined to acknowledge differences than similarities. Take the case of genuine celibates: although not a sexually continent man himself, Montaigne recognised the reality of the continence of Feuillants and Capuchins: imagination could even help him to put himself in their place for a while. This enabled him to see that great human beings should be judged apart, not from 'common examples' (I. 37, p. 300).

This is a modification of the main tendency of the *Essays*. Socrates, Cato, Epaminondas and others lived virtuous lives

Montaigne's assumptions. Nevertheless Montaigne avoids technicalities and, above all, philosophical contentiousness. What he writes at this point does not require acceptance of the Platonic doctrine of forms, though it does apparently assume the reality of form-in-matter, as in Aristotle. It is however reconcilable with the other key passage of the *Metaphysics* 1033a (VII. 8. 6): 'The completed whole, *this* form, in *these* flesh and bones, is Callias or Socrates, different because of their matter but the same in species, since form is indivisible' (Translated from Bessarion's Latin version).

Fonseca's opinions seem to be close to Montaigne's own assumptions; but Montaigne could also be close to Antonio Scaynus who, having faced the fact that no knowledge could be obtained from singulars alone, as such, believes knowledge to be possible because of the everlasting universal form existing in each particular individual within a species. That is true, he adds, even if universals do not exist outside the mind (*Paraphrases de Prima Philosophia Aristotelis*, Rome, 1587, pp. 117, 287f.).

which, however elevated, are admired in so far as they were anchored in their humanity. Yet true Christian ascetics virtually ignore even some of the necessary appetites of their bodies and so do not cultivate the humanising marriage of body and soul. How can this be? Other major additions do not resolve such tensions until the final pages of the *Essays*. The answer lies in wrong and right attitudes towards ecstasy and in a more complex interpretation of the way in which the 'entire form' of humanity exists in each particular man.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Wisdom

1. Socrates triumphant

Montaigne had many heroes: Alexander the Great, the Younger Cato, Epaminondas, Socrates. All were to be admired, but none was to be followed in all things. Even the greatest of them are eventually shown to have been men with failings. As far as sheer greatness was concerned, Alexander won the prize. His manhood could even stand comparison with the human nature of Christ:

> It is full of reason and piety to take examples from the *humanité* of Christ. He ended his life at the age of thirty-three.

Montaigne adds that 'the greatest man who was simply a man, Alexander', died at the same age (I. 20, p. 104).

The saints as such have no place as examples in the *Essays*, since their holiness, achieved under special grace, takes them out of the natural 'condition' of Man; nevertheless their human aspects and their problems do hover into focus when necessary. In the same way arguments may be advanced to support the Christian religion, despite the fact that Montaigne's own religious faith was based not on argument but on grace. However, detailed theological reasoning would have taken Montaigne beyond the boundaries of the kind of wisdom which he had set himself to seek.

Contemporary writings were criticised, Montaigne tells us, 'for being purely human and philosophical, with no admixture of Theology'. He himself condemned the critics: it is better to keep philosophy and theology apart; 'divine instruction holds its rank

better when apart, as Queen or Governor'. He condemned the opposite fault: it is far too common for theologians to write like humanists (I. 56, p. 415).

Once theology and Christian saints are left aside, the great names of antiquity have the field almost to themselves. When it comes to wisdom, no one rivals Socrates. But his melancholic ecstasies are a drawback; they are acknowledged, only to be regretted. All hint of the divine disappears. When Socrates 'was seen standing one day and night in view of all the Grecian army', it was because he was 'surprised and caught up by some deep thought'. The language remains that of high rapture – *ecstase; surpris et ravi* – but Socrates is no longer shown as praiseworthily practising death, his mind departing from the body in search of spiritual truth. Instead he is seen as the wisest man ever, deep in unimaginable thought. That was not what Socrates was admired for. For two thousand years Socrates' claims to ecstatic revelation had been gratefully accepted as valid. The truth of his teachings was vouched for by these revelatory ecstasies. But Montaigne admired Socrates for mundane virtues – for his moderation; for his hardiness in war; for his patience in face of hunger, poverty and a nagging wife; for his constancy in the ordinary affairs of life. The kind of greatness Socrates had did not stop him enjoying a drink with friends or from playing five-stones with children. He was the supreme example of every sort of ordinary, ordinate human perfection – not because his soul aimed high but because it knew how to keep within human limits.

This would have seemed an odd thing to say of Socrates if you thought of him as Ficino, Erasmus or Rabelais had done.[1]

[1] Montaigne's portrait of Socrates as a man abounding in wisdom within the context of a full, ordinary life was a common one (cf. *Insignum aliquot virorum Icones*, Lyons, J. de Tournes, 1559, pp. 68f). Others besides Montaigne were also questioning the assertion that Socrates' ecstasies were a sign of religious favour. Cf. the Coïmbra Jesuits' commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima*, Cologne, 1603, col. 514: 'Alcibiades in the *Symposium* relates that Socrates, "deep in thought, once stood still, in one place, in the midst of the army, for one whole day and night until sunrise." Since it is not likely that such abstractions from the senses happen because of a miracle, it must be conceded that ecstasy can be produced by a faculty of nature'. It is pointed out, on the authority of Fracastorius, (*lib. 2. de Intellectione*), that melancholics are particularly prone to these natural ecstasies. Such ecstasies can be classified as a 'natural privilege' but are not to be confused with those specially privileged ecstasies produced by divine power.

2. Socrates criticised

In the *Essays* Montaigne subjects even this paragon to discreet criticism in the light of his own experience. As he prepared to bring the *Essays* to a close, Montaigne stressed the moral beauty of those who know how to live a full life 'naturally'; unusual phenomena, including ecstasies such as those of Socrates, haunted his mind. 'The wildest form of illness', he had written, 'is to despise our being (*nostre estre*). If anyone wants to set his soul apart, to free it from the contagion of the body, let him do so boldly (if he can) when his body is feeling ill.'

Montaigne was earnestly playing with words and concepts. 'Contagion' is what Platonising mystics attribute to the body, even when healthy. Montaigne does not. He restricts 'contagion' to illness. The soul might understandably find a sick body 'contagious' and so strive to leave it, but, apart from those 'less distracted' and 'spritely enthusiasms' mentioned earlier, the soul should share in all the pleasures of its healthy body, teach it moderation and *s'y plaire conjugalement*, 'delight in it as if it were wedded to it as a husband' (III. 13, p. 423).

Socrates did not do that all the time, so even he, Philosophy's own teacher, comes in for criticism.

3. Me

We have been told what Socrates thought. Now we are told what 'I' think.

Montaigne believed in progress of a sort – we may be lesser men than the ancients, but we are standing on their shoulders. Once the *moy* has come to the fore Socrates is duly criticised for failing to see something that Montaigne (with the help of Socrates) can now see more clearly. That 'something' is the happy wisdom of avoiding ecstasy and keeping the pleasurable marriage of body and soul in full and continuous activity until the moment of death. This marriage is something to linger over gratefully: 'You have to study, savour and chew over the sweetness of it if you are to render condign gratitude to him who vouchsafes it to you.' In this way your soul can 'measure how much she owes to God for your being at peace with your conscience and other internal passions; for having your body in its natural disposition, enjoying ordinately and competently

those sweet and flattering functions by which God, through his grace, makes up for the pains with which his justice chastises us' (III. 13, p. 425).

Not to associate the spirit (or soul) with all bodily pleasures is to experience them *stupidement* (dully). Montaigne even had himself woken up so that he could enjoy falling asleep again.

Death, in the sense of the pain of dying, no longer obsessed Montaigne. His concussion when a soldier seems to have cured him of that fear; his soul had been temporarily wrenched from his body, and he had felt nothing (II. 6). The case he finally makes is not in defence of any kind of preparation for death but of a positive affirmation of the goodness of life, of life as it really is, with a soul living in a body as it really is – a body with its right to enjoy its necessary pleasures in its own good time. 'As for me, I love life and cultivate it as it has pleased God to vouchsafe it.' Seneca, Cicero, Plutarch, Socrates and Genesis – are all marshalled in support of such wisdom.

Philosophy reluctantly recognised that no bodily pleasure exceeds that of a sexual climax – the body's own ecstasy. Montaigne did not regret sexual pleasure, he increasingly dwelt on its 'necessity'. He did not wish '(B) that children were produced *stupidement* with our fingers or our heels, (C) but rather, speaking with reverence, that we could also do it voluptuously with our fingers and our heels as well'. Plaints about such pleasure are '(B) ungrateful and (C) iniquitous'. These pleasures have, after all, been granted to man by God or by his agent, Nature (whom La Boëtie called *la ministre* of God).

> (B) I accept with a good heart (C) and gratefully (B) what Nature has done for me, I welcome it and congratulate myself over it. You do wrong to that great and all-powerful Giver to refuse his gift, to nullify it or disfigure it. (C) *Tout bon il a fait tout bon* – himself entirely Good, he has made all things good.

Cicero is cited saying the same: 'All things which are in accordance with Nature are worthy of esteem' (III. 13, p. 426).[2]

[2] Montaigne's attitudes were to become widely preached by Christian writers. Cf. *Les Triomphes de la Religion Chrestienne* by Father Boucher, the Queen's Franciscan preacher, Paris, 1628, p. 762; see also the Capuchin father Ives' *Morales Chrestiennes*, Paris, 1648: mankind must accept its corporeality; to complain that we are not angelic intelligences 'is to fall into a noteworthy ingratitude for the gifts of God ... ' (p. 127; see also pp. 131ff.).

Quite traditionally Montaigne interlaced God and Nature, Biblical and classical. The classical elements are, on the whole, duly docketed in the editions; the liturgical and Scriptural ones, less reliably so. The 'Good who has made all things well' is the God of Genesis, the New Testament and liturgy: he is the Giver of all good gifts who saw that all he made was good.

Philosophy is condemned whenever she forgets man's corporality, but Socrates is largely excused from responsibility for her errors. Montaigne personalises Philosophy, making her a disciple who has forgotten her lessons. Socrates, her master, had taught her differently. All those astringent and ascetic philosophers who decry the body, calling it brutal or bestial, are condemned, not least in the margins of the Bordeaux copy; it is 'childish' of Philosophy to say that it is a wildly inappropriate 'match to wed the divine to the earthly', or to claim that 'sexual pleasure is a brutish quality'. It is not. All we have we owe to the Giver – and that includes *volupté*. Not to be grateful is iniquitous.

Montaigne advocated ordinate behaviour. As in the case of his championing of constancy, temperance or moderation, he went back to the roots in Plato and, especially, in the ethics of Aristotle: virtuous men are those who react with ordinate affections to the proper objects of desire, appreciating things at their just value. Over and over again Montaigne sings the praises of 'order' in human life: all the philosophers – the Peripatetics, Stoics and so on – urged the rightness of an ordinate life, guided by reason; but they could be inordinate about the need to be ordinate, taking it to absurd lengths which led to a parody of ordinate reactions. A philosopher should be grateful and enjoy lying with his wife; he should not simply take a spiritual pleasure in doing an appropriate job with her, aimed at a useful end. It is absurd and gross for a philosopher to claim 'that the only enjoyment he gets from a beautiful young wife' is one which by-passes the body – namely the pleasure his conscience enjoys from performing an ordinate action – 'like', said Montaigne with a laugh, 'pulling on his boots for a useful ride'.

'Socrates, Philosophy's preceptor and ours', taught no such fantastic nonsense. Because the pleasures of the soul have more variety, constancy and dignity than those of the body, he put the pleasures of the soul in the higher place, but not in the only one. Temperance – the soul's wise gift to the body – is no enemy of pleasure (III. 13, pp. 427-8).

That sounds the height of Renaissance wisdom. Yet even this Montaigne is about to dispute with Socrates, 'the great Teacher of philosophy and of us all'.

4. Nature and natural marriage

If Montaigne's method of investigation was to work, it had to lead him from 'this man' ('me') to 'you and me': to Man. This is what happens as the *Essays* draw to a close: the *je* and the *me* which have been dominating the syntax give way to *nous*. And this 'we' embraces all mankind – Socrates included.

'Nature is a gentle guide, yet no more gentle than wise and just' – Cicero had said it centuries before: *Natura dux optima*, Nature is the best guide. Montaigne tried to follow her footsteps. The main schools of philosophy are in verbal agreement: the Academics who follow Plato, like the Peripatetics who follow Aristotle, all say that the sovereign good is 'to live according to Nature'. As for the Stoics, they tell you 'to agree with Nature,' which amounts to the same thing. (The end of the *Essays* owes many debts to Cicero; not all are acknowledged. This one, from *Tusculans* 5.28.82, is not.)

The trouble is that it is easier to follow in the footsteps of Nature without the philosophers than with them! They claim to teach what the path of Nature is; in practice they confound her traces. The worst are those who do violence to the nature of man, instructing us to tear our bodies from our souls. One of Montaigne's reactions against such false and sophistical philosophies was his concern for 'primitivism'. Primitive man as Montaigne conceived him did not wrench his soul from his body in the name of some false higher wisdom; for Montaigne, admiration for simple men went together with a distrust of philosophical ecstasy. A person who wishes to discover his *forme maistresse* within his complex being as man – discover, that is, the personal, individual, permament strand in the transient, variegated flux of his experience and sensations – may well be wary of civilised veneers, wary too of anything which takes his 'being' apart or which claims to take him 'out of himself', even if 'above himself'.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Wedded Bliss

1. Divorce reform

In the end it is the turn of Socrates to be found wanting for his assertion that the soul's pleasures are to be preferred on account of their *dignité*: '(B) Is it not an error to judge that some activities, simply because they are necessary, *sont moins dignes* – have less dignity?' Surely such a 'marriage of pleasure and necessity' is 'a most becoming one'. What is the point of 'dismembering a structure' such as man, whose parts are 'interwoven with so closely-knit and brotherly a congruity'? We should be doing the opposite: tying our two main parts more closely together by their *mutuels offices*, the duties which each owes to the other (III. 13, p. 428).

The background to Montaigne's final wisdom is partly classical; it includes Cicero's treatises *De officiis* (*On Duties*) and *De finibus* (*On the Ends of Good and Evil*). Cicero was rare in giving central importance to the body: 'How', he asked, 'did you suddenly come to discard first the body, then all those things which are in accordance with nature though they are out of our power, and, finally, even duty, *officium*?' (*De finibus* 5.11.26).

In Christian doctrine the Holy Spirit is the Giver of life; the spirit of man partakes of this enlivening power. For Montaigne, the duty of man's spirit is indeed to 'awaken and quicken' (*vivifier*) the sluggish body; the body's task is 'to arrest the spirit in its lightness, to pin it down'. Montaigne insists that pleasure is the driving force in the whole of human life – even for the saints and the ascetics. To sustain this, he had Christian authority in reserve: he could not champion the marriage of body and soul without wandering into regions where philosophy and theology overlap.

Classical philosophy did not normally respect the body in the way Christians should. A religion which gives the body a place in the world to come is fundamentally at variance with those who teach that souls yearn to quit their bodies for all eternity. Nevertheless, Montaigne ingeniously found support for his Christian Epicureanism in a severe philosopher and an even severer saint, quoting as a challenge unattributed passages from Seneca and the *City of God*, where Augustine condemns the Manicheans who held the body to be evil (III. 13, p. 428).

In the French sandwiched between these two unusually heavy slabs of Latin prose, Socrates' notion that the spirit's pleasures have more *dignité* is closely pressed in argument; Montaigne's experience of his own humanity had taught him that no part is unworthy of cultivation. Some activities are more worthy: none is unworthy:

> (B) There is no part *indigne* in this present which God has given to us; we must account for it down to the last hair. It is not a merely formal commission to man to conduct himself according to his condition as man, it is expressly stated, inborn (*naïfve*) (C) most fundamental (B) and the Creator gave it to us seriously and severely.

A Lutheran or *Réformé* making such dogmatic assertions would have had specific Biblical proof-texts in mind. As a post-Tridentine Roman Catholic layman, Montaigne did not. For what Cicero called the *conditio humana* Montaigne had already, in his chapter on presumption, harked back to the relevant Christian fundamentals, especially to the resurrection of the body: 'The body occupies a large part in our being (*nostre estre*); it holds a high rank.' It is for that very reason that ecstasy, with its detachment from the body, is not an ideal for most of common humanity:

> (A) Those who wish to take our two principal pieces apart and to sequester one from the other are wrong. We must, on the contrary, couple and join them closely together. We must command the soul not to withdraw to its quarters, not to entertain itself apart, not to despise and abandon the body.

(It could only do that, anyway, by some sort of counterfeit monkey-parody, some *singerie contrefaicte*.) The spirit should

> rally to the body, embrace it, cherish it, keep it, control it, counsel it, set it upright and bring it back when it goes astray – it should *marry* it in other words and serve it as a husband, so that their actions may not seem diverse and contrary but harmonious and uniform (II. 17, p. 419).

Montaigne's almost unique source of inspiration where such ideas are concerned was the *Natural Theology* of Sebond, helped out, perhaps, by St John Chrysostom. Theologically he clung to the doctrine of the resurrection of the body; philosophically he accepted – in so far as he found him to be worth it – the one philosopher his church had made peculiarly her own: Aristotle.

Individual man is form and matter, soul and body, married together. 'Christians have been specifically taught about this bond', which links man's two principal parts in loving wedlock.

> They know that divine justice embraces this fellowship and society of body and soul, going so far as to make the body able to receive everlasting rewards. They know that God watches the whole of man in action, willing that he should, in his entirety, receive punishment and reward according to his merits (II. 17, p. 419).

Among the ancient Greeks only the Aristotelians are allowed to have glimpsed this truth about the human condition:

> (C) The Peripatetic Sect – the most civilised of all sects – attributed to wisdom this one care: to provide for the common good of the two associate parts [of a man] and to procure it.

Montaigne was doubtless thinking of the *Nicomachaean Ethics* (cf. 7.14.8). All other schools of antiquity lean, we are told, too far one way or the other.

2. Archimedes' ecstasy

Montaigne's respect for Aristotle leaves room for Plato too. The soul needs 'food' as the body does; that is elementary Platonism. But Montaigne added that Man has enough time in this life to give both body and soul the food they need. Throughout the *Essays* Montaigne delighted in belittling human pride. When insisting that experience shows that man's pride is never more silly than when he neglects his body and claims to be ecstatic, he

gave his delight full play: even what men take to be major intellectual achievements do not matter all that much. 'Ask that man over there' what his head is so chock full of that he regrets spending time on a good meal: 'You will find that none of the food on your table is so tasteless' as his soul's pabulum. His reasoning, and what scholastic philosophy called his 'intentions', are not even worth your modest goat-meat stew. Montaigne, the wise and balanced melancholic, is trailing his coat before the partisans of another school of melancholy, for he goes on to add that the body's enjoyment of its necessities should be neither denied nor postponed – not even if you are a Greek philosopher whose discovery the whole world names after you. The example he gives is a blow aimed at felling those with whom he disagreed:

> Even if it were Archimedes' raptures, what does it matter? (III. 13, p. 429).

Archimedes does not figure here by accident. Melanchthon's treatise *On the Soul* helps us to recover the force of Montaigne's amused aggressiveness. In that treatise Archimedes' discoveries are cited (as they often were) as the greatest of all examples of revelatory ecstasies made to melancholic geniuses. Melanchthon is explaining – need it be said? – Aristotle's *Problems* 30.1. For Melanchthon these ecstasies are encouraged by balanced melancholy modified by blood – by Montaigne's temperament! Such melancholy made a man 'more ardent, tenacious, *vehementissimus*' (very inclined to mental transports).

Melanchthon pointed out that we can see poets who are 'as though moved by divine inspiration'. Those inspired men whom scholars called 'artificers' show the same forces at work:

> The same applies to other excellent creative men when they fall into cogitations because of a major impulse of the mind. Archimedes did not realise that his city had been captured, nor even notice soldiers bursting into his house. What could be more melancholic than his leaping from the bath and running naked through the forum yelling *Eureka*, when he discovered the method of detecting how much silver had been mixed with gold? (Melanchthon, *Opera* III, Basle 1541, pp. 66-8).

Marsiglio Ficino had already said the same, linking – also in praise not in blame – Plato's vehement ecstasies, Socrates'

catalepsies and Archimedes' 'divine' rapture. All were, on Aristotle's authority, melancholics of genius (*Opera*, 1641, I, pp. 280-1).

Montaigne was not impressed. Even cogitations like those of Archimedes can wait their turn. They need no overriding precedence over the body's few undemandingly pleasurable 'necessities'. Generations had been taught that Archimedes discovered his principle through ecstatic inspiration associated with his complexion. Montaigne, elsewhere in the *Essays*, cites Plato and Aristotle on such ecstasies, but nowhere is it suggested that such inspiration is desirable for the wise – or even possible without madness. Archimedes' soul was concerned with *amusemens* (ways of spending time) and *imaginations* (similitudes conceived in the mind). They can take their place in the queue. Against the standards of eternity his famous principle does not amount to much. There is not the slightest hint that he was actually inspired. Quite the reverse: *amusemens* and *imaginations* do not need attendant, heaven-sent daemons.

3. Eternity

During a lull in his attack, Montaigne placed eternity before his reader. Mankind is divided into two. There is the vulgar mass, which includes Socrates, Plato, Archimedes, Cato, you and me, all made in the same mould; all common humanity. The only other category of mankind is tiny; it is reserved exclusively for celibate Christian mystics. They – alone now – are referred to as souls (*ames*) not as souls-and-bodies; they alone have souls which may rightly, and with impunity, neglect their bodies, thought not (since they are human) do without them completely. They form the standard against which human presumption is to be judged:

> (B) Here, I am not touching upon – nor am I mixing up with scrapings from the human pot such as we are and with the vain desires and cogitations which amuse us – those souls, worthy of veneration, which are elevated by ardour of devotion and piety to a constant and conscientious meditation of divine things (III. 13, p. 429).

Here we find the ecstasy which Plato wrote about and which Christians know about: that 'vehement' movement of the soul by

which a saintly contemplative ignores the body while his soul enjoys a foretaste of future blessedness. Even these venerable souls are Epicureans, like the rest of us, but they enjoy pleasures of which we know nothing. They act as if they were not souls married to their bodies but souls practising the divorce of death.

> (C) Anticipating, by dint of a lively, vehement hope, the use of that food which is everlasting, the ultimate end and final stay of the desires of Christians, the only constant and incorruptible pleasure, they despise lingering over our fluid, ambiguous necessary satisfactions and easily hand over to the body the care and use of sensual, temporal food (III. 13, p. 429).

'Necessary satisfactions' (*necessiteuses commoditez*) has its full Aristotelian sense of pleasure derived from essential bodily functions. These *necessaria* include food and sex; they fall within the domain of temperance, which does not attempt to eliminate them but to moderate them (*Nicomachaean Ethics* 7.4.2). As Montaigne puts it: '(C) Temperance is not the plague of pleasure but its seasoning' (III. 13, p. 423).

A Christian Epicurean enjoying a foretaste of everlasting bliss hardly notices his body and its necessary demands – Erasmus had made the same point in the *Praise of Folly*, though his contemplatives are more literally ecstatic. But for the rest of us, including Socrates who remained amorously susceptible unto the last, these *necessiteuses commoditez* mean a great deal; and rightly so.

Montaigne had said much the same thing when writing on solitude. But this time a vital warning is underlined: these contemplatives are an élite. You had better not try to ape them. Your bodily necessities will have their revenge if you do.[1]

[1] The resurrection of the body is a credal certainty for Montaigne, but 'foretastes of heavenly bliss', when vouchsafed to the privileged few, are experienced only in the soul, which in its rapture leaves the body to look after itself. This is quite orthodox. On such matters Montaigne may be compared with Erasmus: both call on authoritative teachings of St Paul in I Corinthians 2, citing verse 9 to make their point. Montaigne is very dogmatic about the gulf separating catholic teaching about the joys of the elect from the erroneous human reasonings of Plato. In the 'Apologia for Sebond' he alludes to Plutarch's treatise 'On the face appearing in the circle of the Moon', in which mention is made of the 'fields of Dis' – the aerial domain in which the souls of the classical dead are purged of the 'contagion of their bodies'. (In Montaigne, as in Amyot's French

4. Special privileges for Christian voluptuaries

In his chapter on prayer Montaigne had protested against the trivialisation of the Scriptures. As completely as any Sorbonagre, he reserved the study of Holy Writ to those whose vocation it was to pursue such studies: '(C) it is not an occupation for everybody but of people vowed to it, called to it by God' (I. 56, pp. 412-13).

Similarly, but very, very exceptionally, some are called to be contemplative ascetics: '(B) *c'est un estude privilegé*', a privileged endeavour.

Even here, where Christianity comes to the fore, Montaigne's debt to Cicero is a real one. In a treatise much concerned with ecstasy, Cicero spoke of 'a rare kind of men who are called away from the body and are enraptured to a knowledge of things divine, *cura omni studioque*, with application and total zeal' (*De divinatione* 1.49.111). Such ideas had long been taken into Christianity.

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translation of Plutarch, this domain is called the 'verger de Pluton', Pluto's orchard.) Montaigne condemned Plato's 'decyphering' of such arcane matters on the arresting grounds that even Plato's explanations and comparisons were too earthbound, too corporeal, for divine reality. He lumps them together with the grossly sensual view of heaven attributed to Mahomet. For Montaigne, the joys of paradise infinitely surpass the powers of human speech and human 'imagination' – the power to picture them. They have no root whatsoever in bodily analogies of temporal pleasures:

> (C) All the pleasures of mortals are mortal. (A) If recognising parents, children, friends can touch and titillate us in the next world, and if we grasp at such a pleasure, then we still remain within notions of fitness which are earthbound, finite. We cannot condignly conceive those high, divine promises if we are able to conceive them at all. To imagine them condignly, we must imagine them unimaginable, unutterable, incomprehensible, (C) and entirely different from our own wretched experiences. (A) Eye cannot see, says St Paul, nor can there rise up into the heart of man, what God has prepared for his own (II. 12, p. 248ff).

The purifications to which Plato would subject human souls after death would change human beings into something different: 'It would not be ourselves ... Something else would receive these rewards.' Unaided human reason cannot reach certainty about the afterlife; nor is even God's own revealed truth enough by itself, since reason will pervert revelation as soon as it 'leaves the path traced and trodden by the Church'. Such doctrines were the very stuff of authoritarian humanist catholicism in the late Renaissance and Counter-reformation. For the texts alluded to directly or indirectly by Montaigne, cf. Plutarch, *Moralia* 943C (Amyot, II, p. 626); Plato, *Gorgias* ad fin.; *Republic* 10. For Erasmus, cf. the closing pages of the *Praise of Folly*.

This *studium* (*estude* in the masculine gender) is a special grace leading to busy application and zealous study. *Un estude privilegé* is a boon available to a few; it is never for the masses. Ecstasies which give man a foretaste of bliss are beyond man's greatest efforts.[2]

The *Essays* show that Montaigne was fully aware of the paradoxical power of his Christian Epicureanism with its acceptance of pleasure – even for the saints. He can be assumed to have known that he was fundamentally changing an idea which Ficino expounded in his own treatise *On Pleasure*. Ficino attacked the contention, attributed to Aristippus and Eudoxus of Archytas in ancient times, that bodily pleasures are greater than those of the mind (or soul). By reaction Ficino made the pleasures of the ecstatic spirit the only ones that really mattered. All the themes of Montaigne's praise of privileged Christian voluptuaries enjoying in advance spiritual food are to be found in Ficino – except the vital point that they are rare.

Like Montaigne at the start of *De l'experience*, Ficino cited *Metaphysics* 1.1: 'All men naturally desire knowledge', with an appetite bothersome when thwarted, pleasurable when satisfied. But he drew conclusions from it which are not Montaigne's:

> There is one thing naturally cognate to all men, one thing sought by them all, one thing, finally, which is the greatest joy. It consists entirely in true contemplation, which, as Plato said, is the true food of the soul, filling the soul with ineffable pleasure. Because of this, different people seek different pleasures for the body but, in the case of the mind, one and the same joy is loved by all (*Opera*, 1641, I, p. 1031, col. 2 of *De voluptate*).

Montaigne was more orthodox than Ficino. By restricting the soul's *pabulum*, which Plato wrote about, to the food enjoyed in anticipation by a few Christian souls living in constant ecstasy under special grace, he subverted much of Ficino's Platonising ethics. For Montaigne ordinary people – all the rest of us, Socrates included – are right to lend half an ear to the teachings of Aristippus and Eudoxus. They were wrong at one extreme, but it is equally wrong to rush to the other: bodily pleasures are not greater than those of the soul, but they are worthy ones which the

[2] For the rare nature of privileged ecstasy, cf. my *Ecstasy and the Praise of Folly*, 1980, pp. 182ff.

soul's pleasures must not be allowed to crowd out. There must be room for both; Man was created that way.

Montaigne was drawing yet another, not unexpected, conclusion from the chain of argument started by *Metaphysics* 1.1. To those who declared that *All men naturally desire knowledge* means (as Ficino thought) that all men, in actual fact, naturally desire to contemplate God as a way of obtaining knowledge, a standard Christian reply was that the kind of knowledge which Aristotle wrote about in the opening sentence of his treatise is supra-natural – to be obtained 'only by God's grace and gift' (*Metaphysics*, ed. Pedro Fonseca, 1599, I, col. 60).

Montaigne insisted that such a 'privileged endeavour' was outside the natural order which applied to most of mankind and so outside the scope of the *Essays* and their wisdom. In all matters of religion there is need of grace. Where unaided human religious fantasies are concerned, 'no opinion is too odd'. True religion 'is beyond human reasonings; it is all the more excusable for anyone to get lost in them, if he is not extraordinarily enlightened through divine favour' (I. 23, p. 140).

Since we have all been made in the same mould, since, that is, each one of us bears within himself the entire form of Man, we can understand human error only too well. But how can we ever understand those saintly contemplatives whose whole experience depends on supernatural grace?

5. People like us

Montaigne had already answered that query. Despite his own lack of chastity and despite his attachment to a particular form of (mere) Man, he could glimpse in imagination the reality of the lives of Feuillants and Capuchins. He believed that their devotion to celibate chastity was real and effective; but the way not to understand them is to try, without special grace, to follow their example.

Since words and idioms change their meaning, Montaigne is often misunderstood about this *estude privilegé*. He wrote, quite reasonably, that the contemplatives whom he honoured were not like most men; they were following a privileged path of zealous devotion:

(B) C'est un estude privilegé. (C) Entre nous ce sont deux choses que j'ay tousjours veües de singulier accord: les opinions supercelestes et les moeurs sousterraines.

(B) It is a privileged endeavour. (C) Among us there are two things which I have always seen to accord together particularly well: supercelestial opinions and subterranean morals (III. 13, p. 429).

It is not uncommon to find that translated and interpreted as though it were a bitter gibe, a sneer, demolishing what has just been said, aimed at Christians – especially the clergy – for using sublime spirituality as a cloak for lechery. It is taken to mean:

> *Between you and me*, I have always found two things to be in singular harmony: supercelestial opinions and subterranean morals.

Such an interpretation is to be found in the work of excellent scholars; it nevertheless does unnecessary violence to the coherence of Montaigne's argument. It is read into his text, not found in it. Coming as it does at the climax of the *Essays*, such a misunderstanding takes on an almost legendary importance. It is cited all over the place. The very grossness of the error makes for its force – like the Emperor's new clothes. And yet, in context, the phrase *entre nous* does not convey a sneer nor even a hint of bitterness. Those words do not convey a judgment on lecherous priests and monks nor, indeed, on anyone at all other than the whole of mankind – apart from a handful of privileged contemplatives. Montaigne is contrasting 'those venerable souls' who enjoy a foretaste of eternal bliss by feeding on the solid, pleasurable, spiritual *pabulum* vouchsafed to privileged contemplatives, with all the rest of 'us scrapings of the human pot' (*la marmaille d'hommes que nous sommes*), who have to come to terms with our bodily necessities or else suffer on the rebound.

All Christians, by definition, are the objects of divine grace. But the rôle of the grace vouchsafed to ordinary Christians is to enable them partly to overcome the effects of sin and to be Christians despite their shortcomings. Privileged grace does more. It raises a chosen few above humanity to angelic purity. But for Montaigne what applies to that elect has no relevance to 'us'. *Entre nous* – among people like you, me, or, say,

Archimedes – even such ecstasies as we may fall into or provoke ourselves into do more harm than good; they may confirm us in mere opinion and have no lasting value, no constancy. 'Among us' ecstasy most definitely does not make men into angels; it may do quite the reverse, bringing us back with a bump below humanity, not simply down to earth, but way beneath it.

In the first version of the chapter Montaigne had written less provocatively:

> (B) Our endeavours (*estudes*) are all wordly ones, and among men of this world the most natural ones are the most just (EM 3, p. 429 variant).

We, as creatures of the world, are limited to *estudes mondains* – worldly affairs, not other-worldly ones. That is firm enough. The final version is firmer still: people like us should not 'strive' (as Keble's hymn puts it) 'to wind ourselves too high for mortal man'. We will come a cropper if we do.

But there is a bolder emphasis than may at first appear. Montaigne was writing for a public who knew what Aristotle's *necessaria* were. He wrote as a member of a church whose ecstatic contemplatives were, for the most part, a celibate elect.

6. Socratic ecstasy and Christian coenobites

In the last few sentences of the *Essays* the language of ecstasy lies thick on the page. There is talk of *ecstases* and *daemoneries*, of the spirit which tries to break its fellowship with the body (*se dissocier du corps*); of those who wish to be 'outside themselves' (*hors d'eux*) – the standard definition of ecstasy – and to 'escape from their humanity'.

All that is wrong. The body has its necessities; the mass of mankind must give due attention to both of the parts that make up the human condition. There is time enough for both, in all conscience. Our spirit has all the time in the world to *faire ses besongnes*, 'to do its jobs' – an amusing phrase which likens the pleasure to be derived from even Archimedes' spiritual cogitations to one of the principal *necessaria*: sexual intercourse, *la besongne*.

This humorous body language is an essential part of the meaning of these final sentences; *naturalia* really are not *turpia*.

Montaigne, never prone to mince words, brings this home simply, with the help of the great Aesop:

> (B) Aesop (C) that great man (B) saw his master pissing as he walked along. 'What', he said, 'do we have to shit as we run?' (III. 13, p. 429).[3]

Defecation, as the saintly Melanchthon pointed out, is one of the pleasurable *necessaria*. So Montaigne can insist that even the pleasures of fecal evacuation and micturition may rightly claim their fair share of our time. The case certainly needed making: Rabelais (who never accepted the body as Montaigne did) has his pupils regularly going to the lavatory in the company of their tutor, so that they can concentrate on purging their minds of error at the same time as they absentmindedly purge their bodies of impurities.[4]

Montaigne opposes such attitudes. People want to cultivate a higher spiritual life at the expense of their bodies:

> (B) That is *folie*. Instead of transforming themselves into angels

[3] Montaigne insists on Aesop's greatness – as a man. That is a way of undermining a standard legend, allegedly based on Socrates, which made Aesop the chosen vehicle of 'daemonic' ecstasies, during which the whole of moral philosophy was revealed to him while still a slave. (Cf. Sebastian Foxius, *Phaedo, sive de immortalitate animae*, Basle, 1555, pp. 60B—61B.) The humanising of Aesop is in keeping with the *Essays* as a whole. Montaigne consistently rejects the belief that learned men are privately inspired: 'My father, warmed by the new ardour with which King Francis I embraced learning ... sought the acquaintance of learned men, receiving them at home like *personnes saintes* who had some private inspiration from divine wisdom.' Montaigne's father, lacking formal education, treated them as 'oracles', whereas Montaigne himself 'quite liked' learned men, but did not 'worship' them. (The key phrase is '*quelque particuliere aspiration de sagesse divine*'; Montaigne returns to it a few pages later and adapts it to the context of the faith of Christians: '*par foy et par une inspiration particuliere de la grace divine*' (*Apologie de R. Sebond* II. 12, beginning, E.M. pp. 141 and 143).) The change from *sagesse* to *grace* suggests that what men acquire even from grace is little enough in comparison with divine wisdom. That was a theme of Christian 'folly' since Origen. As for Aesop, he was a great, wise, good but 'unenlightened' man, in no ways 'inspired'.

[4] See Melanchthon on Cicero's *De officiis* (Paris, 1543, p. 30, s.v. *Temperantia et modestia*): 'It is especially seemly not only to do nothing against Nature but to do with delight whatever Nature requires. For example there is nothing wrong with shitting, but it is wrong to shit in public as Diogenes did' (Melanchthon uses the blunt word *cacare*).

they transform themselves into beasts. Instead of winding high they plunge low.

By now, readers know that this *folie* is not mere silliness but madness – the madness which depressed the genius of Tasso to bestial insanity and which, at best, made Archimedes dash insanely about the forum, as he overvalued his interesting little tidbit of a discovery.

Folie is always a danger; melancholy can change from being the spur of genius to being the cause of madness. Robert Burton sums up the lesson in his inimitable language: 'I may not deny that there is some folly approved, a divine fury, a holy madness, a spiritual drunkenness in the saints of God themselves.' But that is not all. Burton's conclusion is the same as the one that Montaigne reached: 'we commonly mistake and go beyond our commission; we reel to the opposite part; we are not capable of it' (*Anatomy of Melancholy*, Preface, pp. 77-9).

And, after quoting from a letter in which Erasmus defended the ecstasy praised by his character 'Folly', Burton asserted that there is 'a divine melancholy' when authentic, 'but as it is abused, a mere dotage, madness' (3.4.1.2., p. 343).

7. The vita beata

Who are these people who vainly attempt to turn themselves into something more than Man? Those who lack the privilege but who nevertheless seek ecstasies and try to ignore their bodies. Yet Montaigne hints at more. These people want to 'transform themselves into angels'. For centuries it had been traditional to use the term 'angelic life' in a particular way: the angelic life is the celibate life; in Christian culture it was particularly applied to celibate contemplatives.

Ecstatic bliss normally figures in treatises as the blessed (or happy) life. Montaigne knew Seneca's treatise *De vita beata* and drew on it for some views on ecstasy which he did not accept. This prompted me to read Renaissance treatises on the subject, which have proved helpful in understanding what Montaigne was talking about. A useful work, which enables us to recapture something of the world of assumptions which Montaigne was challenging, is the *De vita beata* of Agostino Dato.

Most men, we are told, can enjoy happy and honourable

marriages, while moderating their marital intercourse which, for Dato (as for others), evoked Hippocrates' description of sex as 'part of that dreadful illness epilepsy'. But some are able to live a life 'above humanity', despising all human temptations; all their *studium* is a striving towards truth. 'Their couch is sad but chaste.' Men who were classed as striving above humanity include the Greek philosophers, the Jewish Essenes, the priests of Egypt who 'among many other things abstained from wives'. Best of all, eclipsing all the others, are those who 'in our time lead the religious life of catholic monasticism (*catholicae religionis coenobitas*)'. These people, 'in some way, do doff the weakness of their humanity and imitate the life of the angels. Preferring celibacy to matrimony, they separate their mind from their senses better than even Socrates did and, since they are more truly enraptured by the higher ecstasy of the soul, they *die* better than false philosophers do – if true and solid philosophy (not the painted, feigned variety) is, indeed, a *meditatio mortis*, a preparation for death.'

Dato admits that this sort of man is very rare: 'Only a few can be found in the whole world.' They enjoy unbelievable pleasure (*incredibilis quaedam voluptas*) – far more than can be experienced by others. But clearly neither Dato nor Montaigne expected the average 'celibate' priest to be much of a saint; he would be all the better for not trying to force himself to quit his body and revel in rapture. Let him acknowledge his bodily necessities and stay sane.[5]

With such standard doctrines Montaigne more or less agreed, though even for privileged contemplatives he played down the element of 'practising dying' with the soul leaving the body behind. But he added a proviso so fundamental that it changed everything: he placed a total barrier between privileged Christian contemplatives and all other would-be ecstatics. Precisely because Christian teachings on ecstasy are indebted to Socrates and Plato, Montaigne – like Agostino Dato or like any

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other Christian who tackled such a question seriously – had to state, unambiguously and finally, where he placed pagans like Socrates and Plato. Where do they stand in relation to those privileged Christian coenobites who enjoy a constant foretaste of heavenly bliss? We are left in no doubt. For Montaigne the ecstasies of Socrates, like those of Plato, are mere embarrassments – a proof not of higher spirituality but of pathetic humanity:

> (C) Those transcendant humours frighten me like high, inaccessible places. Nothing is more difficult for me to swallow in the life of Socrates than his ecstasies and daemoneries: nothing so human in Plato as the reason people give for calling him 'divine' (III. 13, p. 430).

In the Renaissance Plato's divine status was attested by the philosopher himself: he was said to have claimed 'frequently to have enjoyed the supreme Good in contemplation, his soul having actually left his body'. Ficino is adamant where Plato's claims are concerned (*Opera* I, 280f.). Towards the end of the sixteenth century the Jesuits of Coîmbra expounded these ideas persuasively in their edition of Aristotle's *De anima* (III, art. 3, p. 513). Such influential commonplaces of Platonising Christians are the errors that Montaigne sought to overthrow.[6]

[6] The entire section of the commentary of the Jesuits of Coîmbra on the *De Anima* of Aristotle, devoted as it is to Ficinian ecstasy and to that *Prisca Theologia* studied by D.P. Walker, makes an excellent backcloth to the understanding of Montaigne at the final stages of the *Essays*. With its help one can see more clearly what Montaigne is supporting and advocating, and, especiallly, what he is by-passing, undermining or overthrowing. On the sole authority of *Divina sapientia Secundum Aegyptios* (II. 4) Plato is honoured, in the Commentary, with frequent and privileged ecstasies, reminiscent of St Paul's unique rapture, during which Plato (like Paul) had a revelation of immortality 'which cannot be expressed in speech nor perceived with the ears nor comprehended by thought'. Such claims for Plato or Socrates are dismissed by Montaigne as human fantasies. The Jesuits of Coîmbra (col. 515) believe that ecstasies such as those of Socrates and Plato were *ex naturae privilegio* (in no ways 'divine', though in a sense, privileged, but with a natural privilege only) – and that they were induced by melancholy; 'Melancholics are more prone to ecstasy' (as the side-note emphasises): the text of the Commentary explains that 'melancholics, as Fracastorius published in Book Two of his *De intellectione*, are inclined to abound in thought and so are held to be prone, in this manner, to being caught away from their senses'. Montaigne restricts the 'privilege' of high ecstasy to the supernatural, not natural, sphere and does not link the privileged ecstasies of the elect themselves with states induced by melancholy.

Where most people are concerned, Montaigne distrusts ecstatic melancholy: we may note that it is the *humours* that provoke these transcendental fantasies which 'frighten' him. They are precisely those melancholy humours which upset his own complexion when he first returned to live in the solitude of his estates and which he subsequently learned to hold at arm's length. Wise melancholics keep the soul 'at home' as Socrates told men to do – and did himself most of the time; they do not, as Socrates occasionally did, send it off chasing opinions or spiritual delusions.

8. Astonishment

The ecstasy of amazement, however, falls into a special category. Wise men obey the laws of the land and conform to the order of Nature. God made the rules governing such ordinate behaviour; he alone, in his providence, may suspend them. When he does so, we have a miracle. Faced by a true miracle, ecstatic amazement is, in fact, the ordinate response.

In the margins of the chapter devoted to advocating conservatism in matters of politics, Montaigne copiously reminded his readers how Christ's victory over 'death and sin' had run its course within a framework of political legality. Throughout the ages, rather than subvert the state, God has preferred to allow the '(C) innocent blood of the elect, his favoured ones, to run' under unjust magistrates. To overthrow the state (as Montaigne's religious enemies were doing) is forbidden to mankind. God may sometimes suspend this general rule: man must not.

> (C) If divine Providence has sometimes passed beyond the rules to which we are bound by necessity, it is not for us to dispense with those rules (I. 23, p. 155).

Such divine interventions 'are blows of his divine hand'. We must not imitate them but greet them with ecstatic amazement (*non pas imiter, mais admirer*); they are 'inordinate' miracles – outside the order of nature (*extraordinaires*); they are 'express, particular' cases of 'the kind of miracle which Providence offers us as witness of almighty power', and they are above our order of being, above human strength. It is – as always in Montaigne –

lunacy to mimic such things in purely human contexts: '(C) madness and impiety' to try to reproduce this kind of miracle, 'which we are not meant to follow but to contemplate with amazement. They are acts of his Person, not ours' (I. 23, p. 155).

Even true miracles such as these are neither sought after nor yearned for by Montaigne. If he had the choice he would prefer the kind of life where God did not break in with such amazing disturbances. The divine never touches human life without upsetting that natural order in which man is most at home.

At all events, such miracles have nothing to do with melancholy genius or a man's complexion. They are acts of God.

9. The whole being of man

Nothing shows up the human weakness of Alexander the Great more clearly than his 'fantasies' about his divine status. Montaigne placed Alexander's manhood side by side with Christ's, but not his deluded 'divinity'. Alexander had nothing divine about him, though he thought he had. Self-idolatry, like all idolatry, is toppled by Montaigne as an all-too-human folly.

To reach such conclusions and apply them to all men required a revolution in Montaigne's attitude to genius. He had once been ready to react with ecstatic amazement before the human beauty of heroic virtue portrayed in poetry. His chapter on outstanding men – Homer, Alexander the Great and Epaminondas – places them '(A) as it were above the human condition', and there is talk of 'miraculous' virtue. Surprise is expressed that Homer '(A) who created so many gods, has not himself been deified'; so much that he achieved was '(A) against the order of Nature (*contre l'ordre de la Nature*)'.

But that was only a stage on Montaigne's journey of discovery. In the margins of the Bordeaux copy it is all countered, and the humanity of such persons is trenchantly asserted: they are great men; '(C) no form nor fortune of Man' exceeds them. And Alcibiades is preferred to the lot of them – as a man, not venerable (*sainct*), but a civil, moderate gentleman: a *gualant homme* (II. 36, p. 573). Glorifying virtue in poetry will produce a kind of ecstatic amazement in the reader or hearer, but there will be nothing divine about it.

God enjoys his Being. That basic tenet of monotheistic

speculation underlies Montaigne's blunt assertion that the way to resemble God is to be like him on the human level:

> (B) It is a perfection, absolute and as though divine, to know how loyally to enjoy one's being (III. 13, p. 430).

The being of man, his *estre*, is what makes each individual human person a particular example of the human race. As the Franciscan Boucher explained to the next generation in his *Triomphes de la Religion Chrestienne* (1628, p. 766), the rôle of the *forme essentielle* is to give specific and natural being to the matter of which it is the proper form. The soul (as *forme*) unites with a body and makes a person – gives it *l'estre de l'especе humaine*, the state-of-being of a member of the species Man. The human *estre* cannot exist without the soul and body together. The 'being' of a man or woman demands this union of them both. It is a scholastic commonplace that *forma dat esse rei*, that form gives 'being' to a substance by 'informing' it.

It is within this *estre*, this state-of-being as individual man, as body informed with soul, that Montaigne seeks a human perfection akin to God's. If we enjoy our *estre* we are at least like God in that: he enjoys his. As far as most of us are concerned, there is no need to try to split our 'being' into its two component parts.

This thought had a new urgency for Montaigne, partly because of his reflexions on human sexuality – additions in the margin of his chapter on Virgil bind that chapter even more closely to the end of *De l'experience*. Those who call sex bestial are roundly condemned: '(C) Are we not brute-beasts to call bestial the act which makes us?' No other creature despises his being; yet 'we men' consider our very being to be vitiated (III. 5, p. 118).

Montaigne is not talking of sin when he talks in this way of the *vice* of our *estre*. He is condemning those who regret that God made man as soul-and-body and belittling Philosophy for 'preaching' that there is something wild about '(C) marrying the divine and the earthly, the rational and the irrational' in Man (III. 13, p. 427). His contention was soon to be commonplace, if it were not so already. Jean Boucher saw this union as a 'special mark of Divine Wisdom; joining by this means Heaven and Earth within each man who, on one side, shares qualities with the angels: on the other communicating with the beasts of the earth ... The order of

the universe requires this' (*Triomphes de la Religion Chrestienne*, p. 762).

The human condition is this necessary union of body conjoined to soul. The Church taught what Montaigne presupposes: *anima mea non est ego*, 'my soul is not me' (is not the whole of man); Plato wrongly said that it was. Not understanding this, we men have recourse to various ecstasies – *sortons hors de nous*. But it is no good: however high your throne, 'you sit down on your arse'.

Montaigne's quest is over. He has studied the particular being who is himself: a botched form of Man moulding his bodily matter. His intellectual journey took him from death to life, from self to all humanity. His conclusion is not simply how he, Michel de Montaigne, should live, but how men and women in general should try to live:

> (B) The most beautiful lives, to my taste, are those which frame themselves to the common model, (C) the human model, with order but (B) without miracles and *sans extravagance* (III. 13, end).

Thus the last words in the book (before a brief special plea is made for tolerance towards old men) are *sans extravagance*. The noun *extravagance* suggests wandering about outside the natural paths allotted to Man. Randle Cotgrave, in his *Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (1611 etc.), includes in the meanings of *extravagance* 'a giddie, unsteadie, fantasticall action'. Such, for Montaigne, were most men's ecstasies.

As he had written in the earliest version of the apologia for Sebond, 'all *voyes extravaguantes*' – all roads, that is, which wander off away from the normal and the usual – '*me faschent*, irritate me' (II. 12, p. 305). In the end even Socrates was not allowed to be an exception to the rule; indeed Montaigne found Socrates' ecstasies and daemoneries especially *fascheuses* (III. 13, p. 430).

Ecstasies and daemoneries are but vain attempts to escape from the human condition; in essentials they show contempt for the life of man. Yet 'the opinion which despises our life is ridiculous. After all, it is our being and our all'. Contempt for his condition is an illness peculiar to man alone: 'No other creature hates and despises itself.' Yet it is quite vain to wish to be anything other than what we are: 'Anyone who desires to be changed from man to angel effects nothing for himself whatsoever' (II. 3, p. 28).

Of course, there is, in the background, always the proviso repeated at the end of the book and spelled out in the apologia for Sebond:

> This discourse only touches on our common order and is not sacrilegious enough to want to embrace those divine, supernatural and extraordinary beauties which can sometimes be seen shining among us like stars beneath a bodily and earthly veil (II. 12, p. 202).

But it does include virtue as philosophy knows it and even religion, in that ordinary men may be carried beyond what is appropriate to people of their sort: 'The archer who shoots past the target misses as much as the one who falls short' (I. 30, p. 258).

Montaigne believed that such moderation was supported not merely by ancient philosophers but 'by God's word' – or, rather, 'by God's voice' as he changed it to later – speaking through St Paul in Romans 12:3. (He could do this because he followed the Latin Vulgate, not the Greek.) He was so struck by it that he inscribed it on his library wall: 'Be not wiser than is becoming, but be soberly wise' (I. 30, p 257).[7]

10. Poetry has the last word

At the end of his *Essays* Montaigne chose to cite Horace's prayer to keep his sanity and to be granted an old age which retained the joys of the lyre:

> *Frui paratis et valido mihi,*
> *Latoe, dones, et, precor, integra*
> *cum mente, nec turpem senectam*
> *degere, nec cythara carentem.*

Vouchsafe, O Son of Latona, that I may enjoy in good health the

[7] Romans 12:3 (Vulgate): *Ne plus sapite quam oporteat: sed sapite ad sobrietatem*. Erasmus had already shown that the meaning Montaigne was to get out of the Latin is not in conformity with the Greek (which is concerned not with a classical-sounding 'moderation' in learning but with a prudently sober estimate of one's own unimportance).

> things I have prepared, but with, I pray, my mind intact, not sinking into squalid senility nor lacking the lyre.
>
> (*Odes* 1.31.17-20)

Being carried away by the arts is the only *furor* welcomed to the last. It may be a *folie*, but it avoids something worse: *sottise*, stupidity (III. 9, p. 270). Apart from that: no *extravagance*, no spiritual gadding about.

Miracles are not denied (though without the Church's guidance you cannot recognise one when you see one); at all events they are best kept away from the lives of ordinary people. Such things are not ordinate, and the life man needs is an ordinate one. He had said the same in *Du repentir*: a man should live according to the natural order; in youth and in old age he himself had lived *avec ordre, selon moy* – 'ordinately' according to his own standards. As Boucher put it: the very order of the world requires Man to be what he is.

Only one thing can spoil all this: senile dementia. Burton helps to explain why the *Essays* end with Horace's plea for sanity. Increased melancholy is the danger. Old age 'being cold and dry, and of the same quality as melancholy is, must needs cause it'.

> Therefore Melanchthon avers out of Aristotle as an undoubted truth that old men familiarly dote, because of black choler, which is then superabundant in them: and Rhasis, that Arabian Physician, calls it a necessary and inseparable accident to all old and decrepit persons (*Anatomy of Melancholy*, p. 183).

Maintain your being to the end, by keeping body and soul together – that was the advice of Cicero in his treatise *On Old Age*, a work that any elderly humanist was sure to read again as death approached:

> The best end of life is one that comes *integra cum mente* – when the mind is intact and the senses unimpaired, and when Nature herself loosens asunder the work which she had put together (*De senectute* 20-72).

In his edition of Cicero, Aldus Manutius commented that the phrase *integra cum mente* meant, 'before, lacking your senses, you become deranged'. And, he added (a lesson Montaigne had learned by watching his peasants face to face with death): 'meanwhile, keep body and soul, both, sufficiently fed, and pray not to lose your faculties. Shall wise men fear what even uneducated young rustics know how to despise?'

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Genius among Men

1. The higher forms again

Socrates taught that right and wrong begin 'at home'. For the Renaissance this was proverbial wisdom. When Montaigne decided to keep his soul 'at home' – to keep it at home in his body – he brought home with it every aspect of his life, including his experience as a soldier fighting for his king and his religion, his wide reading, all his knowledge of men and women, good and bad, ancient and modern, lord and peasant, Catholic and *Réformé*, natural and civilised. He also brought home for consideration and inquiry his sexuality and all the traditional causes of ecstasies. The result was a revolution in thought arising from his perception of an underlying unity within the all but infinite variety of the human species. He did not descend into particulars from the general: his confidence grew until he dared rise to the general from one particular person: from 'me' to Man.[1]

Montaigne believed in the uniformity of nature. But he did not accept the doctrine of the natural equality and identity of endowment of all human forms. In an extreme version of this doctrine, certain Aristotelian theologians and philosophers claimed that, so far as their natural qualities were concerned, there was no difference between the soul of Judas Iscariot and the human soul of Jesus of Nazareth. As forms of Man they were identical in endowment and capacity. Such doctrines horrified

[1] For a useful contemporary discussion of the meaning, scope and limitations of the doctrine *Ab universalibus ad singularia progredi oportere*, see Archangel Mercanarius, *Dilucidationes obscuriorum locorum philosophiae naturalis Aristotelis*, Leipzig, 1590, pp. 11ff.

many. Yet if individual persons do differ in their various endowments, how does that come about within the single species which is Man? Some explained it in terms of bodily variation; some by the injection of the divine or the diabolical into human life; some thought in terms of the superhuman and the subhuman: Socrates, Seneca, Homer, Caesar – to jumble some names together – might be thought of as rising above their species, ceasing to be (mere) Man. Similarly with the great examples of evil. Renaissance playwrights, for example, work upon the animality of the Nebuchadnezzars and the Tamberlanes, portraying them as men who sank below the level of their species.

Montaigne abandoned such opinions, but he eventually placed phenomena such as Siamese twins within a special category. He did so with the help of a Platonic notion (studied by A.O. Lovejoy in *The Great Chain of Being*). There are, it was said, no missing links in the vast 'chain' of creation: the very fertility of God's creative powers required him to create every genus which it was possible to create, every one of them constituting a link in the chain of forms which stretches from that of the highest creature in the highest heaven to that of the lowest creature to be found anywhere. It was this theory that led Montaigne to wonder whether Siamese twins might be individual cases of otherwise unknown 'links', corresponding to generic forms (perhaps known only to God) from which they, in some unexplained way, derive their 'monstrous' characteristics:

> (C) What we call monsters are not so for God, who sees the infinite number of forms which he has included within the immensity of his creation; it is to be believed that the figure which astonishes us relates to, and derives from, some other figure of the same genus unknown to man. God is all-wise; nothing comes from him which is not good, common and regular: but we cannot see the disposition or the relationship (II. 30, p. 515).

Cicero is cited in support of this: 'A man is not amazed by something which happens often, even if he does not know why it occurs; but when anything happens which he has never seen before, he believes it to be a portent' (*De divinatione* 2.21). Montaigne insists that ecstatic amazement has no place in a wise man's reaction to a new phenomenon such as a 'monster': we are too ready to say that something is 'against nature' when it

is merely 'against custom' (II. 30, end).[2]

This special status given to 'monsters' as rare natural cases related to unknown forms did not affect Montaigne's approach to the genus Man. Nor would he admit good daemons, let alone evil devils, within the limits of his human inquiry. For him, men remain men. Moralists might call lust 'animal'. Yet the coarse brutal slaking of sexual desires which some men revelled in he found to be only metaphorically brutal or bestial; it was all too human. Brutes are not as brutal or as bestial as man when it comes to cruel sexuality. The only way in which man may really sink below the species Man is by becoming mad.[3]

What, then, are we to make of those 'forms' he had earlier called 'holy', great and venerable? Are they particular cases of rare or unknown genera? Certainly not.

Montaigne's acceptance of qualitative differences between human forms is what one would expect from him as a Renaissance Roman Catholic of a particular philosophical bent. Theologians and philosophers traditionally disagreed about this – both between themselves and among themselves. The Franciscan preacher Jean Boucher is again a good and succint guide, so I follow him; philosophers and glossators say the same thing, often more technically. According to Boucher, 'Aristotle and his disciples believe that all forms of Man are equally endowed by Nature with the same powers. For them, what makes for the differences between men are the varying degrees of organisation or disorganisation within the bodies to which their souls are joined'. To this may be added differences of climate and – particularly important – the different humours or temperaments of various men. Boucher explains that differences between individuals 'proceed from the dominant humour: we can see that melancholics are more ingenious; phlegmatics gross and heavy; cholerics agile and quick, also light in understanding;

[2] For a very brief naturalistic explanation of the kind of ecstasies which interested Montaigne, including astonishment in face of the unknown, cf. Fracastorius, *De sympathia et antipathia rerum*, Lyons, 1550, cap. 20: *De admiratione, & Ecstasi, & risu*, pp. 179f.

[3] This was quite a common position to adopt; cf. D. Lambin's edition of Horace's *Opera* (Paris, 1604, on *Odes*, I. 31, s.v. *Integra cum mente*): through madness, a human being loses his *humanitas* and ceases to be a man; that is because, as Aristotle taught in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the *mens* is the best part of man and so *amentia* is the gravest and most troublesome of states.

the sanguine more happy and pleasant and of agreeable company'. But many theologians go beyond this, insisting that the human forms themselves vary in degrees of endowment. Just as there are degrees of white which remain within the species Whiteness, so, for them, 'all rational souls remain of the same species', despite inequalities. 'A soul which is, by nature, more perfect than another, still remains within its specific nature, that is, it does not abandon its *species* to climb into a higher one; nor can a soul actually descend to a lower one ...'

In other words, for those who think as Boucher does and as Montaigne did before him, each and every man and woman, however good or evil, remains within the species Man. Nobody is superhuman. Nobody is subhuman – even the bestial madman does not have a 'bestial' soul. All souls of men and women are human, but they are not equally endowed.[4]

The *Essays* show that Montaigne was also aware of differences caused by bodily endowments, climate (both literally and in the sense of locally-based cultures) and various complexions – not least the melancholic. But he accepted his Church's teaching that the individual forms of Man also vary in natural perfection. Each man bears within himself 'the whole form of the human condition' – not only is he completely Man, but all the potentiality of Man is in him. Yet his own dominant form (what Montaigne calls his *forme maistresse*) is necessarily limited, so

[4] See R.-P. Boucher, *Les Triomphes de la religion chrestienne*, Paris, 1628, p. 771, Question 34, entitled, 'De cette esgale presence essentielle de l'Ame je viens à une autre en vous demandant si toutes les Ames sont esgales és degrez de perfection naturelle'. The explanation draws upon Peter Lombard (lib. 2. dist. 32) and the Commentaries of Bonaventura and others. This inequality of souls (or forms) can be explained in terms of the varying limitations of the bodies individually chosen by God for them and would be probably inexplicable if the souls were created independently of their bodies. Boucher stresses that inequality of form does not result in changes of species ('car une Ame plus parfaicte qu'une autre demeure tousjours en sa nature specifique, ne sortant point de son espece pour monter à une plus haute, n'y pour descendre à une plus basse'; p. 772). When Boucher talks strictly of men in terms of angelic or bestial tendencies it is as a comparison:' ... quelques unes subtiles *comme* des Anges, & d'autres grossières & stupides *comme* bestes' (p. 774). It is doubtful whether Montaigne accepted that even madmen were, *sensu stricto*, beasts not men. There is no suggestion in Montaigne of the soul of a madman actually sinking to a lower species even though, as body-plus-soul, he was acting as a beast. The concept that varying degrees of perfection are to be found in human forms is foreign to Aristotle and to scholastics like Aquinas; it was expounded by Duns Scotus and had many partisans in the Renaissance.

he must not mistake his *forme maistresse* for the *maistresse forme* of Nature. His *forme maistresse* is subject to all the limitations of body and temperament and is endowed by Nature with its own degree of perfection or imperfection.

Montaigne acknowledged the excellence of great men. When defending Cato and Plutarch he condemned those who judge everything by their own narrow standards – by what they are able to do or wish to do. 'Everybody believes that the *maistresse forme* of Nature is within himself, making that the touchstone and compass of all other forms.' This is wrong and Montaigne will have none of it. Yet, in the end, after much hesitation, he succeeded in keeping even the greatest forms of human kind well within the species Man.

Montaigne's admiration for the great had been real enough for him to explain his reactions in terms of the ecstasy of amazement. But while he remained 'stunned' and 'astonished' by the 'venerable forms' no moral progress was possible: he had to be able to judge them. Otherwise a major group of men rose above humanity and so were closed to his methods of investigation. Moral progress became possible once he laid aside ecstatic wonder. Then he could say that he 'fixes his gaze on great men' and '(B) judges what makes them rise so high'. Once he had identified the cause, he went on to claim '(C) to some extent to perceive the seeds of it' within himself. If that was so, it became possible and legitimate for him to judge himself against these great men – and to judge them against himself.

This is the key. He now considers these men as men, different from himself only in degree. The greatness of Cato grew from 'seeds' which exist in all men. The same applies to the 'extreme baseness' of some human souls: it does not 'astonish' him and he finds no difficulty in believing that fully human beings can be so base (II. 32, pp. 531-2).

Control of ecstatic *admiratio* (astonishment) in face of all but the truly divine became part of Montaigne's considered wisdom (Cf. II. 30, end). Thus, in the end, Socrates becomes not a saintly exception to be venerated but a model for mankind – always excepting his 'ecstasies and daemoneries' for which he had long been admired as divine, as though he had risen above the species Man. It is interesting to see how Montaigne reached this conviction. In his chapter on empty vanity, for example, Montaigne considered Socrates' preference for death rather than

exile. It puzzled him, since he could not square it with mere humanity. In such 'heavenly' lives as that of Socrates he could honour some aspects but could not feel emotionally involved. At that stage, moreover, he felt that 'some lives are so elevated and so *extraordinaire*' – so outside the natural order – that he could not really honour them, since he could not even conceive of them. Socrates claimed to be a citizen of the world; yet there he was fearing exile from his homeland! How can such contradictions in a great man be reconciled? (III. 9, p. 241). Montaigne eventually cut the knot by insisting on the humanity of this greatest of men. Once we are dealing with a man, however great, inconsistencies cease to surprise: men are like that.

2. Sallies and constancy

The old heroes were ecstatic in their bravery. Montaigne – even when all had been considered and weighed – did not deny the existence of many sorts of natural ecstasy: they existed and he distrusted them. Already in the first version of his chapter on virtue, Montaigne had reached this conclusion by his chosen method of looking into himself: 'I find from experience', he wrote, 'that there is a difference between [ecstatic] leaps and sallies of the soul and a settled, constant habit.' Seneca had dared to believe that the Stoic sage surpassed the divine, since God already has the property of impassibility, but the sage acquires it! Montaigne dismissed such nonsense. There is nothing impassible or constant in man. In the end Montaigne was unimpressed by claims that some men are superhuman: 'It can even happen to us – to us who are but misbegotten men; our souls are awakened by the speech or actions of others and we shoot them far above their ordinary state. This kind of passion thrusts and agitates the soul, ravishing it somewhat outside itself' (II. 29, p. 504). Because of this, quite ordinary men can know directly, from their own experience, something of the ecstatic virtues of the heroes of other times and of our own. All of us, including them, are and remain human. The divine has no place in Montaigne's account of the process by which the soul of heroes or philosophers is driven *hors de luy* – ecstatically 'outside' its normal state.

What others can do, we can share in, at least to some extent:

(C) Ordinate conduct, moderation, constancy apart, I believe that anything at all can be done, even by a man who, taken overall, is lacking and deficient (II. 29, p. 505).

3. Inspiration, or unfair arguments?

In the early days, Montaigne noted that Plato's title *divine* enjoyed 'universal consent; nobody has tried to contest it', unlike the same title boastfully attributed to Pietro Aretino – a common enough author 'who in no wise approaches that ancient divinity' (I. 51, end). Yet before the end of the *Essays* Montaigne had done what 'nobody' did; he had contested Plato's right to that title: the very claim to be divine was a pathetic indication of the man's humanity.

In the margins of the Bordeaux copy Montaigne wrote dismissively about the way in which Plato and Socrates called on inspiration to help them out of difficulties. To support a weak argument, Plato had asserted that even the wicked know how to distinguish good people from bad, '(C) through some divine inspiration ... '. Montaigne's comment is arrestingly blunt: '(C) that person and his pedagogue are marvellous and bold workmen' when it comes to introducing 'divine operations and inspiration, anywhere and everywhere when human strength gives out!' (II. 16, p. 404).

4. Judging revelations

It may well have been Montaigne's bad experience of the medical profession that led him to be ironical about all but specially privileged revelations vouchsafed to God's chosen few. Whenever medical experts based their remedies on divine revelations – as they often did – Montaigne kept his counsel and took his medicine! As for the proofs which 'authors say they have acquired from some daemon or other,' he said with detachment, 'I am quite happy to accept them (I never touch miracles) ... '. He saw such claims as dishonest ways out of hopeless situations. His choice of examples tells us much about his own preoccupations: among the infinite data which doctors would have to digest if 'their art' were to have value, he cites only one illness (epilepsy); among the infinite variety of complexions, only one (melancholy); among the infinite variations of the heavens, only one (the conjunction of Venus with Saturn – the planet which presided over all sorts of melancholy).

With such reflexions he toppled the gods of medicine from their pedestals. (If you wanted to know about melancholy would you go to them?) It is a fact that the medical art went back to very few great names. Herein lay its weakness: that three 'inspired' witnesses and three 'inspired' doctors should set up as professors to the whole human race is not reasonable (II. 37, p. 608). Hippocrates and Galen are two of these 'professors'. Another could well be Plato or Aristotle – both were authorities in medicine. Montaigne's amusement at those who claim to get their proofs from daemons may imply a laugh at the followers of the daemonic Aristotle, but would also apply to Platonising doctors, who had their daemons to inspire them. Hippocrates was thought to have been inspired. A Renaissance doctor like Cardano believed himself to be inspired too.

Ficino can be classed with 'Plato and his pedagogue' as one who had recourse to the divine when reason ran out. Ficino read the whole of Platonic *mania* into the thirtieth of Aristotle's *Problems*. The relevant passage of Ficino's commentary – the basis of so much Renaissance thought on ecstasy – represents just what Montaigne overthrew when he brought all men, except those privileged by special grace, firmly back into the human species. Ficino wrote:

> We must give reasons for the assertions of Democritus, Plato and Aristotle that some melancholics at times excel everyone else in their genius, so that they seem divine rather than human. Democritus, Plato and Aristotle definitely assert this, but they hardly seem to explain adequately why.

So Ficino proceeded to do so under inspiration – *monstrante Deo*, 'with God showing him the way' (*Opera*, 1641, I, p. 485). How can we argue with people who make their authorities superhuman and then explain what they mean by private inspiration direct from God!

Once Montaigne saw this, his whole attitude to revelation and ecstasy changed. Take the divinity away from Plato and Aristotle, reject Ficino's claim to divine guidance, and it is only a tiny step to doubt that the *Problems* were authentic anyway. One more step, and it does not matter whether they are or not:

they contain such stupidities.

Montaigne was reading the *Problems* when preparing the 1588 edition of the *Essays*. He was struck by the ease with which natural philosophers find causes for everything. He took an example from the *Problems* themselves: Why do we say 'bless you' when somebody sneezes? Well, '(B) we produce three sorts of wind; the one that comes out from below is too dirty; the one from the mouth, the belch of gluttons. The third is sneezing. As that comes blamelessly from the head we give it this honourable welcome. Don't laugh at such subtlety! It derives (they say) from Aristotle' (III. 6, beginning).

Again: lame women are more enjoyable to lie with. Why? Montaigne might hazard the guess that their irregular movements increase the pleasure of *la besongne*. But, he added, '(B) I have just learned that ancient authority has decided the matter'. He went on to give a dead-pan account deriving indirectly from *Problems* 10.25: the vaginas of such women are more forceful because they take the nourishment which the crippled thighs and legs are deprived of. He breaks off to make the comment: 'At this rate, what can't we reason about!' (III. 11, p. 319).[5]

5. Imagination and ecstasies

Montaigne had tried out for himself what it was like to lie with a lame woman. He found that imagination can make you believe you have exceptional sexual pleasures from crippled women,

[5] Montaigne's theme goes back indirectly to *Problemata* 10, 25 or 26, but it is misleading to state that his allusion to ancient explanations of the sexual potentialities of lame women are actually expounded there. Standard treatments of this theme are, as in Aristotle himself, man-centred, connected with the practice of the Amazons who crippled their future studs. They explain why crippled men, not crippled women, are more sexually desirable. Cf. the best-known text on this subject: Erasmus, *Adagia* 2.9.49, *Claudus optime virum agit*. But Montaigne is talking of women not men. For this, cf. Junius who, in his exposition of an adage *Cucumere vescens chlamydem texito*, has an explanation relevant to women, partly derived from Ermolao Barbaro (whom he accused Caelius Richerius Rhodiginus of plagiarising): cf. *Adagia id est Proverbiorum ... omnium quae apud Graecos, Latinos, Hebraeos, Arabas, &c. in usu fuerunt*, 1643, p. 663; Rhodiginus, *Antiquae lectiones*, Book 4, chap. 5, *Cur claudi salaciores*. See also Septalius on *Problemata*, 1632, pp. 97 and 294. On sneezing, cf. J.Guastavinius' *Commentarii in priores decem problematicum sectiones*, Lyons, 1608, p. 342.

even when you do not really do so; but imagination can also help you to glimpse the nature of real ecstasies, which are above the sustained experience of ordinary men. By 'imagination' Montaigne implies a force of disturbing power, enabling man to picture both absent realities and pure fantasies. The Roman medical writer Celsus, like Augustine later, vouched for ecstatic effects which may in fact be explained in terms of the power of imagination on soul and body. Montaigne recalls that the mysterious wounds of king Dagobert and the stigmata of St Francis might be accounted for in this way (I. 21, p. 123). The same examples and the same conclusions can be found in Cornelius Agrippa and Robert Burton.[6]

Montaigne weighed all forms of ecstasy, including sexual and philosophical ones, against his personal experiences. In special cases, imagination may make the soul's pictures into bodily realities. He had no doubt that, where ordinary men are concerned, imagination may even help to picture for a moment the spiritual states which privileged ecstatics experience with constancy.

Montaigne is always worth careful attention when he discusses imagination and fantasy (both subject to melancholy disturbances). He was '(A) one of those who felt the force of imagination very strongly'. As he wrote when discussing his melancholy tendencies, if he had not learned to tame his imagination '(A) he would have been in continual fear and frenzy' (I. 21, beginning: I. 20, p. 108).

Frenzies and ecstasies may be induced by imagination, and what passes for inspiration may be unexplained good luck. Montaigne did not consider such impulses to be divine, but he did not consider them negligible either. The amused tolerance which led him to take medicines based on allegedly revealed recipes worked elsewhere too: '(A) Not only in medicine but in several of the more certain arts fortune plays a great part. Why should we

[6] Cf. *Anatomy of Melancholy*. Pt. 1, Sect. 2. Mem. 3. Subs. 2 (Dent edition, I, pp. 253f): 'On the force of imagination': 'Especially it rageth in melancholy persons ... ' who may be 'witch-ridden'. 'Fracastorius *lib*.3. de *intellect*. refers all ecstasies to this force of imagination ... Dagobertus' and St Francis' scars and wounds, like Christ's (if at least any such were), Agrippa supposeth to have happened by force of imagination.' And so on. Fracastorius' approach to melancholy and ecstasy, with its rigorous exclusion of divine interventions, is a good yardstick for judging what Montaigne has to say.

not attribute to good luck (*bonheur*) those poetic sallies which catch an author away and ravish him outside himself?' *Orateurs* (prose-writers and public speakers) feel these 'extraordinary movements and agitations too'. Painters may even be in an ecstasy of amazement before their own paintings (I. 24, p. 162).

When writing about artistic creation – especially of poetry but also of excellent ancient prose – Montaigne regularly kept the language, though not the substance, of Platonic ecstasy: it was not in the earlier versions of the *Essays* but in the margin of the Bordeaux copy that he wrote: '(C) Poetry is an art (said Plato) light, flighty, daemonic' (III. 9, p. 270). When talking of poetry his most typical words are *fureur* and its cognates. But despite terms like 'daemonic', the supernatural is eliminated. What seems like poetic inspiration can be explained by other means: by luck, by imagination, by the demands of deep reflexions and profound thinking.

In the same way that artists feel themselves inspired, so mad inspirations from outside – *fureurs estrangeres* – are said to make leaders choose unlikely courses which then turn out right. Even in the early days, Montaigne was sceptical: 'Ancient Captains, in order to lend plausibility to their bolder decisions', told their men they had been led to such conclusions 'by some inspiration or other, some sign or prognostic' (I. 24, p. 163).

What may have brought Montaigne to place more and more distance between his wisely ordinate man and any form of ecstasy was the credence widely but unwisely given to the accusations of witnesses in cases of witchcraft. These witnesses were themselves amazed by the strange events they claimed to have witnessed. It is one thing to appear to be ecstatically amazed as a poet, author, painter – or even as a great statesman or general who cannot account for his lucky intuitions: it is quite another thing to treat the convictions of dazed witnesses in a court of law as matters of life and death for wretched old women. Divine truth or divine relevation is one thing: astonished opinion is another.

It is right that we should take 'God's own word' about witches when he deigns to reveal it, for it provides 'certain and irrefragable examples'. But that does not mean that we should take the word of a man who is '(B) amazed by his own narration – necessarily amazed if he is not out of his senses'. We should only

act on such evidence if God gives his *approbation surnaturelle* – a miraculous sign of approval – which will not be often. 'The privilege which it pleased God to grant to some of the testimonies we have must not be cheapened.' Men lie. They take their opinions for revealed truths. Yet, when all is said and done, '(B) it is putting a high price on your conjectures to roast a man alive' (III. 11, pp. 315-17).

The trouble arises from the power of imagination – the very thing wise melancholics learn to distrust.[7]

Montaigne seems to have reached the same conclusion as Jerome Mercurialis in the section on mania in his *Medicina Practica* (1601): melancholy madness is a form of alienation (as all authorities maintain), but it alienates the imagination, not the mind. In which case it has nothing at all to do with the manias Plato wrote about. Once this is accepted as true, the theories of Ficino based on the thirtieth of Aristotle's *Problems* fall to the ground, in so far as they apply to the natural ecstasies

[7] Montaigne discusses witchcraft in relationship to law; in medieval and Renaissance times the liberal view – that witches are deceived, only doing in imagination what they think they do corporeally – derived authority from Canon Law (26, qu. 5, *Episcopi*). The 'delusions' by which they are 'seduced' are classed there as the works of devils. 26, qu. 5 gave difficulties to keen prosecutors when witches were charged with going bodily to their sabbaths. Cf. the *Lucerna inquisitorum haereticorum pravitatis* of Bernardus Comensis in *Tractatus juris civilis*, 1584, Bodley, at L.Z.16, Art. Seld., p. 348v; the same point is raised by Bartholomaeus Spineus in *Quaestio de Strigibus*, ibid., p. 356r.f. Such works show that Montaigne was challenging deeply-entrenched legal authority. And yet, as Burton rightly insists, many medical authorities attributed all cases of alleged witchcraft entirely to melancholy delusions: 'Wierus, Baptist Porta, Ulrich Molitor, Edwicus, do refer all that witches are said to do, to imagination alone, and this humour of melancholy' (*Anatomy of Melancholy*, Part I, Sect. 2. Mem. 1. Subs. 6). Montaigne never gives the devil any rôle to play in the delusions of witches. He was not alone in that. Cf. Burton (*Anatomy*, Part I, Sect. 2. Mem. 1. Subs. 3, p. 202): 'Many deny witches at all, or if there be any, they can do no harm; of this opinion is Wierus, lib. 3. cap. 53, *de praestig. daem.*, Austin Lerchmeyer, a Dutch writer, Biarmannus, Ewichius, Euwaldus, our countryman Scott ... They laugh at such stories; but on the contrary are most lawyers, divines, physicians, philosophers, Austin ... ' (Montaigne is prepared to believe 'Austin' – St Augustine – but not the others!) Cardano, as cited by Reginald Scott in the *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (p. 16), attributed belief in witchcraft to three causes: 'the imagination of the melancholike, ... the constancie of them that are corrupt therewith, and the deceipt [deceiving] of the Judges.' J. Wier gives an important place to devils, but sees witches as being much the same as deluded ecstatics (*Cinq livres de l'Imposture et tromperies des diables*, Paris, 1569, p. 137vf. Montaigne's interest in sex-changes may be connected with similar preoccupations; Wier discusses them also at this point).

of unprivileged mankind.[8]

This brings natural man back to his own resources. Even Platonic ecstasies are discounted as unstable poor relations of privileged Christian ones; there is nothing divine about them. If the language of *furor* and *mania* continues to be used, it is as metaphor. Montaigne based none of his philosophical judgments on *mania* and only one on divine enthusiasm.

All judgments made from external appearances alone '(C) are marvellously uncertain and doubtful. No witness is more reliable than each man may be to himself', provided that we judge ourselves when we are 'at home' – that is, when we are in the state diametrically opposed to ecstasy or the philosophical practising of dying (II. 16, p. 339).

6. Geniuses are men

An entire culture had explained the achievements of genius in terms of melancholy ecstasies. Yet Montaigne concludes that in order to be wise it is not desirable to go beyond the ordinate. And nobody (as far as human wisdom can tell) is worked upon by spiritual forces raising Man above humanity – except ascetic contemplatives. Only these privileged contemplatives complicate the picture. Philosophy does indeed admit that they – and they alone – represent the highest reach of all. In other cases philosophy advocates not ecstatic *furor* but tranquillity of mind.

This explains why Montaigne, partly under Stoic influence, wrote that Philosophy herself had once been taught by divine enthusiasm from the true God, and so made to realise that the highest wisdom of all does not consist in philosophical calm. In this way Montaigne brought the divine madness of Platonising Christianity into harmony with the dominant Aristotelianism of an essentially scholastic moral theology. The complicating factor was the second Person of the Trinity, Holy

[8] Hieronymus Mercurialis, *Medicina Practica*, Frankfurt, 1601; cap. xvi, *De mania*, p. 70: 'Mania is a *mentis alienatio* or a continuous ecstasy, without fever or inflammation ... It is called an alienation of the mind as distinct from melancholy, in which it is the imagination which is alienated, not the mind ... From the above description it is obvious that this sick *furor* is far different from the *furor* which Plato talks about in the *Timaeus*.'

Truth, *la saincte Verité* who dragged Philosophy beyond her natural sphere of calm serenity, of *ataraxia* and *tranquillitas animi*. Truth compelled Philosophy to admit that, for the very few, there is a higher state than the one that she can reach: that of Christian Folly.

> (C) It was a pure enthusiasm – breathed into the spirit of Philosophy and wrenched from her, against her normal teachings, by *la saincte Verité* – that the tranquil state of our soul, the quiet state, the sanest state that Philosophy can obtain for the soul, is not the soul's best state. Our waking is more drowsy than our sleeping; our wisdom, less wise than our folly; our dreams, worth more than our discourse; the worse place we can take is *en nous*, within ourselves (II. 12, p. 319).

As a natural philosopher, Montaigne is only concerned with the lesser state, the one that owes nothing to direct inspiration from Truth. At all events it is right for the souls of the mass of mankind to stay within the limits of natural philosophy and to resist the temptations of that highest state revealed by Truth. Whatever may be right for the 'few', it is wrong for 'us' to aspire to being *hors de nous* in what can only be a foolish parody of true ecstasy. The divine madness of the few is the bestial madness of all the others. We avoid that fate by enjoying our 'being' in its natural condition. That is why ordinary humans have been granted compensations, including the God-given pleasures of the body – pleasures which great and busy men like Socrates, Alexander and Caesar found time to enjoy. Such pleasures – which strengthen the soul, not weaken it – are 'natural and, consequently, necessary and just' (III. 13, p. 419).

Montaigne urges the wise to accept the human condition in terms consecrated by traditional piety: they should enjoy everything that God has granted them and render 'condign thanks' to God for every pleasure. *Graces condignes* are ordinate thanksgivings, proportionate to the bounty of each particular gift. Typically, Montaigne insists that for a man to offer up condign thanks he must 'savour and ruminate' the gifts of bodily pleasures, associating his soul with them, '(B) not so that it should become drunk on them, but so that it should take pleasure in them – not losing itself but finding itself in them' (III. 13, p. 425).

This advice applies especially to those like Montaigne, whose

conscience and passions are at peace and who accept their bodies with buoyant gratitude. Such men have a soul which 'measures' how much it owes to God, 'enjoying ordinately and appropriately those pleasures which God vouchsafes, in compensation for the pains he so justly sends upon mankind' (III. 13, p. 425).

Philosophy, unaided, can obtain no higher state for the human soul.

Montaigne conquered melancholy with melancholy. In a sense he had always done so. Young love can be a form of ecstasy; so when he was struck with grief over the death of La Boëtie (a grief which was powerful and just, he tell us, '(B) on account of my complexion') he sought out a *vehemente diversion*, a mind-departing distraction, by deliberately making himself fall in love by art and industry – something rendered easier by his age (III. 4, p. 63). That might be all right in youth, but it seemed less and less wise as time went on. For there is a wiser melancholy, wiser than all the melancholic ecstasies of natural man. It is the reverse of vehement, being inclined, rather, to stolidity. It keeps the soul at home and weighs all things in the quiet intimacy of that 'privat roome' at the back of the shop. Unlike ecstatic melancholy, it keeps madness well away.

Yet even that is not enough; the best of complexions may become too rigid. Complexions affect the very form, or soul, of men: '(B) We ought not to nail ourselves so strongly to our humours and complexions ... To keep yourself attached and bound, of necessity, to one single way of life is to be, but not to live. The fairest souls are those that have most variety and suppleness' (III. 3, beginning). He himself found that he passed easily from moroseness to joy, from bouts of melancholy humour to accesses of choler. That was, for him, more proof of human inconstancy.

Mad melancholics like Molière's Alceste cherish their rigidities and seek out dark corners in rural solitudes. Not so the wise: they keep up their commerce with friends, women, books. The solitude that Montaigne advocated was never a local one. It always emphatically remained a matter of the mind withdrawing, not from people nor from the body, but from an excessive engagement in outside affairs.

It took Montaigne a lifetime to reach his conclusions, since he worked from particulars not universals. An attractive humanist

of an earlier generation, Celio Calcagnini, reminded his readers that young men can be knowledgeable when knowledge consists in universals; but they can hardly be wise; wisdom depends on particulars and so on a long acquaintance with the experiences that life can offer (*Opera*, 1544, p. 118; cf. *Nicomachaean Ethics*, VI, 8, 5-8).

Montaigne's wisdom brought him, by roundabout paths, from one particular, himself, to the whole of human kind.

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Concordance of references

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III.11, p. 316, (V/S p. 1032; Platt. p. 132; Pl. p. 1009). S.1168.

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Estienne de La Boëtie, *Oeuvres Complètes*, ed. Paul Bonnefon, Bordeaux & Paris, 1892, p. 159.

2.6 The hunt for wisdom
II.10, p. 103 (V/S p. 409; Platt. p. 112; Pl. p. 388). S.459.
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I.28, p. 243 (V/S p. 186; Platt. p. 66; Pl. p. 185). S.210.

6.2 Sexual climaxes
III.5, p. 73 (V/S p. 844; Platt. p. 85; Pl. p. 281). S.952.
III.5, p. 74 (V/S p. 844; Platt. p. 85; Pl. p. 281). S.952.
III.5, p. 139 (V/S p. 893; Platt. p. 157; Pl. p. 872). S.1011.

III.5, p. 143 (V/S p. 896; Platt. p. 162; Pl. p. 875). S.1014-15.
III.5, p. 94 (V/S p. 859; Platt. p. 108; Pl. p. 837). S.970.
III.5, p. 118 (V/S p. 877; Platt. p. 135; Pl. p. 856). S.991.
III.5, pp. 137-8 (V/S p. 892; Platt. p. 156; Pl. p. 871). S.1009f.
III.5, p. 138 (V/S p. 893; Platt. p.157; Pl. p. 871). S.1010.

6.3 Poetic ecstasy
II.12, p. 208 (V/S p. 489; Platt. p. 228; Pl. p. 469). S.544f.
III.3, p. 46 (V/S p. 823; Platt. p. 54; Pl. p. 801). S.927.
II.2, p. 20 (V/S p. 347; Platt. p. 28; Pl. p. 329). S.390.

7.1 Melancholy retreat
I.26, p. 212 (V/S p. 164; Platt. p. 34; Pl. p. 163). S.184.
II.8, p. 69 (V/S p. 385; Platt. p. 78; Pl. p. 364). S.442f.
II.8, p. 79 (V/S p. 392; Platt. p. 89; Pl. p. 372). S.440f.

7.2 Bravery and pedantry
I.39, p. 314 (V/S p. 241; Platt. p. 140; Pl. p. 235). S.271.

7.3 A place of one's own
I.39, p. 315 (V/S p. 242; Platt. p. 142; Pl. p. 236). S.271.
I.39, p. 312 (V/S p. 240; Platt. p. 139; Pl. p. 234). S.269.
I.39, p. 313 (V/S p. 241; Platt. p. 140; Pl. p. 235). S.270.

8.1 Amorous zeal
I.56, p. 414 (V/S p. 321; Platt. p. 251; Pl. p. 307). S.360.
II.11, p. 131 (V/S p. 430; Platt. p. 141; Pl. p. 409). S.481.

8.2 Religious zeal
II.11, pp. 120, 127, 130, 133 (V/S pp. 422, 427, 429, 431; Platt. pp. 129, 137, 140, 143; Pl. pp. 400, 406, 408, 410). S.473, 480-482.
II.19, p. 463 (V/S p. 672; Platt. p. 104; Pl. p. 654). S.763.
II.30, p. 258 (V/S p. 197; Platt. p. 81; Pl. p. 195). S.223.

9.1 Change and decay
I.26, p. 187 (V/S p. 146; Platt. p. 7; Pl. p. 144). S.164.

9.2 Platonic forms
II.12, p. 366 (V/S p. 601; Platt. p. 399; Pl. p. 586). S.680.

9.3 How to know individuals
II.1, p. 8 (V/S p. 337; Platt. p.15; Pl. p. 320). S.379.

10.1 The footloose soul
III.2, p. 21 (V/S p. 805; Platt. p. 29; Pl. p. 782). S.908.
II.12, pp. 366-7 (V/S p. 601; Platt. p. 399; Pl. p. 586). S.680.
I.46, p. 359 (V/S p. 279; Platt. p. 192; Pl. p. 269). S.312

11.1 Experience
III.13 (lst sentence of *De l'experience*).
III.13, p. 360 (V/S p. 1065; Platt. p. 179; Pl. p. 1041). S.1207.
I.47, p. 368 (V/S p. 286; Platt. p. 203; Pl. p. 276). S.320.
III.13, p. 361 (V/S p. 1065; Platt. p. 180; Pl. p. 1042). S.1207
III.13, p. 363 (V/S p. 1067; Platt. p. 183; Pl. p. 1044). S.1210.
III.13, p. 363 (V/S p. 1067; Platt. p. 183; Pl. p. 1044). S.1210.
III.13, p. 375 (V/S pp. 1075-6; Platt. p. 195; Pl. p. 1053). S.1221.

11.2 Words
III.13, p. 366 (V/S p. 1069; Platt. p. 186; Pl. p. 1046). S.1213.
I.26, pp. 221-5 (V/S pp. 170-4; Platt. pp. 44-9; Pl. pp. 170-4). S.189ff.
I.40, p. 325 (V/S p. 251; Platt. p. 154; Pl. p. 245). S.281.

11.3 The end of Man
III.13, p. 364 (V/S p. 1068; Platt. p. 184; Pl. p. 1045). S.1210.

12.1 Satisfaction for the soul
I.39, p. 318 (V/S p. 245; Platt. p. 146; Pl. p. 239). S.275.

12.2 Asceticism
I.39, p. 319 (V/S p. 245; Platt. p. 146; Pl. pp. 239-40). S.275.

13.1 Authority
I.56, p. 408 (V/S p. 317; Platt. p. 245; Pl. p. 303). S.355.
I.56, p. 408 (V/S p. 318; Platt. p. 245; Pl. p. 303). S.355.
II.2, p. 18 (V/S p. 345; Platt. p. 26; Pl. p. 328). S.388.

13.2 The body and the Church
III.8, p. 186 (V/S p. 930; Platt. p. 210; Pl. p. 909). S.1084.
III.13, p. 420 (V/S p. 1108; Platt. p. 244; Pl. p. 1089). S.1259.

14.1 Physics or metaphysics?
II.10, p. 102 (V/S p. 409; Platt. p. 112; Pl. p. 388). S.459.
For Montaigne's indifference to natural philosophy, see II.12, p. 322 (V/S p. 570; Platt. p. 352; Pl. p. 553). S.642f.
III.13, p. 365 (V/S p. 1069; Platt. p. 185; Pl. pp. 1045-6). S.1212f.
III.13, p. 371 (V/S p. 1072; Platt. p. 190; Pl. p. 1050). S.1217.

14.2 Forma mentis
I.50, p. 387 (V/S p. 302; Platt. p. 224; Pl. p. 290). S.338.
III.2, p. 29 (V/S p. 811; Platt. p. 37; Pl. p. 789). S.914.

14.3 Honesty
III.2, p. 21 (V/S p. 805; Platt. p. 29; Pl. p. 782). S.908.
I.9, p. 40 (V/S p. 36; Platt. p. 45; Pl. p. 37). S.35.
II.18, p. 456 (V/S p. 666; Platt. p. 97; Pl. p. 649). S.757.

III.11, p. 318 (V/S p. 1033; Platt. p. 134; Pl. p. 1011). S.1170
III.9, p. 265 (V/S p. 991; Platt. p. 73; Pl. p. 969). S.1121.

14.4 The whole form of mankind
III.2, p. 21 (V/S p. 805; Platt. p. 29; Pl. p. 782). S.908

15.1 Aristotle and the glossators
II.6, p. 60 (V/S p. 379; Platt. p. 71; Pl. p. 359). S.426.

15.2 Botched forms and individual forms
III.2, p. 32 (V/S p. 813; Platt. p. 40; Pl. p. 791). S.916.

15.3 Angels and Cato
III.2, p. 23 (V/S p. 806; Platt. p. 30; Pl. p. 784). S.909.
I.37, p. 303 (V/S p. 231; Platt. p.127; Pl. p. 227). S.259.
III.12, p. 345 (V/S p. 1054; Platt. p. 164; Pl. p. 1031). S.1194.

15.4 The soul at home
III.2, p. 28 (V/S p. 810; Platt. p. 36; Pl. p. 788). S.913.

15.6 The greater forms
III.12, p. 323 (V/S p. 1037; Platt. p. 139; Pl. p. 1014). S.1174.
III.12, p. 325 (V/S p. 1038; Platt. p. 140; Pl. p. 1015). S.1175.

16.1 Wondrously corporeal
III.8, p. 186 (V/S p. 930; Platt. p. 210; Pl. p. 909). S.1054.

16.3 Platonists, Averroists, Realists, Nominalists ...and Ascetics
I.37, pp. 299-300 (V/S p. 229; Platt. p. 124; Pl. p. 225). S.257f.

17.1 Socrates triumphant
I.20, p. 104 (V/S p. 85; Platt. p. 114; Pl. p. 83). S.93f.
I.56, p. 415 (V/S p. 323; Platt. p. 252; Pl. p. 308). S.361.

17.2 Socrates criticised
III.13, p. 423 (V/S p. 1110; Platt. p. 247; Pl. p. 1091). S.1261f.

17.3 Me
III.13, p. 425 (V/S p. 1112; Platt. p. 249; Pl. p. 1092). S.1263.
III.13, p. 426 (V/S p. 1113; Platt. p. 251; Pl. p. 1093). S.1264.
III.13, pp. 427-8 (V/S p. 1113; Platt. p. 252; Pl. p. 1094). S.1265.

18.1 Divorce reform
III.13, p. 428 (V/S p. 1114; Platt. p. 252; Pl. p. 1094). S.1266.
III.13, p. 428 (V/S p. 1114; Platt. p. 252; Pl. p. 1095). S.1266
II.17, p. 419 (V/S p. 639; Platt. p. 58; Pl. p. 622). S.727.
II.17, p. 419 (V/S p. 639; Platt. p. 58; Pl. p. 623). S.727.

18.2 Archimedes' ecstasy
III.13, p. 429 (V/S p. 1114; Platt. p. 253; Pl. p. 1095). S.1267.

18.3 Eternity
III.13, p. 429 (V/S p. 1114; Platt. p. 254; Pl. p. 1095). S.1267.
III.13, p. 423 (V/S p. 1110; Platt. p. 247; Pl. p. 1091). S.1267.

18.4 Special privileges for Christian voluptuaries
I.56, pp. 412-13 (V/S p. 321; Platt. pp. 412-13; Pl. p. 306). S.358f.
III.12, p. 429 (V/S p. 1114; Platt. p. 254; Pl. p. 1095). S.1267.
I.23, p. 140 (V/S p. 111; Platt. p. 153; Pl. p. 109). S.125.

18.5 People like us
III.13, p. 429 (V/S p. 1115; Platt. p. 254; Pl. p. 1095). S.1267.
III.13, p. 429 (EM variant) (V/S p. 1115; Platt. p. 254; Pl. p. 1095). S.1267.

18.6 Socratic ecstasy and Christian coenobites
III.13, p. 429 (V/S p. 1115; Platt. p. 254; Pl. p. 1095). S.1268.
III.13, p. 430 (V/S p. 1115; Platt. p. 254; Pl. p. 1096). S.1267; (also for 18.7).

18.8 Astonishment
I.23, p. 169 (V/S p. 121; Platt. p. 168; Pl. p. 120). S.136.
I.23, p. 155 (V/S p. 121; Platt. p. 169; Pl. p. 120). S.137.

18.9 The whole being of man
II.36, p. 573 (V/S p. 757; Platt. p. 225; Pl. p. 735). S.856f.
III.13, p. 430 (V/S p. 1115; Platt. p. 255; Pl. p. 1096). S.1268.
III.5, p. 118 (V/S p. 878; Platt. p. 135; Pl. p. 856). S.993.
III.13, p. 427 (V/S p. 1113; Platt. p. 251; Pl. p. 1094). S.1265.
II.12, p. 305 (V/S p. 558; Platt. p. 334; Pl. p. 541). S.629.
III.13, p. 430 (V/S p. 1115; Platt. p. 254; Pl. p. 1096). S.1265.
II.3, p. 28 (V/S p. 354; Platt. p. 36; Pl. p. 334). S.397.
II.12, p. 202 (V/S p. 485; Platt. p. 221; Pl. p. 464). (For 'sacrilege' the text of 1588 read 'temeraire'.) S.540.
I.30, p. 258 (V/S p. 198; Platt. pp. 81-2; Pl. p. 195). S.223.
I.30, p. 257 (V/S p. 197; Platt. p. 81; Pl. p. 195). (For 'biaiz s'accommode la *voix* divine' the text of 1588 read 'biaiz se peut accommoder la parolle divine'.) S.223.

19.1 The higher forms again
II.30, p. 515 (V/S p. 713; Platt. p. 161; Pl. p. 691). S.808.
II.32, pp. 531-2 (V/S p. 725; Platt. p. 180; Pl. p. 703). S.821.
III.9, p. 241 (V/S p. 973; Platt. p. 47; Pl. p. 951). S.1101.

19.2 Sallies and constancy
II.29, p. 504 (V/S p. 705; Platt. p. 149; Pl. p. 683). S.799.

II.29, p. 505 (V/S p. 705; Platt. p. 150; Pl. p. 683). S.799.

19.3 *Inspiration, or unfair arguments?*
II.16, p. 404 (V/S p. 629; Platt. p. 44; Pl. p. 613). S.344.

19.4 Judging revelations
II.37, p. 608 (V/S p. 783; Platt. p. 262; Pl. p. 763). S.883.
III.11, p. 319 (V/S p. 1034; Platt. p. 135; Pl. p. 1012). S.1171.

19.5 Imagination and ecstasies
I.21, p. 123 (V/S p. 99; Platt. p. 134; Pl. p. 97). S.111.
I.20, p. 108 (V/S p. 88; Platt. p. 118; Pl. p. 86). S.97.
I.24, p. 162 (V/S p. 127; Platt. p. 177; Pl. p. 126). S.143f.
III.9, p. 270 (V/S p. 994; Platt. p. 78; Pl. p. 973). S.1125.
I.24, p. 163 (V/S p. 128; Platt. p. 178; Pl. p. 127). S.144.
III.11, pp. 315-17 (V/S pp. 1031-2; Platt. pp. 130-3; Pl. pp. 1008-9). S.1166.
II.16, p. 399 (V/S p. 626; Platt. p. 38; Pl. p. 609). S.711.

19.6 Geniuses are men
II.12, p. 319 (V/S p. 568; Platt. p. 349; Pl. p. 568). S.640.
II.12, p. 320 (V/S pp. 568; Platt. p. 350; Pl. p. 552). S.640.
III.13, p. 419 (V/S p. 1108; Platt. p. 243; Pl. p. 1088). S.1258.
III.13, p. 425 (V/S p. 1112; Platt. p. 249; Pl. p. 1092). S.1263.
III.4, p. 63 (V/S p. 835; Platt. p. 73; Pl. p. 813). S.941.

APPENDIX B

Two Latin versions of Aristotle, *Problemata* 30.1 (abridged)

1. The version of Theodore Gaza

Cur homines, qui ingenio claruerunt, vel in studiis philosophiae, vel in Republica administranda, vel in carmine pangendo, vel in artibus exercendis, melancholicos omnes fuisse videmus? & alios ita, ut etiam vitiis atraebilis infestarentur ceu inter heroas de Hercule fertur? hic enim ea ipsa fuisse natura putatur; & morbum commitialem sacrum ab illo, & Herculeum prisci nominavêre. Puerorum quoque motio mentis idem hoc explicat & eruptio ulcerum quę mortem interdum antecedit. Id enim plerisque atra bile consistit. Et Lysandro Lacędemonio proximè ante obitum genus id ulcerum emersit. Adde Ajacem, & Bellerophontem, quorum alter penitus ad insaniam prorupit, alter loca persequebatur deserta. Unde illud Homeri:

> *Ast hic quando etiam gravior diis omnibus errat,*
> *In campos solus latos: ínque avia rura,*
> *Ipse suum cor edens, hominum vestigia vitans.*

Quinetiam plerósque alios ex heroum ordine morbo eodem laborasse compertum est. Annis verò posterioribus Empedoclem, Socratem, Platonem & alios complures viros insignes hoc fuisse habitu novimus, atque etiam partem ordinis poëtarum ampliorem. Nam & multos id genus hominum morbi ob ejusmodi habitum corporis exercent, & aliqui suapte natura in eos ipsos affectus perspicuè vergunt: omnes tamen ferè, ut dictum jam est, natura hujusmodi extitere. Ergo causam primùm exemplo haud sanè incommodo vini capiemus. Vinum enim immodicum tales maximè homines reddere videtur, quales melancholicos esse affirmamus, morésque varios id condit, cùm bibitur, ut iracundos, humanos, misericordes, audaces, quorum nihil mel, aut aqua, aut lac, aut ejusmodi aliquid efficere potest. Intelligi planè quàm varios reddat homines licet, si quis potantes ipsum animamvertat, ut gradatim evariat. Ubi enim vinum hominem frigentem taciturnúmque à sobrietate accepit, paulo liberaliori poculo refovet, excitátque id

verba: tum largiori potu verborum uberem, eloquentem, fidentémque reddit: posthac processu potandi ampliori, audacem propensúmque facit ad agendum: deinde pleniùs amplificato in contumeliam & petulantiam vertit: mox ad insaniam propemodum accendit: postremò, nimio ex potu resoluit, stultúmque agit, in modum eorum qui à pueris morbo laborant comitiali, aut etiam eorum qui vitiis atrae bilis majorem in modum continentur ... Si modum (atrabilis) excedit, hominem facit attonitum, aut obtorquentem, aut anxium, aut formidolosum: sed si admodum incalescit, securitatem animi, cantilenásque parit, & mentis alienationem, & ulcerum eruptionem, & alia pleraque generis ejusdem. Parti igitur hominum maximé victu quotidiano redundans, mores nihilò immutat, sed morbum melancholicum tantummodo creat. At quibus habitu natura tali constiterit, mox his multa & varia morum genera exoriuntur, prout scilicet alius aliam habitus intemperiem sortitus est. Exempli gratia, in quibus multa & frigida bilis est atra, hi stolidi sunt, & ignavi: in quibus permulta & calida, ii perciti, & ingeniosi, amasii, propensi ad omnem excandescentiam, & cupiditatem, nonnulli etiam loquaciores. Multi etiam propterea quòd ille calor sedimentis in vicino est, morbis vesaniae implicantur, aut instinctu lymphatico infervescunt, ex quo sibyllae efficiuntur, & bacchae, & omnes qui divino spiraculo instigari creduntur, cùm scilicet id non morbo, sed naturali intemperie accidit. Maracus civis Syracusanus poëta etiam praestantior erat dum mente alienaretur. At quibus minùs ille calor remissus ad medioritatem sit, ii prorsus melancholici quidem, sed longè prudentiores: & quanquam aliqua in parte minùs excedant, multis tamen in rebus caeteris sunt omnibus praestantiores, alij in studiis literarum, alii in artibus, alii in Republica ... Homines melancholici varii inaequalésque propterea sunt, quia vis atrębilis varia & inequalis est: quippe quę vehementer, tum frigida tum calida reddi eadem possit. Et quoniam vim eandem morum obtinet instituendorum, (mores enim calidum condit, & frigidum omnium maximè, quae nostro in corpore habentur,) idcirco nos morum qualitate afficit quadam, informátque ut vinum, quod prout plus minúsve corpori intermistum infusúmque est, varios reddit. Flatuosum utrumque est, & vinum, & atra bilis. Cúmque sit, ut portio quoque aliqua temperata illius inaequabilis ordinis habeatur, flatúsque modo quodam acquiratur integrè, habitúsque respondere calidior frigidiórque possint ob exuperantiam qualitatis, hinc efficitur porrò, ut melancholici omnes non per morbum sed per naturam sint ingenio singulari.

From *Aristotelis Opera Omnia*, ed. Duval, Paris, 1629, f., vol. 4, pp. 815-19. (In some earlier versions there are minor variants in this text, as, for example, *hujuscemodi* for *hujusmodi*; cf. *Problemata Aristotelis cum duplici translatione antiqua verò & nova. s. Theodori Gazę cum expositione Petri Apone*, Venice, 1505, page E3vf. The older version given in this volume is interesting, but remote from Montaigne: it is the translation of Bartholomew of Messana, which usually accompanies the commentary of Peter d'Abano: see R.J. Durling, *A Catalogue of Sixteenth-Century Printed Books in the National Library of Medicine*, Bethesda, Maryland, 1967, p. 36, entry no. 286.)

2. The version of L. Septalius

Cur omnes, qui egregii fuerunt, vel in Philosophia, vel in civilibus, vel in poësi, vel in artibus videntur esse melancholici, & ita quidem, ut infestentur etiam à morbis, qui sunt ab atra bile, ceu fertur ab heroicis de iis, quae sunt circa Herculem? Etenim ille visus est factus hujus naturae, ut & propterea morbum comitialem ab illo denominabant antiqui Herculeum, & sacrum morbum. Et quae pueris contingit mentis commotio, hoc explicat, ut & eruptio ulcerum in coeta, quae mortem antecedit: id enim plerúmque ex nigra bile evenit. Contigit autem & Lysandro Laconi ante mortem fieri ulcera haec. Quin & praeterea quae contigerunt circa Ajacem, & Bellerophontem, quorum alter maniacus factus est omninò, alter loca prosequebatur deserta. Unde illud Homeri.

Ast hic quando etiam Diis gravior omnibus errat,
In campos solus latos; inque avia rura.
Ipse suum cor edens hominum vestigia vitans.

Et alii ex Heroïbus simile quid passi sunt. Et posteriorum Empedocles, Plato, & Socrates, & alii plures notorum; & praeterea eorum, qui in poësi se exercuerunt plurimi. Multis siquidem talium fiunt morbi ab huiusmodi temperamento corporis. His autem inesse natura demonstrat ad has passiones repens. Oportet igitur causam sumere, primò ab exemplo argumentantes. Vinum etenim immodicum maximè tales reddere videtur, quales melancholicos esse affirmamus, & varios mores producit epotum, puta iracundos, humanos, misericordes, truculentos. Atqui neque mel, neque lac, neque aquam, neque aliquid similium videbit quispiam varios adeò facere, si quis observaverit, ut mutat bibentes à priori statu. Assumptum enim à frigentibus hominibus unde sobrii, & taciturni erant, paulò plus, potest loquaciores facere. Adhuc autem plus faciendos, & audentes ad aggrediendas actiones etiam timidos. Quin praeterea uberiùs epotum contumeliosos, deinde maniacos; si verò valdè in bibendo excedatur, dissoluit, & facit stupidos, sicut ex pueris laborantes morbo comitiali, aut laborantes vehementi melancholia ... Si verò superabundaverit in corpore, apoplexiam aut stupores, aut torporem facit, aut timorem: quando autem magis incalescit alacritates, mentis commotiones, & ulcerum exacerbationes, & alia similia. Multis igitur à quotidiano cibo facta diversitatem morum non producit, sed morbum solùm aliquem melancholicum. Quibus autem à natura consistat temperamentum, tale confestim isti secundùm mores fiunt omni genere morum variabiles pro alio, atque alio temperamento, verbi gratia; Quibuscunque quidem

multa, & frigida inest, stolidi sunt, & inepti; quibus autem multa, & calida, maniaci, industrii, amasii, & propensi ad iram, & concupiscentiam, nonnulli etiam verbosi magis. Multi enim quòd calor is est prope locum mentis, morbis afficiunter maniacis, & lymphaticis. Unde Sybillae, & Bacchides: & numine afflati fiunt omnes, ubi morbo tales non fiant, sed naturali temperie: Malacus Syracusanus praestantior etiam erat poëta, dum mente alienaretur. At quibus caliditas magna ad mediocritatem reducitur, ii melancholici quidem sunt, sed prudentiores tamen, & minus admirandi; ad multa autem differentes in aliis. Siquidem ex iis, alii ad disciplinas, alii ad artes, alii ad gubernandam Rempublicam idonei redduntur. ... Quia facultas atrae bilis varia, & inaequalis est, homines melancholici varii inaequalésque sunt, quòd vehementer tum frigida, tùm calida eadem reddi possit, & quoniam vim habet formandorum (mores enim calidum format, & frigidum omnium maximè, quae nostro in corpore habentur) ideò nos, ut vinum, prout magis, minúsque corpori commixtum, facit nos tales, & tales secundùm mores; flatulentum enim utrunque & vinum, & atra bilis. Quoniam autem contingit & benè temperatam esse, & inaequalitatem obtinere, & benè quodammodò se habere, & ubi oportet calidiorem esse, & iterum frigidam, aut è contra, ob hos excessus, quos subit, efficitur, ut melancholici non per morbum, sed per naturam, excellant ingenio.

From *Ludovici Septalii Patricii Mediolanensis, Protophysici Regii in Mediolanensi Dominio, & Politicae Scientiae in patria Professoris, in Aristotelis Problemata Commentaria ab eo latine facta* ... Lyons, Claudius Landry, 1632, pp. 345-8. (Some discreet, and usual, changes in spelling and punctuation, in the interests of clarity.)

The passage cited has at the head a marginal note reading, 'Viri egregii in aliqua scientia, arte, aut facultate cur magna ex parte melanchonici'.

Select Bibliography

1. Texts

The best basic text remains that of Fortunat Strowski: *Les Essais de Michel de Montaigne, publiés d'après l'exemplaire de Bordeaux, avec les variantes manuscrites & les leçons des plus anciennes impressions, des notes, des notices et un lexique*, 5 volumes, Bordeaux, 1906-1933. (In the course of the work François Gebelin and Pierre Villey joined in the task of editing and annotating.) This text is normally called *L'Edition municipale* or *L'Edition critique*.

An excellent substitute for everyday use is the edition of Pierre Villey, re-edited by V.-L. Saulnier: *Les Essais de Michel de Montaigne. Edition conforme au texte de l'exemplaire de Bordeaux avec les additions de l'édition posthume* (etc.) 2 volumes, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris, 1965 (3rd edition, 1978). This text is known as Villey/Saulnier.

2. Concordance

Since the completion of this study, a *Concordance des Essais de Montaigne* has been established by R.E. Leake, assisted by D.B. and A.E. Leake (2 volumes, Droz, Geneva, 1981). It will save readers hours of not always fruitless search for a quotation or *locus*. It gives references which can be traced in the Villey/Saulnier edition and then (with the help of a table of page equivalents) in the *Edition municipale*, the *Pléiade* and the *Garnier* editions. It does not include the handy edition of Plattard for the Société 'Les belles lettres'.

3. Bibliographies

(a) For older works consult:

Plattard, J., *Etat présent des études sur Montaigne*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1935

Tannenbaum, S.A., *Michel Eyquem de Montaigne*: A Concise Bibliography, New York, 1942
Cioranesco, A., *Bibliographie de la littérature française au XVIe siècle*, Paris, 1959
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(b) For current and more recent works consult:

Bulletin de la Société des Amis de Montaigne
Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance
Studi Francesi
Bibliographie internationale de l'Humanisme et Renaissance, Droz, Geneva, 1965 – in progress
Klapp O., *Bibliographie der französischen Literaturwissenschaft*, Frankfurt A/M., 1960 (in progress)
Rancoeur, R. (editor): *Bibliographie de la littérature française du moyen âge à nos jours*, Paris, 1962 (in progress); based on running bibliographies appearing in the *Revue d'Histoire littéraire de la France* (q.v.)

4. Further reading

(a) Basic studies

Three standard interpretations of Montaigne are conveniently summed up in three studies:

(i) Pierre Villey: *Les Sources et Evolution des Essais de Montaigne* (2nd edition, Hachette, Paris, 1933). An impressive study, especially of sources and datings.

(ii) Hugo Friedrich: *Montaigne* (A Francke R.G. Verlag, Berne, 1949 (revised 1967); French translation by Robert Rovini, Gallimard, Paris, 1968. Useful, but weak on religion and the influence of Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy.

(iii) R.A. Sayce: *The Essays of Montaigne. A critical exploration*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1972. Dr Sayce was at his best when treating the complexities of Montaigne's text.

The bases of all modern studies of Melancholia are:

(i) Panofsky, E., and Saxl, F., *Dürers 'Melancholia I'*, Berlin and Leipsig, 1923

(ii) Klibansky, R., Panofsky, E., and Saxl, F.: *Saturn and Melancholy*, London, 1964.

A new interpretation of Montaigne is that of Antoine Compagnon: *Nous, Michel de Montaigne* (Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1980). It is the first published study I know which gives a large place to Montaigne's debt towards scholastic traditions; the work assumes the validity of some curious critical approaches but is well worth reading.

(b) Life of Montaigne

The two standard works, both excellent, are Donald M. Frame: *Montaigne: A Biography* (New York 1965) and Roger Trinquet, *Le Jeunesse de Montaigne* (Nizet, Paris, 1972).

(c) General

Works of particular interest to the subjects treated in this book are marked with an asterisk, but are not, otherwise, necessarily more important than the others.

A useful introduction to the kind of questions raised here is the last book of the late Dame Frances A. Yates, *The Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age*, London, Boston and Henley, 1979.

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