STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY
California State University, Chico

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Written for S.D. in the Czech language,
in the Czechoslovak Academy of Science,
Institute of Philosophy, Prague,
Czechoslovakia, 1956 - 1958.

Confisticated and destroyed by censorship
of the Soviet bureaucratic dictatorship,
Prague, occupied Czechoslovakia, 1968.

Translated and published with the help of
University Foundation, California State University,
Chico, United States of America, 1978.

Note: The following three essays were originally printed as a classroom material for my classes in history of philosophy, without my proof-reading. Some mistakes and accents could not have been corrected in this reprint without resetting the original print. There are three more studies dealing with the *Road to Atheism,* which are not translated into English yet, but which were part of the Czech original: *Feuerbach - the Humanist, Marx - the Revolutionary,* and *Camus - the Absurd Rebel.*

MONTAIGNE

Voicy du grand Montaigne une entiere figure:
Le Peinctre a peinct le corps, et luy son bel esprit:
Le premier par son art égale la Nature,
Mais l'autre la surpasse en tout ce qu'il escrit.
Thomas de [illegible]

FOREWORD

Many of us are concerned with how use might be made of the knowledge proliferating so rapidly in modern society. Even with the great advances in communications, the plethora of scholarly journals in each discipline, and the advent of the paperback as a means of disseminating professional material, most of us find difficult the task of maintaining competence in our own special areas while at the same time sharing new and interesting developments with our colleagues in the academic community. Just such, a concern led a small group in the Spring of 1970 to consider means by which pertinent, well-written contributions might be made accessible to the college community at large. What follows represents our attempt to fill the lacuna mentioned above. The manuscripts chosen thus far give clear indication that there is much we can learn from our colleagues. The succinctness and readability of each lends itself to recognition of the limitations we all have on our time.

Ivan Svitak needs no introduction to Chico's academic community Since his arrival here in 1970, he has maintained the same level of quality publications that led to his international reputation as a theorist prior to his leaving Czechoslovakia. In addition to developing his thought further with new publications, he has spent considerable time translating many of his works into English. *Montaigne* is one such endeavor. Written in the late 1950's, but never published, it was used as the basis for Professor Svitak's DeBellis Memorial Lecture in 1971. Since that time it has been revised and is here published for the first time.

The reader should be aware of this chonology because it provides insight into what the author had in mind when he wrote it. Although written about the thought of a celebrated sixteenth century French essayist, the monograph is as much Svitak as it is Montaigne. One cannot escape the pessimism of the East European communist intellectual of the post-Hungary era. Ironically Svitak's translation and revision occurred under even more trying circumstances: his homeland had been invaded, he had lost his citizenship, and he was separated from his family, perhaps forever. Moreover, an enlightened intellectual environment -- which Svitak had helped to create -- had vanished.

Nevertheless, Svitak's Montaigne sparkles as a man in love with life, a man dedicated to exercising his intellectual powers. Those who reviewed the manuscript were moved by the life-like portrait of Montaigne. They were also treated to an exciting excursion into the world of philosophy. The Monograph Selection Committee is confident that those who read our third publication will find it as rewarding and worthwhile as we did.

Robert S. Ross, Editor
CSUC Monograph Series

THE MAN

"To know how to live is all my calling and all my art."
. . .Montaigne

The shrewd, big, almond-shaped blue eyes gaze at us from the portrait by an unknown artist with a cool distrust rooted in knowledge of life. The apparent repose of the figure sets off the dynamic intellectual energy that shines in the face, together with a certain nobility of soul. The bald, elongated skull with high forehead and small mouth suggests all that was vital in sixteenth-century life. This is the official portrait of the mayor of Bordeaux. But let us rather imagine him galloping through the countryside of southern France while his horse's hooves beat out the rhythm of "Here come the cadets of Gascony. . ." Now the figure in the portrait comes to life and becomes its true self, the Seigneur Michel de Montaigne, *gentilehomme de la Chambre du Roi de France*, gentleman-in-ordinary and chevalier of the Order of St. Michel. When the excellent horseman dismounts, you will be a little disappointed, for he is short and his walk is temperamental, quick and rather ridiculous. But he will be sparkling with ideas, for during his ride he had a long talk with himself and his best thoughts always come to him while he is riding.

If asked to talk about himself he would say, in his loud, high-pitched voice and with a touch of irony, that he is cheerful, has no dreams and a good digestion; he is terribly lazy, he never becomes too excited about anything, he is not accustomed to serving others, he tries to avoid exertion and worry, he has no taste for domestic matters or for practical occupations, he is clumsy, he cannot even saddle a horse, he cannot recognize the vegetables in his garden or the farming implements in his fields. He has tried everything but he does nothing really well, only *a la francaise*. He loves books and discussions but he is not much of a scholar; he has only a kind of respectable acquaintance with learning. He is extraordinarily forgetful, suffers from colic and loses everything; he cannot remember the names of his servants and it takes him three hours to learn three lines of poetry. Though he has some 1,000 books in his library, he does not study them but desultorily turns the pages, reading a passage here and there at random. He amuses himself by playing with ideas about whatever happens to interest him. He says his mind is dull, slow and irresolute, though his judgment is good. Indeed, he is simply a lazy, vain egoist with a thousand faults.

The man who introduces himself in this delightful way was born on February 28th, 1533, a little before noon, at the Montaigne chateau in Perigord, as the third son of a rich patrician, wine-grower and merchant. The family house stood in the trading port of Bordeaux, in the Rouselle quarter which smelled of salted fish. His father, Pierre Eyquem de Montaigne, was a sensible man of independent spirit and good judgment who knew his own mind; he was small, strong, active in public affairs and he always behaved with the greatest courtesy. In his youth he went as a Gascon soldier to Italy where he came into some contact with renaissance humanism

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and was fired with enthusiasm for it. On his way back home he married Antoinette de Louppes, of Toulouse, the daughter of a Portuguese Jew and Michel's mother. He wanted his child to be brought up in such a way as to make him both healthy and humble. As soon as Michel was born, he was sent to live among the woodcutters in the village of Papessu so that he would acquire a strong character. Then, while he was still an infant, his father had taught him Latin, the language of scholarship, even before he learned to speak French, so that Michel spoke Latin as his mother tongue. At the College de Guyenne in Bordeaux, where he was sent at the age of six, he excelled in Latin, but otherwise his studies bored him profoundly and he preferred to spend his time reading Ovid. He became an avid bookworm. At thirteen he went to the faculty of Arts and then to the faculty of Law, probably in Toulouse. His father, who was mayor of Bordeaux at the time, set him up as a counsellor in the Cour des Aides in Perigueux and soon afterwards as a counsellor in the Parlement of Bordeaux. The young Montaigne spent sixteen years in these professions though they did not really appeal to him. Meanwhile he struck up an admirable friendship with Etienne de la Boetie, who greatly influenced his intellectual development; he visited Paris and the royal court, saw his friend die and had some love affairs which taught him that to become totally absorbed by any passion is foolish; at 32 he married the 7,000-livre dowry which went with the hand of Franoise de la Chassaigne, the daughter of a parliamentary colleague of his; he published a translation of *Theologia naturalis* by the Spanish theologian Raymond de Sebonde and had several children of whom he took no notice and two or three of whom died in the cradle.

At his father's death he inherited a large property, gave up his profession and changed his way of life. He moved to the family chateau and looked forward to an idle life of the kind practised in the antiquity he loved. He intended to spend the rest of his life in peace, in reading for his own amusement. He turned the third floor of a tower into a library and on the beams of its ceiling he had carved the maxims of various classical authors: "He who claims he is wise does not know what wisdom is"; "Men suffer because of their ideas about things not because of the things themselves," and so on. He came to this room every day to enjoy its peace and tranquility. He would turn the pages of one of his books for a while, then go to the window to look out over his garden, glance through another book for an hour or so, copy out some quotation, or whole passage, that struck his fancy, then walk to and fro dictating whatever thoughts occurred to him; all without any plan or system at all. In this way he went on working at his book, interrupted only by a seventeen-month journey through Switzerland, Germany, and Italy and by his duties as mayor of Bordeaux, a function which he did not take too seriously. When the city was struck by plague, he left it and shut himself away in his castle. From there he observed the ravages wreaked by the plague in Bordeaux and also by the plague of the civil war, in which almost no lives were lost, it is true, but which for him was nothing but a school of treason, inhumanity and plunder. As mayor he organized the defense of the city and acted as intermediary between the Catholics and the Protestants, whose fanaticism left him unmoved. When his official duties came to an end, he returned to his chateau, prepared a new edition of his book, declined an invitation to come to court and, on September 13th, 1592, he died.

The book which he left us is one of the most magnificent things in world literature. The Essays are the first work of a man of 47 with no training in philosophy. They were written rather like a diary, simply to satisfy the author's need to express himself, and were probably not originally meant to be published at all, but merely to be read after his death by his friends and relatives. The 107 chapters that make up the three books contain his views on the most varied subjects. They tell us about his whole life, about his favorite books, about the education of children, about friendship, solitude, prayer, the conscience, about fame and vanity. Reflections about great personalities and famous men, about Cicero, Heraclitus and Plutarch, are rooted in anecdotes which alternate with observations on how people in general, and the author himself, behave. He usually makes no effort to keep to the subject announced in the heading, and he is capable of making one essay a page long and another as long as a whole book. In some places he openly contradicts himself, in others he repeats himself almost word for word. He copies whole passages out of Agrippa of Nettesheym, perhaps because Agrippa copied them in the first place from Pico della Mirandola.

What made Montaigne decide to write? It has been said that he was ambitious and that the provincial honors of Bordeaux could not satisfy him because all the attractions they offered were his already.

Did he first cure himself of love by marriage and then of ambition by solitude, so as to fulfill the stoic ideal and find the harmony he longed for? Hardly. He simply withdrew into himself in order to find not philosophy, but wisdom and peace of mind. He sets himself only one goal: to find himself; for as long as he possessed himself he would never be without resource. For once one betrays himself, he loses everything, though he should gain the whole world. The book is a document of the rise of individuality and of the evolution from medieval anonymity to the expression of the author's own personality. Whatever subject he deals with, Montaigne always comes back to his principal theme, himself; he plunges into himself with a cool, astute and even ironical introspection. Dominate nations and other people? No. The goal is to dominate one's own self, to become master of oneself. The Essays grew out of Montaigne's journey towards himself; the subject of the book is the process by which his wisdom grew to maturity. If we do not approach it in this way and if, instead, we look for some kind of philosophical system in it, we shall find only a system of contradictions and a caricature of a vain nobleman who tells us all sorts of silly things about himself. The Essays are beautiful because they were written for the person dearest to the author: for Montaigne himself. They are near to us because we discover ourselves in them, and they are philosophical, because philosophy beams with self-knowledge.

At one time the Essays were regarded as a homogeneous whole; then it became apparent that they bear the traces of the successive stages that mark the evolution of Montaigne's thinking. The author's original intention arising from his desire to let his spirit rest, give itself up to idleness and divert itself as it pleases, unconstrained by any set goal, was simply to amuse himself. If this was not the method and the aim of the Essays, they had no aim and still less method. Two months after St. Bartholomew's Night (1572),

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Montaigne began, very inexpertly, to compile the first essays; he paraphrased, or even directly copied, classical authors and built up series of quotations concerning various specific topics rather than composing coherent essays. He drew upon only a few favorite authors and had nothing but contempt for systems of all kinds. The literary sources of the Essays were: the classical philosophers and historians, especially Seneca, Plutarch, Sextus Empiricus; his favorite poets, Horace, Lucretius, Virgil and Catullus; and, among the French, Ronsard and du Bellay. What Montaigne looked for in books was what pleased him and what helped him to know himself. He read in order to divert himself and then noted down the thoughts that occurred to him. The entertainment to be derived from reading may be less enjoyable than the pleasures of discussion or the company of ladies, but that cannot be helped. Then he began to be drawn to moral problems; the first, anecdotic type of essay dissappears; the reflections are based on history and on reports of people's real actions and general behavior; until finally the sense and intention of the essays crystallizes out: to learn about man in general and about the author himself in particular. The Essays therefore represent the triumph of the most natural interest of a spirit given up to idleness - its interest in itself. If they have any specific goal, it is the discovery of man, and the man they set out to discover is Michel de Montaigne. In the last phase of his life, after 1588, he again went back in his notes to his original method, commenting what he read.

The first edition of the Essays appeared in 1580; it contained the first two books, which were the fruit of the preceding eight years' work. There followed an interval of six years, in which Montaigne travelled and occupied himself in public affairs. In 1586-88 he wrote the third book, added some notes and prepared the fifth edition, that of 1588, which included the third book. The sixth edition, with further additions, appeared only after his death. The work immediately had a great success on account of the variety of its subject-matter, the charm of its style and the frankness and lucidity of its thinking. Its success grew still greater with time. We cannot give a better idea of how widespread an effect the Essays produced than by saying that they influenced all the leading figures of French and world literature, almost without exception, even though some, like Rouseeau and Pascal, reproached him with cowardice, softness or false sincerity. On the other hand, others, like Voltaire especially appreciated him as a unique phenomenon of his time, a philosopher among barbarians.

The Essays are an achieved, integral work, and yet they are an unplanned, incomplete, confession. They are finished, but not in the sense that the Mona Lisa is finished, because they are a work that cannot be finished. They are literature of the highest rank and yet they are primarily the memorial of a life, not the product of a maker of books. They are deliberately non-scientific and yet the scientific contribution they made to the knowledge of man is still valid. They were meant to be a means whereby a renaissance spirit, an individualist mind, could express itself and this makes their objective value all the greater. Montaigne does not confront one objectively valid system with another system but only with a series of his own personal attempts to arrive at one. An open system is set against a closed system, a living form

against a toothless, academic tract. The objective spirit of Bacon's or Descartes' scientific method is totally alien to the author, and yet his subjectivity is much closer to us today than exact empiricism or rationalist clarity. The world is change, just as our spirit is, and therefore the nearest that we can come to capturing it is by a snapshot of reality, an attempt, an essay; Montaigne himself is one such attempt.

The content of the book matched the absolute formal novelty, the uniqueness of the new genre. The essay is at once a new literary genre and a new technique; it is an attempt with no pretensions to universal validity, an attempt conscious of the risk of failure, a test of the author's personal possibilities, an admission that his image of the world is fragmentary and subjective, a sounding of his own personality, an immediate record of the dialogue going on inside him. To be an essayist, a man must be ready to interrupt a strictly logical argument in order to capture an idea that occurs to him and to abandon the depths of thought in favor of a poetic image. A solemn philosopher turns away with disgust from a book of essays, and a non-philosopher turns away from philosophy. That is why from the very first paragraph the reader feels at home with Montaigne -- who is never solemn but rather delights in irreverence, and thus proves himself a kindred spirit.

Perhaps the essay form grew out of Montaigne's love of argument, which was his favorite pastime. He believed that our minds become coarser or more refined according to our choice of partners in debate, and so he tried to establish what makes for a good discussion; he put the same principles into practice in his writing. He demands openness, frankness, objectivity. It is better to be beaten by a good argument than to win by a bad one. If the conversation is to remain lively there must be contradictions, but the rules of debate must be observed. Debating is a way of training the mind; it is a school of truth-seeking, not a battle-ground for ambition. He hates bad habits in debate, such as misusing analogy, misunderstanding the opponent's argument, growing angry instead of countering one argument by another, repeating propositions and not saying anything to the point, using words instead of arguments. It is best not to waste time on the fools who behave in this way; they are always self-satisfied, whereas a wise man is always dissatisfied. Strowski thinks that the impression of a light, flowing conversation is the outcome of a deliberate effort, and the number of corrections he makes shows how meticulous the author was and what pains he took to produce this appearance of facility. How much time it must have cost Montaigne to make his writing so lucid and easy to understand. And how easy it is to be deep and incomprehensible if one uses a philosophical jargon which is so ambiguous that it is guaranteed to suggest some meaning even when it has no real content at all.

Montaigne does not have a high opinion of his writing; he says his style is just random talk, formless and following no rules. Everything he writes seems to him crude and without beauty; he envies people who take pleasure in their work, because he is always dissatisfied with his. He is very self-critical and afraid that his reader will be bored. He says his language has no ease or polish, but he leaves it as it is, because it matches his natural

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character. He has something of the ape in him, he confesses, and he borrows from others. He does not like the pretentious searching out of new expressions for the sake of novelty, and he would be glad if his style were such that it could be understood in the Paris market-place. That is why he rejects Latin, which was the official language of scholars, as well as learned terminology and jargon, and why he writes conversational French, the strong and forceful language of the people. Even in the twentieth century some expressions have appeared too undignified to one timid editor who has preferred to replace them by dots.

Montaigne's language is the union of light and shade, tenderness and strength; a union which is always overpowering, in love as in literature; because it springs from an integral personality, from true individuality. Montaigne writes to amuse himself, he does not play at being a man of letters and his style is a fair reflection of his character. Its charm lies in its casual carelessness, the constant digressions and detours away from his main topic, through which we sense a frank and open directness that delights us. Difficult topics are interspersed with narrative illustrations, humor alternate with gravity and behind the pleasant chatter we suddenly glimpse the gaping jaws of death. Montaigne's style is personal, concise, economical, directly involving the reader and yet marked by the refreshing casualness with which the author wanders around the topic of his essay, giving in to the momentary impulses that lead him now in one direction and now in another. This style derives its personal quality, which has no parallel in philosophical literature, from the combination of a light conversational tone with grave and complex matter, a combination which makes a mockery of the school theories about the necessary unity of form and content. This technique creates the continual tension between the verbal surface and the nucleus of idea which is an artistic representation of thought. The two kinds of thinking, in images and in concept here merge while each retains its peculiar advantages; philosophy blends with poetry until it appears that they are one: that philosophy is the poetry of thought and poetry the philosophy of the word. Beauty does not veil depth but makes it more unfathomable, and depth does not spoil beauty but makes it shine more brightly against the darkness. This is the marriage of paradox which Montaigne, like Heraclitus, Hegel or Marx, loved so dearly; of paradox which demonstrates the complexity of nature and of man more vividly than logic, because both nature and man transcend logic at every step.

Montaigne was both philosopher and writer at the same time, so that often we do not know what to admire first, the originality with which he solves the problems he sets himself, his mastery of literary form or the modernity of his work, or rather - if modernity itself is history - its relevance to the present time. Montaigne writes out of an inner need, in order to set his own life straight. If he had thought of his writing as belonging to the literary craft, he would have hired someone to do it for him; it was not something a nobleman would take up himself. It is his ostentatious non-literariness, the fact that he does not use his high style to present a stylized image of himself as a superior being, or perhaps that his auto-stylization is so complex and frankly unconcerned about the reader, that makes him so like a modern

writer. And it is this that makes him immortal. Works of art and of philosophy are meaningless if they are no more than some kind of objectively discovered truth to be conserved with archaeological care by historians of literature and philosophy. They are valuable only in so far as they are documents about life, in so far as they help to preserve the memory of actual personalities and bear witness to the possibilities of human experience.

ESSAIS
DE MESSIRE
MICHEL SEIGNEVR DE
MONTAIGNE CHEVALIER
de l'ordre du Roy, & Gentil-homme ordinaire de sa Chambre.

LIVRE SECOND.

A BOVRDEAVS.
Par S. Millanges Imprimeur ordinaire du Roy.
M.D.LXXX.
AVEC PRIVILEGE DV ROY.

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THE STOIC

"I seek only self-knowledge, that which will teach me to die well, and also to live well."

. . . Montaigne

When the culture of a given society undergoes an integral, profound, structural change, a complex and multi-faceted process of intellectual re-birth takes place also. This is brought about by at least three principal currents of ideas: an absolute stagnation in the way of thinking prevalent up to that time, an attempt at a radical reform of the dominant ideology, and finally the revolutionary creation of a new culture which publicly proclaims its rejection both of the old era and of any tendency to compromise with it. As a rule the opposition springs up first among the most cultivated members of the ruling class, in this case among the educated ranks of the feudal intelligentsia. This law, which seems to govern every cultural revolution, operated at the beginning of the modern era through two distinct attitudes towards the stagnating tradition of feudal Christianity. There was the politico-ideological current, which tried to reform religious ideas and whose aim was not to break with the preceding culture but to reform it in order to bring it into line with the new social conditions; this led on the one hand to the wars of religion and on the other, to the Council of Trent. The second current, humanism, was often conservative from the external, political point of view, but at the same time it was much more radically at variance with Christianity and it created new forms of living and thinking which did not draw their intellectual inspiration from the culture then prevalent, but from a social order long left behind - the world of antiquity. Thus the humanists who, thinking they were going back into the past over one whole cultural formation, took the secular spirit of the time for their guide and reality for their prop; in fact, had a much more penetrating influence on reforming the way their age actually lived than did their practically more important and politically progressive contemporaries who were trying to reform the world. That is why many humanists such as Montaigne, Erasmus, Ronsard, La Boetie and More spoke out against radical Protestantism and remained Catholics. They were attracted by the program of the reform movement but not by the institutions, which offered them less freedom than the old church. So the ideas of humanism grew up, often in the margin of the current political struggles, but always in the heart of the fundamental conflict of two cultures. There are ideas that directly serve their age and need to be in contact with it, and there are other ideas that mature in solitude and preclude any such contact by the fact that they far transcend their age.

When dealing with a specific cultural revolution, we must be careful to distinguish between political appearances and the real essence of the situation - the change in the way people live. While people living at the time tend to be totally absorbed by the political surface of events, and to regard it as much more important than it really is, it is on the contrary the gradual change which slowly creeps through history that is of the greatest importance in the historical context. Because the question of all political questions is

not whether this happened or that, while the conditions remained unchanged with an oriental persistence unaffected by the sultan's incompetence and the viziers' intrigues. On the contrary, the real question is: what changes took place in the way people lived? Only where such changes do actually occur and are not merely simulated by an ideological camouflage does that which is most important for social progress happen - a change in the human situation, a change in man himself. Montaigne lived in an age where both types of change occurred with a particular violence, in the midst of the civil war in France and in the Reformation.

We must bear this in mind so that we may understand that Montaigne is the battle-ground where two cultures clash: the feudal, aristocratic and religious culture and the capitalist, bourgeois and secular culture. Let us now try to enter into his intellectual world. In his personal development, Montaigne went through four main phases of thought. He was Christian, a stoic and a sceptic before arriving at his own life-wisdom. That is to say, he changed his views, overcame them and left them behind him in the process of developing his own opinions. These were often contradictory, but for the author himself they formed a consistent view of the world and of life; they enabled him to live a better, more conscious and more individual life. This constant changing of opinions corresponds to his personal development and to man's natural inclination to receive ideas, and when they are worn out, to lay them aside, with the innate grace of a capricious woman. The changes in our opinions follow from the changes in our organism; we think differently when we are healthy and when we are sick, when we are old and when we are young. So there is no view of the world that is valid once and for all; there is only continual change which enables us to react to the changing current of life's events. Even the firmest conviction is only a function of the given situation and if the situation changes, the conviction changes too. Fate tosses us hither and thither and we always think that our latest views are the most correct. Why should a man uphold the same ideas all his life, considering that the world of youth, maturity and old age are so different from one another? A change of mind shocks only the professional philosopher who has to remain the dupe of the principles of his school because his livelihood depends on it. But if such a man sets up the immutability of life-principles as a standard, he is simply projecting on to others the conditions of his own existence, and people are not guided by these in any case.

Montaigne changed his views. That is why many contradictory views have been expressed about him. Some praise his morality, others his amorality, one praises his scepticism, another his firm conviction. As regards his attitude to religion, he is once a Catholic apologist, then a critic of religion and a third time a sceptic. For some, his criticism of reason is frankly fideistic and his scepticism about the possibilities of knowledge is related to his faith in revelation, for others, it is a means of attacking the dogmatism of the church. This kind of approach will not get us anywhere, because there are elements in Montaigne which can be used to build up mutually contradictory interpretations of him. Who is Montaigne? Is he a Christian or a critic of religion? a sceptic or on the contrary a man seeking knowledge and leading us to do the same? is he a philosopher or ostentatiously a non-philosopher?

A thinker shut up in an ivory tower or on the contrary a man closely involved in the immediate practice of daily life? Montaigne is first of all himself. He is a Christian and a pagan, a sceptic and a believer, a stoic and an epicurean, a sceptic and a seeker for knowledge, a theoretician and a practitioner of the wisdom of life; he is a man of the middle ages and of the renaissance, a sociable recluse a conservative radical; he is a living contradiction, he is the union of various aspects which cannot be reduced to the opposite poles of any single antithesis. We cannot interpret him as a personality characterized by one of the traits or one of the currents in a specific form of social consciousness, as a philosopher of one category or of one idea. We can understand him only if we see him as a personality formed by the clashing of different cultures; as a battle-field on which the culture of antiquity struggles with the bourgeois reality, as a landmark in the process of reshaping an old culture to new ends. It is this breadth and disparateness that make the phenomenon that is Montaigne so remarkably representative of the renaissance, of its different individual aspects; for his thinking contains both poles of the various contradictions that characterize the age. There are thinkers who embody one aspect of the social problem of their time and who are optimistic in opposition to its pssimism, and so on. Montaigne always contains both poles within his own person. He is not on one side, he is on both and against both. Perhaps that is because profound wisdom cannot confine itself to one standpoint and fight for that, since what it is fighting for is to give its life as many dimensions as possible.

The first layer of Montaigne's consciousness is the Christian religion. All through his life Montaigne remained a believing Catholic and there is no need to try to make out that his Catholicism was merely a superficial, insignificant and formal component of his personality. The truth is that he personally committed himself politically to the Catholic cause, that he wrote a great apology of the Christian faith and that he never knowingly abandoned the fundamentals of Christianity. And yet from an objective point of view his work was basically a radical anti-Christian proclamation: it was so deeply pagan, anti-feudal and even anti-religious in its essence, that if we judge how radical a given attitude is not according to the words in which it is expressed but according to its intrinsic revolutionary value, we must place Montaigne's work among the most violent attacks on feudal philosophy and society in the history of atheism and materialism. In his philosophy, religion is only one of the things about which he reflects with the same seriousness as about toothache, about his colic or about a classical author. What is important is not what Montaigne thinks about God but what part God plays in his life and in his philosophy.

Montaigne's Catholicism is connected with his political conservatism rather than with his philosophical system. Theology, politics, laws and dogmas, priests and rulers, these are authorities which must be obeyed. At a time of growing religious strife, he believes that the solution lies in a strong authority which will uphold the liberal attitude of tolerance. Montaigne is thus an advocate of tolerance, but at the same time a firm supporter of the king and of political power, because he would like to avoid the civil war, extremism and disorder that Protestantism brought in Germany and England. Moreover he felt that only an extremely conceited man would attach so much

importance to his own opinions that he would be prepared to disturb the public order and start a civil war on their account. Nevertheless, he would also have liked to do away with the defects of Catholic countries such as Spain and Italy. Thus even in politics Montaigne cannot confine himself to one point of view; the republican in him struggles with the monarchist; the conservative trying to preserve the old order and distrustful of change comes forward as a champion of tolerance and writes with hatred about the brutality and baseness of both sides in the conflict; the resolute upholder of the political power of the monarchy reproves the nobility and reminds them that even on the seats of power they sit only on their own behinds; he favors a policy of clean hands and yet he admires Machiavelli; he advises people to serve the aristocracy, but with reservations and without becoming slaves to the party spirit; he fully respects the laws' authority while he scorns their imperfection and injustice; he rejects the right to rebellion in the same way as political murder.

Similarly the modern theologian struggles inside him with the renaissance humanist and the renaissance humanist with modern man. Montaigne has many critical ideas about the Christianity of his time which bring him near to Protestantism. He does not believe in miracles. He feels that Christianity does not live by what it pretends to believe in, because people simply use religion in order to do what they want to do anyway. Their convictions are determined by circumstances. He reprobates the wars of religion and considers that both sides are in the wrong. Nevertheless he condemns whatever the Catholic church condemns and his attitude in practice is submission to the Church. He recommends the Our Father as a pleasant prayer and reprehends the evangelical worship of scripture and free interpretation of the Bible.

It must be acknowledged that in one respect Montaigne remained permanently dependent upon the religious view of the world, and that was in his scepticism about the capacity of human reason and in his total reliance on faith and on God's mercy in the final questions. Montaigne realized that Christianity cannot be proved by rational arguments; he thought this was because of the nature of reason, which according to him, was feeble, wretched and ineffectual; he was convinced that religious faith has a logic of its own, which cannot be founded on reason because it is beyond the scope of reason. Montaigne takes a fideistic attitude when he says that besides the truths which reason cannot discover - and among these he includes the existence of God and the fact of revelation - there are also mysteries accessible only to faith. Instead of simply rejecting these views of Montaigne's as a medieval survival of which almost no one in his time managed to rid himself, let us rather ask what is objective and right about his attitude. The conflict between faith and reason, between religion and science, is objectively valid so long as reason and science are not capable of explaining the mysteries of their opposite pole, religious faith. While this is the case, these irreconcilable principles are obliged to co-exist, just as irreconcilable elements - fire and water - exist side-by-side in nature. For Montaigne, faith in God was a kind of metaphysical certainty about the order of life, a trust in a guarantor of moral values, a name given to the unmanageable sector of man's personal and social life. This Christian layer of his consciousness was soon overlaid by new influences.

In every man's life there comes a time when he begins to be tormented by the question of what he really is, when he tries to find and discover himself, to come to grips with the meaning of his life, when he feels the reality of his personality as only the appearance of being, as an alienation of himself. This state is a sign of maturity, because in it we become aware of the value of life by the very fact that it begins to disappear. It is a crisis in which the world we have known suddenly seems to be deprived of meaning, because the mechanisms of escape which shield us from the insoluable question of life's meaning cease to function. Out of the strange yearning which suddenly falls upon us, we emerge either broken by the knowledge that life is senseless or reborn through our realization that we are responsible for whatever we do. Out of the desire to be masters of our own personality, not to be dragged along by circumstances, not to be prisoners of the given situation, is born either self-command or capitulation. These crises often lead to a complete change of direction in life, a collapse of the view of the world that we held previously; they may bring a complete paralysis or, on the contrary, a great upsurge of activity. For Montaigne this turning-point in life takes the form of his moving away from his earlier course of action and his decision to try to define himself. He turns to Seneca and Plutarch in order to learn from them how to accept the inevitable and he begins to write his first stoical essays.

After his father's death Montaigne immersed himself for two years in books containing the stoical wisdom of antiquity, the philosophy which aims to teach man how to dominate himself and morally perfect himself. You are wise when you have become master of yourself, says stoical wisdom in short. At first Montaigne simply paraphrases the stoical view that people are more tormented by ideas than by things. It is not in our power to change things, but we can change our ideas about them. If that is so, we have the power, by changing our estimation of things, to stop tormenting ourselves; for evil is not evil in itself but only because we imagine it so. Change your ideas about death, poverty and pain and you will be rid of them; then you will not need to fight the world, to defend yourself against it, oppose it. We can overcome the fear of death or poverty by changing our view of them. Only the fear of physical pain cannot be eliminated in this way, because pain is real and no intellectual approach will do away with it, as advocates of torture are well aware. But if pain is long it is weak and if it is sharp, it is short. The same is true of pleasure; if we want it to last, we must not burn it up in an instant. And therefore the way to deal with the only real suffering which we cannot dominate by our consciousness-that is, physical pain-is to approach it as Mucius Scaevola did, refuse to give in to it, remain above it, even when it dominates our body, even though our hand may burn away. The problem in the last resort is not pain, but the fact that we are too weak to bear it.

Montaigne is also a stoic in his conviction that man must live in harmony with nature and this, for stoics, meant not only with the environment and with the nature in man, but also with reason, which was regarded as part of nature. It is easy to achieve harmony with external nature because that does not demand anything of us, but to attain harmony with the nature inside ourselves is much more difficult. Montaigne gradually softened the harshness of stoicism by bringing some milder epicurean ideas into it. He turns away

from the rigid demand that we must dominate our passions, conquer them, and pursue virtue along narrow stony paths, towards the idea that we should rectify our passions with the help of reason. After all what matters in life is that we should arrive at some kind of Socratic philosophical balance, obtain contentment of mind and firmness of character. Montaigne gradually relinquished the extreme stoical calm advocated in the story which tells how, when a storm at sea threw a fellow-passenger into a panic, Pyrrha pointed to the calm pig standing before them as an example that the frightened man would do well to follow. We can find calm pigs in the midst of every storm but we need not take them for our models.

In his stoical period, Montaigne thinks of philosophy in the traditional way, as the art of the good life; he regards it as a preparation for non-being and the problem of death dominates his thinking. This philosophy fulfills the role of religion; it solves the problem of life's meaning by teach-- ing us to despise death. For an intellectual, death may be a question of coquetry or of decadence, but it is as real to a philosopher as to a doctor, because the thinker sees life as a limited sector of time between two states of non-being at the beginning and at the end, a sector filled with joy and suffering, love and hate, good and evil, tenderness and brutality, as a dance between the abysses of birth and death. Thinking about death and about the darkness which will swallow us up need not lead to passivity; it can equally well provide a stimuls to action. We are mortal? Then let us live all the more intensely; the outcome is not determined by the logic of our opinions but by the logic of life. If we try to make things easier for ourselves by refusing o think about our end, we deprive ourselves of a part of our humanity, just as if we reject pleasure or anything else that actually exists. Not thinking about death is no proof of superiority; an animal does not think about it either. Optimism robs us of one whole dimension of life, of the unrepeatability, the uniqueness of each moment through which we move nearer to death. If we know that at the end there is a pit into which we shall fall, the journey has a different, deeper meaning. Montaigne is not the kind of optimist who lives in ignorance of death and enthusiastically sings the glory of life. Montaigne constantly carries his death about with him and therefore he is silent before life. And life shines for him with a thousand facets, like a coal burning in the darkness. Death as a once-for-all negation of life is a metaphysical untruth. Montaigne humanizes death for us when he presents it as ceaseless decay and renewal, as the death of the moment in which the flower withers, our mistress leaves us, or something comes to an end. This death is comprehensible, it is familiarly close, we walk hand in hand with it as with our alotted time, as with end of our misfortune.

Montaigne reminds us of those Egyptians who feasted in the presence of a human skeleton and made merry while looking at what they will become. He did not accept the illusion which seeks the solution to the problem of man's personal end in the idea of peace and salvation. He did not believe that we shall survive in the achievement of our nation or of our class. There is no salvation; the end is death; the gaping mouth, the staring eyes and the doctor cuts you open. That is how things are without optimism. Does it frighten you? Montaigne learns not to be afraid. He advises us to think about death, to become accustomed to it, to learn to die. He says that the loss of life is not evil, that we should always be prepared to go. After all we are always

arriving, taking leave and going, we are always coming back to life like the mythical god who rises from the dead. And only when we take this attitude when we learn to die every day, do we cease to be enslaved by life, engulfed by circumstances; only then do we know that death is the goal of our life's journey. We do not know where it is waiting for us, but it lies in wait always and everywhere; there is no place we can escape it, not even in the arms of another person, where it will appear only in a different form. It is waiting somewhere around the corner, one day we shall meet it and it will tell us that we owe it ourselves and that it will wait no longer for payment of the debt. It will always bring us to our knees, we shall always lose, because it is stronger than we are. And yet it need not posses us entirely if we do not give ourselves up to it at this very moment and if we are capable of protesting against the absurd horror of death. So to live with the idea of death liberates us, frees us of fear and binds us more closely to life. That is why great things are done in situations where the threat of death is imminent. Man's greatness is born in the noose of the moment.

Death is the cure for all ills and it depends on us alone. To live freely is to despise death and to die at any time we choose; to live only as long as we wish to, for do we not hold the key to life in our own hands? All we need is will-power, for we are always free to die. There is only one entry into life but there are a thousand ends. The road to the freedom of death is always open. Do not complain about the world, get out, leave your prison. In life we can hide behind philosophical theories, in death we cannot, there the mask falls. We die as we have lived, we live as we shall die. We must see a man die in order to know what he is. Situations where our life is at stake, situations of mortal danger, are a test. If we have always turned aside from our road to grasp at the charm of the moment, we shall find at the road's end that we never had any road of our own and that we have not place left to turn to. How did Montaigne get away from this pessimism, from the concrete certainty of death, to the certainties of life? By fighting his way through scepticism about philosophy, he moved towards the immediacy of life.

THE SCEPTIC

"Indeed, man is an amazingly vain, fickle and unstable being; it is difficult to make any single definite judgment about him." . . . Montaigne

The pedant dies and the philosopher is born only when he steps outside the traditional world of certainties and asks Montaigne's question, "What do I know?" - a question which robs all our acquired wisdom of its validity and demands that we ourselves answer for whatever we know and whatever we are. *"What do I know?"* is more consistently sceptical than the affirmation "I know nothing," which is after all positive. Without asking this question, which is simply a paraphrase of the fundamental and most deep-seated Socratic problem of self-knowledge - what exactly am I, where am I going and why - without asking this, a thinker will never become independent. He must put aside the learning which he acquired at school in order to stand on his own two feet, in order to start expressing himself. Without this question of the sceptic, we can live only on the credit of borrowed values, academic honors, and be content with the superficial existence of a writer or a philosopher who does not have to pay for what he says with the ready money of his own life-experience, who plays about with ignorance because he is secretly convinced of the value of his learning; it is on the contrary the question of a man who goes through the cultural values of past and present and tries to find his bearings in this mass of learning so that he will not lose himself. A little learning is proud of its tiny ball of knowledge which, like the beetle, it is always pushing forward in front of itself; a thinker is always dismayed by the immensity of what he has yet to learn. There is the scepticism of folly, which is beneath the level of knowledge, and the scepticism of learning, which follows from it and always forms part of the dialectical process of learning. It criticizes the one-sidedness of any view and thus helps to overcome all one-sidedness.

Let us not ask whether Montaigne is an idealist or a materialist. Montaigne is a sceptic; he is the founder of modern scepticism, which was not directed only against the ineptitudes of theology and against scholastic gnosiology, but had a much deeper significance as one of the currents that helped to shape modern materialism and atheism, as the current of a particular critical spirit. In this sense Montaigne's scepticism is the *conditio sine qua non* of the modern scientific spirit, it coincides with the critical spirit and any opinion that does not include this critical spirit among its organic components remains at the medieval level. What is true, modern, right in scepticism is its anti-dogmatic position between the faith in reason, the conviction that we can arrive at the truth, and the infinite unattainability of this truth. Montaigne's approach to certainty is his search for it, the uncertainty of his certainty. Against the authority of traditional certainties Montaigne sets up the authority of his uncertainty. To this day there are people who become angry if anyone follows his example. And yet in science progress is not possible in any other way, because science knows no authority outside itself; it knows only the authority of the thinking, critical mind which always belongs only to a specific man and is never the natural adjunct of any official function. Without scepticism there is nothing but the propagation of

doctrine, which leads to fanaticism first with regard to ideas and then with regard to people. Every system must contain an element of scepticism if it is to go on developing. Otherwise the final truth that is discovered bears its own end within itself. Scepticism towards all doctrines and constructions that claim certain validity is an essential element of learning. Scepticism is an indispensable ingredient of all knowledge and the sceptic is the mole who undermines accepted ideas and thus aerates theoretical thinking.

But Montaigne was not the kind of sceptic whose intellect had withered, who is but off from concrete reality, drifting among conceptual abstractions, paralyzed by his inability to act and belittling knowledge simply because he knows that his own mind is sterile. His scepticism has different roots, near to dialectics. Montaigne recognized that knowledge is a natural need and considered that its sources are reason and experience, with which he did not associate faith or religious feeling. The spheres of religion and knowledge remained strictly separated. We shall not, however, find a systematic theory of knowledge but only a series of reflections about the value and origin of knowledge, the most important of which is the conviction that there is no criterion of truth, because everything is relative. Everything is in a state of flux; there is no permanence, no certainty; there is only continual change, transition from one state to another. There is no permenent subject and object, there is only a changing subject in a changing objective world, which evolves according to the laws of motion like a *perpetuum mobile*. Our senses are inadequate and if we try to prove anything by reason, we need to substantiate one proof by another and so on *ad infinitum*. From these positions he carries out a sharp criticims of man's capacity for knowledge, in the longest of the Essays or rather in an independent, comprehensive work, the Apology of Raymond de Sebonde. Here Montaigne professes pyrrhonism, because it is this which presents man in his nakedness. All we know about nature and man is only a jumble of errors. There is no true knowledge in natural philosophy, nor in what we know about man's soul; the world is full of idle talk and lies, of philosophical absurdities, of sophistical poetry. Man is imprisoned in tradition and a blind faith in Aristotle, while the essence and possibilities of man remain unknown. Even in moral laws there is no certainty, for is it not true that what applies in one country does not apply in another, what is a virtue here is a defect there? How can we talk of universal principles when there validity is decided by the geographical frontiers, by a river or a mountain range? We cannot in any event grasp the general laws of the world. The world is a muddle, a glorious pile of scattered things, as Heraclitus put it.

The fundamental question of philosophical scepticism is its relationship to truth. A thinker who believes in firm, immutable truths is called a dogmatic; another, who keeps his reservations about the final validity, immutability and knowledge of truths is traditionally called a sceptic; a philosopher who has given up even trying to find the truth is an agnostic. Scepticism thus philosophically stands in the middle as regards its solution to one of the central gnosiological problems and it does not carry the derrogatory connotation which we sense in the current use of the word "sceptical" or "sceptic." Scepticism denies that it is possible to know the truth about the essence of things. Within the limitations of the old philosophical controversies this

is as correct, or as incorrect, as the opposite pole of the dogmatics, the faith in settled truths. It is only dialectics that takes into account both truth and its inexhaustibility and constant movement and thus frees itself of these limitations. The changability of truth, which is itself a reflection of changing reality, can equally well lead to the dialectical profundity of the sayings of Heraclitus as to the impotent agnostic silence of his disciple Cratylus, whose conclusion from the mutability of things was apparently to refuse to say anything at all about reality and only to wag his finger. From the sceptic's point of view there are no essences; all we can do is bring together our guesses about appearances. The sceptic clings to the appearance of things not because he puts greater faith in appearance than in essence but because the world of appearances enables him to live without any opinions of his own about things, because it is less deceptive. Already Sextus Empiricus said in this connection that no one quarrels about what the world looks like, but that the question is precisely whether it is what it seems to be. The sceptic will not fight about the truth, because he does not know what the truth is. But this does not prevent him from striving after learning, knowledge and action, because in any case man acts in accordance with his habits and not with the truth he has learned. That is why probability is enough for him and he does not need to possess the truth in order to act. Sceptics therefore acknowledge the inadequacy of knowledge, but they pursue it, they strive for things even though they keep their inner reservations about them. That is bolder and more accurate than dogmatic faith in the finality of knowledge. Only a false sceptic - or rather an agnostic - *a priori* gives up the attempt to acquire knowledge.

Scepticism is the non-existance of certainty; it is the opposite of the dogmatism which was represented in Montaigne's time by the Aristotelian tradition as emended by the priests. The middle ages relied in everything on revelation and Aristotle; the novelty of an idea was a defect rather than a virtue in scholarship. The medieval philosopher was also indifferent as to whether empirical investigation confirmed his theses or not, because he believed that his thesis was more prfoundly true because it was logical; that is, it was truer than empirical appearances. He did not in fact investigate things and appearances; these were represented by concepts and it was thought that knowledge of the essence can be reached by combining concepts according to the strict logical laws of syllogism. Thus phenomena and facts were verified by logic and not by experimental research. It was not until the times of renaissance, when a great number of new discoveries broadened the field of experience, that facts came into open conflict with both of the previously accepted authorities. The approach taken by the modern natural scientist is diametrically opposed to that of the medieval philosopher. He does not care if the facts he observes and measures make it impossible for phenomena to be explained by traditional logic and cause them to appear contradictory or "illogical" if they infringe the accepted laws. In the development of this modern scientific method the element of scepticism acts as an acid, corroding the traditional certainties by its questioning. It was not the agnosticism that denies any kind of certainty, it was merely an element that gave scope and freedom of action to the new critical thinking and to the formation of a new scientific method. It was the consciousness of the mutability of truth, awareness of the value of provisional conclusions as against the worthlessness of dogma. It was simply a manifestation, in a certain historical

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... to social progress;
scepticism is neither good nor bad in itself; everything depends on the meaning conferred on philosophical categories by their relation to other central categories, to reality as a whole. Strangely enough, none of the perceptive monographs that have been written about Montaigne has taken note of the connection between his scepticism and the civil war (1562-1598) nor tried to establish the link between the aggravation of the internecine fighting between the Huguenots and the Catholics and Montaigne's withdrawal from public life and concentation upon himself. And yet the year in which he began work on the Essays was the year of St. Bartholomew's Night, the greatest political mass murder perpetrated up to that time, which, together with the more frequently remembered voyage of Columbus, marks the dawn of the modern era. Was there not a deeper connection between this turning inward of philosophical interest and the growth of scepticism on the one hand and the bloody cataclysm of the civil war and the internal turmoil in the absolutist state on the other - a connection of which Montaigne may not even have been aware?

The immediate stimuli or the unifying principle of Montaigne's scepticism was probably his self-doubts, which led him to conduct a searching examination of his own life. Why should he have taken on this vast work, unless it were to provide an answer to these doubts, to abreact this undertainty? Sextus Empiricus too saw scepticism as a solution to the problem of how to live. Montaigne proclaimed that the source of scepticism was the hope that man will free himself of all excitement. His tendency to attribute a purely relative value to all judgments, to invalidate certainties by pointing out phenomena which contradicted them and to devalue one statement by another was only a means to attaining peace of mind. Besides this personal motive for scepticism, however, he had another reason which was impersonal and more deep-seated. Thinking is always linked with a certain social practice. In itself it can produce nothing more than speculation with theses; it can counterfeit some false theory; it can pretend that it is engaged in the evolution of pure thought, but the fact is that the issue is never one of pure theory but rather of the forward movement of society. Thought alters with the age and the age with thought and so the class significance of every category shifts, the social function of scepticism changes. In antiquity, the philosophy of scepticism was an expression of the emptiness of life and the lack of perspectives, which followed upon the optimism

to any greater extent than the rise of optimism or of any other feature of the renaissance mentality. What was socially conditioned, however, was the mass social role of scepticism in the milieu of the middle bourgeoisie and the enlightened nobility. So we see that scepticism is a product of the dissolution of social formations and the most famous sceptics, such as Pyrrho, Sextus Empiricus, Montaigne and Anatole France, are intellectual concomitants of the changing social differentiation which is brought about by economic expansion and by a growing state of crisis. But the rise of scepticism cannot be interpreted as a mere philosophical equicalent of the breakdown of the values of medieval society. We must also take into account the complexity of the intervening process which historically reshapes the philosophical idea. Sociologically speaking, the various philosophical systems are not the capricious fancies of individuals, they are an expression of economic trends, they are idealogical systems deriving from the same values, which of course crystallize in extremely variable forms. If we compare the classical, the Christian and the bourgeois systems, we shall see that they are different variants of the same basic type of thinking, which is determined by economic laws that exist independently of people's will. In view of the fact that one and the same basis gives rise to contrary philosophical tendencies, it may appear that the effect of social conditions on thinking is slight; but it assumes greater importance as soon as we compare the philosophies of various social formations or of the various classes of certain formations. But philosophical historiography does not have the same task as sociology, because the historian of philosophy *assumes* these facts about the class character of ideas. He has a more complicated and concrete field than the general laws concerning the dependence of the type of philosophy on certain classes. His field is the process by which social impulses are conveyed and transformed into a given philosophy, which can then no longer be regarded as the product of a class or of an era but becomes primarily the product of the philosopher's personality.

In the end Montaigne found an answer to the question which so tormented him, an answer that was practical and not theoretical. What do I know? I know that I should live wisely. And then, after going through illusions about metaphysical values, he arrives at the conclusion that philosophy does not make us wiser. So he stops striving after it, he gives philosophy up because

form, of the inextinguishable and indestructible freedom of thought. In fact scepticism is not a decadent tendency, it is only Pyrrho, Sextus Empiricus, Montaigne. The categories of Sextus' or Montaigne's sceptical system are, of course, neither correct nor incorrect in themselves, and if we judge them from the standpoint of the social roles they assumed, they have always, in Rome as in the Renaissance, represented the scientific element in a flood of ideological constructions.

An intellectual trait has no direct relationship to social progress; scepticism is neither good nor bad in itself; everything depends on the meaning conferred on philosophical categories by their relation to other central categories, to reality as a whole. Strangely enough, none of the perceptive monographs that have been written about Montaigne has taken note of the connection between his scepticism and the civil war (1562-1598) nor tried to establish the link between the aggravation of the internecine fighting between the Huguenots and the Catholics and Montaigne's withdrawal from public life and concentation upon himself. And yet the year in which he began work on the Essays was the year of St. Bartholomew's Night, the greatest political mass murder perpetrated up to that time, which, together with the more frequently remembered voyage of Columbus, marks the dawn of the modern era. Was there not a deeper connection between this turning inward of philosophical interest and the growth of scepticism on the one hand and the bloody cataclysm of the civil war and the internal turmoil in the absolutist state on the other - a connection of which Montaigne may not even have been aware?

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self-awareness the base for the great transformations that were taking place in the outside world" (Horkheim). Thus scepticism acted as an anti-feudal intellectual element, as cure against the self-redeeming fanaticism of faith.

The sceptic's attitude towards certainty corresponded to the social instability of values; it was an intellectual trait stemming from the swift social change. The growth of Montaigne's scepticism was not socially conditioned to any greater extent than the rise of optimism or of any other feature of the renaissance mentality. What was socially conditioned, however, was the mass social role of scepticism in the milieu of the middle bourgeoisie and the enlightened nobility. So we see that scepticism is a product of the dissolution of social formations and the most famous sceptics, such as Pyrrho, Sextus Empiricus, Montaigne and Anatole France, are intellectual concomitants of the changing social differentiation which is brought about by economic expansion and by a growing state of crisis. But the rise of scepticism cannot be interpreted as a mere philosophical equicalent of the breakdown of the values of medieval society. We must also take into account the complexity of the intervening process which historically reshapes the philosophical idea. Sociologically speaking, the various philosophical systems are not the capricious fancies of individuals, they are an expression of economic trends, they are idealogical systems deriving from the same values, which of course crystallize in extremely variable forms. If we compare the classical, the Christian and the bourgeois systems, we shall see that they are different variants of the same basic type of thinking, which is determined by economic laws that exist independently of people's will. In view of the fact that one and the same basis gives rise to contrary philosophical tendencies, it may appear that the effect of social conditions on thinking is slight; but it assumes greater importance as soon as we compare the philosophies of various social formations or of the various classes of certain formations. But philosophical historiography does not have the same task as sociology, because the historian of philosophy *assumes* these facts about the class character of ideas. He has a more complicated and concrete field than the general laws concerning the dependence of the type of philosophy on certain classes. His field is the process by which social impulses are conveyed and transformed into a given philosophy, which can then no longer be regarded as the product of a class or of an era but becomes primarily the product of the philosopher's personality.

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THE SAGE

"Every man contains within himself the whole sum of human possibilities."
. . . Montaigne

The purpose of philosophy in Montaigne's sense is to enable man to become fully himself. Therefore Montaigne's life is a journey towards inner freedom, through metaphysical systems, through stoicism, through scepticims, through his pedogogical views - towards wisdom. What is important here is the journey, not its outcome, the Essays. Montaigne is wise and he would have been wise even if he had not written anything. The Essays preserve for us only a dim literary shadow of the wisdom at which he arrived in the actual process of living. Montaigne achieved freedom and wisdom in life itself and that is all a philosopher can desire. A philosopher does not wish to write books and treatises. Socrates and Christ wrote nothing. He wishes to arrive at himself, at truth in life. A thinker's journey towards inner freedom - that is Montaigne.

Montaigne went through stoicism and scepticism, but he went on further, keeping his philosophy as a system which accepts all impulses and is marked by all that it has been. It is an open system based on life experience, whose unifying factor - what systemizes the non-systematic views - is not an inner logical consistency, but only its author's personality. Montaigne went through Christianity, stoicism and scepticism, but it was only in the course of his work that he set himself a new objective and came to realize that what mattered for him were not philosophical schools but only his own self, only the art of living. Montaigne's decision to devote himself to the problems of his own I represents the highest stage of his intellectual development, a stage in which he studies himself for his own benefit, reads books only so that he may apply what he has learned to himself and tries to describe his own essence; his introspection is as intense in its secular way as a monk's. He defends the choice of his theme against any objections that might be raised by saying that his claim to being scientific rests at least on the fact that when he writes about himself, he is writing about something which no one understands as well as he, so that in this respect he is the most knowledgeable man in the world. He follows his life's goal and behind everything he does lies his striving after the integrity of his own life, after a unified personality. He says he knows nothing that is more sensible and useful than to keep on describing himself. Montaigne begins with himself, with the experience which is most trustworthy; he speaks about his inner life and regrets only that convention forbids him to portray himself in total nakedness. He says frankly that he himself is the subject of his book and that his concern is only the art of living, of studying and deriving entertainment from himself. He talks about himself as though he were not in any way famous and his life were not enriched by any extraordinary events. And yet his description of everyday life keeps us constantly interested, because unknown lives are actually the most worth knowing, if they happen to be our own. Montaigne simply entertained himself and that is why he still entertains others. His goal was not writing but the good life, which the writing of the Essays was to help him achieve. Only such manifestly non-literary people become a permanent part of literature. And only they belong there.

Thus, Montaigne writes about himself. But that is only the outward aspect of the matter. In reality his work has a much deeper significance. As he analyzes himself, Montaigne unfolds behind the scenes of his private life the universal questions of human nature. To understand the life of man is closely related, is indeed equivalent, to understanding one's own life. For we are all people, we all have within us all the aspects of a human being, so that in the portrait of one of us, others will recognize themselves, and that is sometimes better than discussing what people are, or should be. Montaigne obeys the Socratic commandment: by getting to know himself, he gets to know man; in his own portrait he depicts others, by working out his own personal life-wisdom without claiming any general validity he arrives at universally valid conclusions. And conversely, since Montaigne wanted to learn how to live well, he had to discover man in order to discover himself. If we wish to understand ourselves we must understand others and conversely, if we do not know our own human inwardness, we shall not know that of others. So we must modify our initial wrong impression that the Essays have no definite object. They have. It is the knowledge of man. The Essays describe the process of man's evolution towards himself, his evolution towards wisdom; they portray the seeking and finding of wisdom. Their author did not want to produce a book; he wanted to learn how to act, not how to write. He did not live in order to write. He wrote because he lived, because he wanted to live more freely; he wrote as he breathed, loved or ate. Therefore his wisdom does not war the high buskin of dignity, it is not bound by any system, it does not hide itself on the heights of transcendence, it does not mystify reality; it is philosophy only in so far as a wise life is philosophy. That is why Montaigne is fascinating and amusing, unlike so many more profound but deadly boring philosophers. Montaigne is living thought, striving for wisdom, a living spirit as against the fetishes of formulas, an intellect as against convention, an individuality as against borrowed authority, against conformity.

In his preoccupation with himself, Montaigne was one of the first to begin to transfer this traditionally religious question on to materialist lines, altering the significance of private experience. The advance on simple self-analysis consists in this: that in himself, the unique, Montaigne studies the general, that he integrates his self-portrait into the philosophical striving to know man. Thus the general, speculatively determined features of man are investigated only through the intermediary of the individual and in this there is the seed of something which will later overcome even the subsequent abstract cult of man. Thus the Essays go beyond their original intention and become an analysis of the human character; reflections about reading and about one's own life are raised to the level of a philosophical method which leads to a knowledge of human nature. Montaigne the man is himself a concrete example and a test of the truthfulness of his own theses about man; theory merges with the practice of the philosopher's life; the work becomes one with its maker. Montaigne adheres to what he proclaims, he does not practise a Sunday nobility of words coupled with an everyday baseness of actions, he stands behind what he says. In that he is a living example to us.

His evolution from Christian to stoic and from sceptic to sage is so many-

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sided that the last phase of his development is often criticized as being eclectic or dilettantish. There is a penetrating analysis of his so-called dilettantism which relates it to his irony and humor and describes the Montaigne of the last phase as a dilettante "a mille moi." That is correct, provided that the concept is used not to imply any element of censure but to emphasize that in the closing phase Montaigne in fact already stands outside philosophy; turning away from it in order to give his own life priority over every system, in order to become something much more significant than a mere philosopher, to become an *artifex vitae,* to become wise. It is because of this non-philosophical character that we today appreciate him as a profound philosopher, a humanist sage, one of the most classical representatives of renaissance humanism. In what does the greatness and the intellectual contribution of this renaissance in philosophy lie? In the fact that Montaigne again conceived philosophy in the classical sense as the love of wisdom, in the Socratic sense as a secular life wisdom and as a road to self-knowledge, that through philosophy he sought the direction of his life's journey. In this he is a thinker of the future. He does not know any philosophy that is objectively valid for every time and place. He knows only his own practical art of living and dying well, and it is in this respect that he created a new discipline, which may no longer be a philosophy at all but which is something more; it is the theory of a new life, the intellectual reproduction of your fate. This is a conception to which the philosopher will always return after his vain excursions in search of a dogmatic philosophical certainty that would help him to achieve integrity; a conception which resurrects elementary wisdom in opposition to the blackmail of ideal goals, a conception which presents itself to us as the philosophy of the everyday.

Montaigne is the creator of a new life-style which corresponds to the life-ideal of the educated bourgeoisie: to make the best use of all the values, both material and spiritual, of a given culture in order to satisfy the needs of the individual within the limits of the prevailing conditions. Montaigne is the creator of a philosophy of life that corresponds to the new condtions of the renaissance man's way of life. This is the source of his strength and originality.

Philosophy is a theory of life, identical with wisdom, as simple as reading and writing; it is a form of action which does not make learned grimaces or put on a show of affected complexity but teaches us to celebrate life. Perhaps that is why it is so close to the unschooled and so totally alien to the bald-headed souls of the professional philosophers. The aim of this philosophy is the art of living -- an art which cannot be learned from books, but only in the mirror of the world in which we must look at ourselves if we wish to know ourselves. It is philosophy which enables us to take possession of ourselves and which sets before us as the highest value the ability to be one's own, *etre a soi,* the art of belonging to one's self. This philosophy is the remedy against alienation, against the scholastic pendantry that simply accumulates knowledge. The Essays are a document of the search for wisdom. That is the only form in which philosophy is at all immediately relevant to man. Conceptual poetry may bring enjoyment or knowledge, but only through Montaigne's kind of philosophy, that is, through generalizing his own life

wisdom, can the man who seeks come to understand the meaning of his own life, to attain the freedom to be himself. To learn to be free is to become the philosopher of one's life, to have the courage to be wise. Man is free if he answers to himself and to nobody else -- neither society nor the norms set by law; if he lives not according to the moral prescriptions of some system but according to himself alone. If we are moral, we must be moral in our own terms and not in terms of some norms. Only this is freedom, only this is the responsibility of freedom.

Wisdom is not scientific and Montaigne does not pretend that it is, because wisdom is more than science or scholarship. The sage may know only trivialities, but in the end he knows all that is most essential. The scientist may have an enormous amount of specialized knowledge about atomic physics and yet, judged as a man, he may be a miserable illiterate and ignoramus. Science is, in the last resort, irrelevant to personal life and often an encumberance. All that is important is what nature and experience can teach us. Science enables us to look into the universe and into our own fate as through a keyhole, to master a part of nature and society. But its relevance to our personal fate is only partial. If we approach science too one-sidedly, we grow foolish, we develop one aspect of our personality to the detriment of our life as a whole. If empty learnedness alienates us from life and bloats us with a mass of information of doubtful value, let us choose unphilosophical wisdom which will make us happy, let us choose the theory of human happiness. So in the end Montaigne gives up all philosophies, because he has discovered how empty they are. We have to go from general philosophies, to concrete people. What can Montaigne tell us about them?

Medieval anthropocentrism assumed that man is a superior being created by God, the center and final end of the universe. The world was made for him. This religious conception was destroyed by modern natural science, which discovered that the origin of man is a simple consequence of the evolution of living matter, the outcome of the biological process which led to the evolution of the genus *homo,* and that man's superiority over animals is due only to the expansion of his social activity. But if we ask contemporary science what it means to be a man, we shall not learn a great deal. Anthropology, the science of the physical nature and origin of man and the human races, the science that stands at the boundary between the history of nature and the history of men, can teach us about man's place in the system of the living world, about his original birthplace, about the time he came into being and about the factors that made for his humanization. But it is of no relevance to the concrete practice of our lives that we are descended from the anthropoid apes; that our ancestors ran around somewhere in the heart of Africa or Asia; that the earliest ancestors of man, Pithecanthropus and Sinanthropus, appear at the beginning of the Quaternary age; that the freeing of the hand from functions of locomotion marks the beginning of man's engaging in work-activity and the transition to meat-eating; starts the process of humanization. All this tells us almost nothing about the philosophical and practical side of our own orientation in life, because the evolution of man is known only as history and not, so far, as philosophical anthropology. Let us there ask not science, but rather Montaigne, "who is man?"

His most constant characteristic is his inconstancy. Man is inconsistency incarnate and every final judgement about him is false. A change in his character, inconstancy in his emotional life, are man's innate characteristics. Do his interests, capacities, opinions and habits not change according to the weather, circumstances and physical conditions? Man sees things in different ways. He is constant in his inconstancy and inconstant in his constancy, he cannot bear the dreary virtue of regularity, he loves diversity, he is now one thing now another, unfinished in every respect; we can make contradictory statements about him, he is the embodiment of contradiction. His I today is different from what it was yesterday, no moment in his life is the same as any other; his individuality is not something that is given, it is an evolving structure, shifting from one state to another. Life is incessant change. We cannot therefore believe in people's constancy and all we can do is understand their changeability. Man is always changing, free, open to evolution, ceaselessly altering his personal and his social profile in the course of his life-cycle. Therefore let us assume not that people are absolutly consistent in their actions but that they are incalculable, that they change like the animals that take on the color of their environment. If you like, you can read between the lines that it is unwise to try to living according to immutable principles, because there is no such thing and because we live not according to rules but according to opportunity and the impulses of our desires. We are irrational beings, our vision is dimmed and our judgement blunted by habit, and we are possessed by an irrational, unreasonable restlessness. So it is best not to try too hard to behave rationally but rather to act on the spur of the moment, allow nature to lead us. In any case we are ruled only by unstable opinions and by vague moods. We are called to battle by the sound of the trumpet, not by reason. Man is absolutely incalculable. When we try to depict the vain, fickle being that he is, we cannot attribute any firm lineaments at all to him. Thus Montaigne grasped the fact that universal humanity, humanness, reveals itself only through actual people in all their diversity; that people are individuals, persons, who cannot be lumped together under the general heading of man and then made the object of a cult; that their social or class characteristics are not all that is important about them; that man can also be regarded as an evolving, contradictory whole, as something unique rather than as the sum of the facts known about him, as a tototality which continually expresses itself as an individual. Man is thus conceived as an isolated, empirical I, living through a series of disjoined life-situations.

Montaigne opposes the anthropocentric view which makes man the center of the world. It is ridiculous to think that a being which is not even master of itself is the center of the universe. The high opinion that man has of himself is based on the error that everything happens on his account. Montaigne's philosophy portrays man with all his vices, as an infinitely vain creature, proud of his ignorance; it sets his weakness and his limitations before his eyes and humbles him, so that it may raise him up. Man is in no way superior to the animals and indeed in some respects he is inferior to them. But Montaigne does not despise man; his scepticism is the result of great knowledge. And yet, as regards his over-all view of man's worth, he remained within the grip of Christianity. For Montaigne sees man as a system of imperfections, as a weak, unreasonable, ignorant and yet vain creature, compos-

ed of uncertain qualities, who imagines that he is the lord of nature but who is great only in God. He thus defines human nature in terms of its faults rather than of its virtues. This is sometimes regarded as proof of Montaigne's profound pessimism, but we should rather ask whether man was not in fact like this, so long as in his overwhelming majority he remained the unconscious prey of the all-powerful and unknown causality of the social flux which oppressed him and made him suffer. The elements of Montaigne's pessimism are outweighed by his conviction that every man is infinitely rich in that he possesses his own life, in that he has the whole form of human nature within himself, in that everyone without exception has the possibility to develop. Man has inside himself all aspects of the human being, of humanity, and that is why, as soon as Montaigne has described his present state with all brutal truthfulness, he immediately gives him every chance and perspective for the future.

By nature man is neither good nor bad, he is capable of great actions, of enormous self-sacrifice and amazing baseness. If we are not to lie about man, we must not generalize any partial experience of him, saying that he is sinful, weak or heroic, but we must see him as a union of conflicting aspects, as a being who loves and hates, lies and tells the truth, is wise and foolish, all at the same time. Usually a man wonders which of two mutually exclusive opposites he is. In reality, he is always both. Montaigne himself provides a splendid illustration of man's contradictory nature, since he always puts a contradiction in the place of a straightforward certainty and describes himself as a man who is learned and yet knows nothing, who is both energetic and indolent, a strong personality with a soft, humane heart, a sociable recluse, a sceptic and a believer, a political conservative and a radical in his way of life. He knows the whole scale of life-situations, a nobleman's, an official's, a soldier's, a courtier's; he is a townsman and an aristocrat, a Frenchman and a European, a Catholic and a Protestant, proud and modest. A truthful liar, a generous miser, a learned ignoramus, a reticient chatterer, that is the man of contradictions, of internal conflicts and therefore the admirably whole man - *etre ondoyant et divers* - that is Montaigne himself. The dialectitian has brought contradiction into the essence of things - into man himself.

How is the wise man to act and live? Montaigne answers this absolutely fundamental question by putting forward not a moral code of rules but the simplest of proposals which, moreover, he does not attempt to force upon us: act in whatever way corresponds to your nature; seek peace of mind and a clear conscience, not the applause of others; act in accordance with your freedom; act humanly; hold onto yourself not to what people will think. After all, you have your own laws, you know how to act. And you must live in the present, as far as possible without obligations, seize every opportunity for pleasure with both hands, not hire your forces out to others, and remain your own master. If we are going to do anything, we should do it as whole men and unconditionally retain our spiritual freedom. If we take a risk, let us take it on the side of pleasure; and since our fate is ridiculous in any event, it is better to laugh at one's nothingness like Democritus than to suffer on account of it like Heraclitus. One must be a man, have the courage to fight

even on one's knees and look the enemy in the eye. Because then even if you should be killed you will remain unvanquished. What matters is to play out one's part like a man, that is all. It is senseless to playact in life and to try to make others take us for something that we are not, to create the impression that we are wiser, or in any way other, than we are. Let them take us only for what we really are. Your role in life calls for truth. Montaigne often wished to be different, but he did not regret being what he was. If he had another life to live, he would live it in the same way, he would remain himself. Montaigne counsels us: be yourself, regardless of others, because in any case you are usually wrong about what the others are thinking; be yourself and bear in mind that whatever the world may be like, you win or lose everything, according as you are or are not in possession of yourself. We must learn to know ourselves in the mirror of the world, and all we can learn in the end is what we are ourselves. If we attain to what Montaigne calls *etre a soi*, to be our own, we shall know everything, be capable of everything, achieve everything. We must live in a real world, act according to human, natural, earthbound ideas, ideas which connect the divine with the worldly, the rational with the irrational. What is the use of high ideals if they let us down in life? We must be true to ourselves. But our imagination supplies us with qualities and abilities which we do not have and make us prefer to live in a dream world rather than recognize and accept the real conditions of our lives. But misfortune and suffering always pursue those who try to escape from their own conditions of life. We must live in the real world, discover reality and live in the most varied way possible among real people, and not in a world of our own fancies about the world and other people. Our world becomes interesting only when we realize that others' lives are still more interesting and that we must try to understand them if we are not to live only our own dull life. One life, even our own, is not enough. But we can live other lives only if we understand them, take possession of them at least intellectually. If we want to multiply our I, we must seek out opportunities to live out and grasp as many different kinds of life as possible. Montaigne does not judge reality by the criterion of his illusions and he does not exchange the ugly truth for a pretty myth. Life is meaningful only in itself, not in any illusions we may have about it. What matters is always the life process which we actually experience and not what we may make up about it. This is the art of living which will bring us self-control, perseverance and peace; the art which will teach us to laugh, to behave foolishly and to do good, though we are capable of doing anything at all. The wise man is he who manages to do good to himself and to others.

Montaigne's success is due to the fact that he used his life-wisdom to answer the questions, how one can live in harmony with people, develop one's capacity for knowledge, realize one's creative possibilities, know how one should act. He deals with the issues with which every human life has to deal - inner freedom, the security of a harmonious life, material and cultural prosperity. Montaigne revived the old classical ideal of *kalokagathia*. He desired not only to read the authors of antiquity but also to live according to them, at one with their pagan wisdom. And he did live so, in spite of the age into which he had been born. He did not try to become learned but to acquire that everyday human wisdom which makes itself felt in the sound judge-

ment, independent mind and right behavior of simple people. Indeed knowledge does not enrich us in any way; at most it changes the phenomenal aspect or our personality but not our real selves, it gives us learning but not wisdom. A fool can acquire knowledge, but he will not become wise. And any one who speaks in the name of wisdom is certainly a fool. To acquire wisdom and to acquire knowledge are two different things. We should abandon the scholars' vain speculations with supposedly great principles and cultivate the ability to take things as they are, without making a science of it or exaggerating. That is why he admires artisans, who are wiser and happier than the rectors of universities. That is why he regards the spontaneity of a man's behavior as the best guarantee that his behavior will be morally good. If he finds himself in a complicated situation, the man who acts naturally will do whatever is most important, he will defend the most essential elementary interests. To be virtuous is the same thing as to be natural. Montaigne hates pretence and those who think that the truth is whatever they can make others believe; he hates lies because they are unnatural and have a thousand faces while truth has only one, he hates evil which is indefinite and contrary to the definiteness of the good.

And how does his philosophy approach the problem of the highest good? Is this highest good virtue, pleasure, knowledge, stoical indifference, immediacy, harmony with nature, peace? These are all merely different aspects of life reduced to an absolute form and Montaigne does not agree that any one of them is intrinsically the highest; he does not set up a hierarchy of goods because he knows that the *summum bonum* is not any one aspect of life, but all its aspects together. If anything at all can be said to be the highest good, it is the ability to belong to oneself, to be one's own man, to enjoy health, beauty, wisdom, wealth, not to rely on the acquired goods of noble birth, fame, authority and learning, to develop one's honor, truthfulness, simplicity of soul, capacity for friendship and sympathy.

Life-wisdom presupposes harmony with nature. Man is subject to nature but he should not allow it to dominate him. We should either discipline our passions or avoid them. But sensual pleasure is not something base, animal; physical enjoyment must be appreciated at its true value. Montaigne would have been ready to subscribe to the verses of his favorite poet, Ronsard:

> "You always said that love is shared
> Through contact of souls. I do not believe it
> Indeed I say that the body is the instrument of the soul."

One should profit both from pain and from pleasure but without allowing himself to be dominated or enslaved by them. And if your passion should grow too strong, turn your attention away from it or divide it up. If one passion threatens to overwhelm you, give yourself up to another. Only our inhuman wisdom despises the body and bodily delights. Montaigne does not run away from them but neither does he pursue them. His wisdom stands between the two extremes. We should go on developing; we should not try to dominate others nor allow them to dominate us; we should be natural, devoting ourselves, like wise men, to nature which will teach us all we need to know: how to live as well as how to die. We ought to enjoy life and its de-

lights without excess, live as variously and flexibly as possible, protect ourselves from boredom by the variety of our activities, not hunt after fame and glory but seek our own way towards stoical calm. You must find this way yourself, it is not in philosophy but in you; for we ourselves are responsible for creating our own happiness. If we wish to attain peace, we must attain it ourselves, no one can help us. If you do not know where your peace and happiness lie, no one knows it.

With this wisdom Montainge lived "in the lap of fate;" he watched himself gradually fading away and becoming a part of the past, and with the same wisdom and the same calmness he saw his teeth falling out one by one and observed himself growing old and slowly dying. He always remained himself, as if to tell us that the way to become objective is to be subjective in the name of our life's meaning, in the name of some goal. There are two kinds of subjectivity; one enables us to control the situations in which we find ourselves and to act, because it understands its environment, the other cannot do so, and therefore lets us down. But man always acts subjectively, in accordance with the meaning which he assumes his life has. Montaigne's wisdom teaches us to discover this meaning of our, to travel along Montaigne's road. Or, in the words of the poet, Emily Dickinson, to live the adventure of our being "attended by a single House - Its own identity."? 338/

MONTAIGNE AND WE

"The greatest thing in the world is to know how to be oneself." Montaigne

The evolution of the history of philosophy can be regarded as the gradual construction of some supreme system or as a series of solutions to the basic problem of life, an endless Sisyphean struggle, as fruitless as it is inescapable. It is in this second view that Montaigne's philosophy assumes its true significance as the expression of one man's life-wisdom. It is not the generalization of natural processes, neither is it a new system of categories or a militant political theory. And yet Montaigne managed to give a push to this burden of Sisyphus when he provided an example of philosophy in its most democratic sense, when he invited each of us to become a philosopher on the grounds that everyone is in fact a philosopher even though he may not know it. Montaigne's place in the history of philosophy is in the pleiad of the giants of the renaissance, many of whose qualities he shares. His specific contribution consists in his theoretical generalization of a new way of life. But where does its modernity lie? How is it that a philosophy based on the meditations of a provincial nobleman who lived in his chateau, thought about himself and was conspicuously disinterested in anything else is still alive today? And in what respects is it obsolete?

Twentieth century men have no tower where they can withdraw into themselves from the confusion of their age, they have no domain to which they can retire in order to be alone, they have no faith in God; they have only their reformations and their St. Bartholomew's Nights. Their human tragedy is played out in quite a different setting. So they cannot accept Montaigne's philosophy in its specific details; their wisdom has a different content. The individual points of Montaigne's philosophy are alien to us, but its essence, the striving for self-comprehension and self-possession, is absolutely modern, is always modern. There is a shorter distance between the wisdom of different ages, even across the gulf of centuries, than between the wisdom and folly of any one time. That is why Montaigne's philosophy too is not yet dead; its essence is alive and one might almost say immortal, because it expresses the basic interests of man. What aspects will be of particular interest of the twentieth century reader?

Between the real world in which the modern intellectual actually lives and the phenomenal reality which he professionally counterfeits there is generally an abyss -- the abyss between two worlds, the official and the private. The man of today, divided and crushed by his social relationships, stands before Montaigne in admiration at the effort he made to achieve an integrated personality living in harmony with itself. When we read Montaigne's reflections about man, we have a feeling that we are looking in a mirror and that there is a kind of dream-like familiarity about everything he says. He expresses himself and in so doing he expresses us too. In his struggle to integrate his personality he comes close to the people who are today experiencing their own alienation much more acutely and fighting much harder and against greater odds for their integrity, oneness and freedom. What makes Montaigne so remarkably alive is precisely the fact that his personal profile

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as a thinker is so much all of a piece, that his philosophical theories and his personal behavior form one whole. Montaigne is thus a slap in the face for those who proclaim one thing *ex cathedra* and its exact opposite everywhere else, for those modern impostors of personal integrity. The demand that every man - and especially the philosopher - guarantee his philosophy by the actual practice of his life and not only the syllogism of his argument, should be taken to heart by everyone today, and particularly, by the thinkers who are personally experiencing the split between the general theory and the practice of their own lives.

Furthermore, Montaigne goes beyond the middle ages and the renaissance in the stress he lays on personal life-wisdom, on the shaping of a way of life in an age of unprecedented social dynamism; an age in which people were obliged to adapt themselves to a new world and to disrupt the thought-forms of the past, in the same way as the cultural revolution of the twentieth century demands of us today. Do you wish to be wise in an age such as this? Form your opinions on the basis of your own personal experience, live with them as variously as possible and be your own guide. Take hold of the basic theoretical problem at its very root, man himself; grasp man's whole personality, but concretely, not in the abstract, get a grip on yourself, on your own personality. This is the essence not of Montaigne's wisdom but of wisdom in general. Only through this wisdom can we gain freedom. And only through this free dom can we gain wisdom. Montaigne sets out the humanist program of our own life. He teaches us life-wisdom, epicureanism, irony, and the light scepticism that is so necessary. He points out that we should learn to live before our life has passed away, because in old age it is too late to learn. He advises us to do what we want to do, what will help us to live, what we enjoy and what will enable us to find ourselves. Wisdom consists in knowing how to adapt ourselves to nature and make the best of the good fortune which gives us the opportunity to develop our natural forces without doing violence to ourselves or to others, to prove our ability to manage our own lives.

The goal towards which Montaigne's wisdom tends is the attainment of something which is the legacy of the stoical ideal of the balanced sage; but the legacy is modified by scepticism so that the original ideal of harmony is transformed into the ideal of man controlling the disharmonious, contradictory being that he is as he moves through the changing circumstances, the ideal of modern man's self-control and self-confidence. The aim is therefore to live in harmony with oneself, *vivre en soi, etre a soi,* and that is the best advice Montaigne can give us. He does not set before people a plan of reform by which human reason could be perfected, he tells them not what they should be but what they are, he does not want to make super-men or new men of them. For whoever wants to escape from his human nature will not raise himself to the state of an angel but debase himself to that of an animal. Superhuman ideas and sub-human conduct go hand-in-hand. Man has no need to be a superman or a new type of man; it is enough if he becomes more of a man, if he tries not to escape from himself but to fulfill himself. Montaigne does not portray abstract man but actual people, himself, in the spontaneity of life, greatness and misery.

Montaigne teaches us only ancient truths, in fact he is absolutely unoriginal and almost every one of his ideas can be found in classical philosophy or Christianity. And yet the whole is original by what he picked out and how he formulated it in the specific social conditions in which he lived. When reading Montaigne we feel the magic of ancient truth, the beauty of an antique bronze ornament; we do not sense the fake profundity of a speculative system. That is why, while experts in philosophy will read Montaigne in one evening, like a simply causerie, so that they can immerse themselves once again in the complexity of Hegel, Montaigne will appeal to the more spontaneous people, such as artists, who dislike being bludgeoned by the convolutions of German philosophers and their juggling with the relations between phenomena and essences, subjects and objects. The people who prefer Montaigne are those who love the essence of life without the masks of phenomena and who, if life is a masquerade, resolutely wait for midnight. Montaigne belongs to those who-however educated they may be-are simple and incapable of the sophistry which demonstrates that behind every phenomenon there stands its opposite. He loves simply philosophy, which shows that freedom is freedom and a scandal is a scandal, and does not try to persuade us that behind the phenomenon which we know from personal experience there is a real essence which is exactly contrary to it and which only the brahmins of some system can teach us to know. His world does not appear or seem to be, his world is; it is as real as matter. In this Montaigne's wisdom is close to the present time. In what is it alien to us? Montaigne's wisdom is the wisdom of all ages only in the broadest outline, in those things which modern man, who belongs to the age of the growth of socialism, shares with the men of earlier social orders. In all societies man was a child, a lover, a father, an old man, he made things, struck up freindships, suffered the pangs of love, built up his relations with his environment and tried to find room both for his solidarity with mankind and for his need for solitude. But while he was always man, he was always a different kind of man, because his production relations and social conditions were never merely the framework of his fate, but were themselves the fundamental conditions of his personality, just like the air he breathed. Whether he was aware of the part which the conditions of his life played, whether he rebelled against them or accepted them, man was always the product of the social circumstances in which he lived. In so far as Montaigne speaks as a man who was formed by the capitalist relationships then emerging, he is out of date and his personality and his opinions express historical conditions that have been left behind.

Montaigne's personal development represents one solution to the problem of man's alienation in production relations which was then emerging, a strenuous search for a way to preserve one's personal integrity against the forces of dehumanisation. But Montaigne was not aware of the social character of these forces and therefore he managed to solve only his own personal problem, the problem of himself, and even then only be returning, with new ideas, to the old aristocratic way of life. He became modern, he went beyond the middle ages, but it was only through his head and he was alone in doing so. The atomization of mankind, the disruption of the mystical communion previously represented by religion, the creation of the personality, as a reflection of a society of competing producers, found its philosophical expression in Montaigne's wisdom of the isolated I. And, strange to say, it was

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this I, which was not meant to express anything except itself, that in fact expressed the social I of the others, of sixteenth-century man in general, of the unrepeatable type of man created by the emergence of capitalism. The way in which he combines those features which are universally human with those which are peculiar to a specific historical type and those which are purely personal and unique is relevant to our appreciation of Montaigne's personality also. Just as Montaigne is close to us in the sheer immediacy of his reflections, he is alien to us in his solution to the relationship between man and society, his striking individualism. The man of today cannot rid himself of alienation in the way Montaigne did, because he cannot escape from social relationships by withdrawing into a totally private world. Modern man overcomes his alienation only by grasping the necessity of social change and by taking part in historical events. The oneness of his personality is a divided oneness; against Montaigne's integrity there stands the paradoxical truth that modern man is himself even when he is not himself.

Montaigne is the thinker of a bourgeois era, an age in which a new class is rising and in which the bourgeois patriciate is not yet striving for political power in the state but expressing the distinctly intellectual features of the bourgeois ideology that is taking shape. Let us now try to see how the fact that Montaigne belonged to the wealthy patriciate, or rather his life experience, is reflected in the intellectual outline of his work. Montaigne's philosophy is an expression of early bourgeois culture, springing from the ground of the capitalist system of production in the midst of the feudal social order. Its author lived through a great, progressive, cultural upheaval, a revolutionary transformation of society, the decay of feudalism and the rise of the capitalist system of production, which made itself felt in the typical features of bourgeois ideology: humanism, the struggle against feudalism, the expansion of knowledge and individualism. If ideas were simply the imprint of the economic conditions, these fundamental characteristics would all have to appear in Montaigne. But Montaigne's ideas are just as much an individual expression of the economic relationships that arise when subsistence economy changes into market economy as they are a direct expression of the philosopher's personal life experience, which need not coincide at all with the laws of historical change. That is exactly the case with Montaigne who does not subjectively put himself in the position of a bourgeois. In judging Montaigne's class postion we must bear in mind that while he partly shared in the political and legal influence of the bourgeois intelligentsia of Bordeaux, he also fully shared in the illusion of every free profession in which the intelligentsia - intellectually speaking the most highly developed stratum - serves the ruling class and at the same time deludes itself into thinking that it is itself the motive force of history. And so, though objectively Montaigne's thinking belongs to the bourgeois era, and though he himself is a member of the bourgeoisie, subjectively his class postion is peculiar to himself; he stands outside the class struggle, does not consciously take into account the conflict between the two systems of production nor defend the interests of the representatives of market capital and assumes the "classless" position of his tower. That is the main reason why only two of the principal features which distinguish the future bourgeoisie, humanism, and individualism, can be found in his work, while those features which presuppose a politically anti-feudal attitude are not developed.

Therefore Montaigne's class profile is not apparent in the political sphere but only on a higher level, in philosophy and in bourgeois humanism, in the specific expression of a man of the bourgeois era - a representative of the objectively revolutionary bourgeoisie. Montaigne's class-determined attitude comes to the fore in his philosophical insight into the changing way of life, in the manner in which he reflects the seemingly apolitical concrete humanism in this way and of life's meaning, and in the manner in which his work documents the emergence of modern personality from medieval anonymity. But in the essence of his work Montaigne is no less a bourgeois of his age than he is a man and his work is just as much the self-expression of a renaissance spirit, the personal confession of an individualistic thinker as a generally humanist appeal inviting man to develop himself to the utmost and to expand the limits of his freedom. On the one hand his work is a form of literature that reflects a narrow class subjectivism and portrays the world from a merely personal point of view; on the other hand it is a profoundly objective, scientific, apprehension of man as a union of opposites, as one whole made up of antinomies, as a randomly changing structure, as an isolated I experiencing the world, as the sum of contradictory qualities. Montaigne is bourgeois in his refusal to deal with theological matters, his total break with school philosophy, his anti-scholastic unphilosophicalness; he is bourgeois in his moderately consumption-oriented way of life, in his desire to make full use of the material and spiritual values of his particual culture and to satisfy his individual needs within the limits of the prevailing conditions. But he escapes from the world of trade into his tower whenever the narrowly utilitarian attitude of the merchant comes up against something which is not only a question of a rich bourgeois' way of life but where the fundamental simple and always topical wisdom of knowing how to live is threatened, where he wants to gain control over himself, over his inner freedom, and where he is obliged to set the open system of his own life experience against the limited experience of the bourgeois and the merchant. Montaigne is bourgeois in his pessimistic estimation of man, in the liberalism which leads him to say "Live as you like," in his effort to fulfill his creative capabilities and his own identity. In some respects he does not even come up to the standard of bourgeois ideology, as in his attitude to the reformation, in his fideism, his search for stoic calm, his fatal fascination with the question of death, his doubts about the possibilities of knowledge and of human capacities, his unwillingness to fight for progress, for the bourgeois-democratic content of state power. Thus the internal conflict which marks Montaigne's philosophy is a reflection of an undecided class struggle which on one hand gives a fundamentally bourgeois imprint to Montaigne's work and combines with Montaigne's status as a patrician intellectual to produce the political ambiguity of Montaigne's philosophical attitudes and which, on the other hand leads the aristocrat to isolate himself in his tower from which it is no longer the member of a certain class but the naked voice of a man with no other attributes that speaks to us.

Montaigne is historical--that is, progressiveness--and therefore now obsolete in terms of his whole conception of the meaning of life. The problem of what life means is perhaps the most profound philosophical question of all, a question that hovers on the very edge [illegible]aning, and therefore it is something that people have thought abou[illegible] [illegible]usands of years. In one

of the earliest documents of literature, the Epic of Gilgamesh, the mythical hero is tormented by the problem of the reason for living and this is subsequently taken up by the Jewish prophets, the philosophers of antiquity, the Christian saints, Hamlet and modern philosophy. What is behind this apparently simple question of whether life has any meaning, a question which, to the uninitiated, may seem quite pathologically superfluous, much like the puzzle why man has two hands and not three? A biologist regards the question of life's meaning as an inquiry into the causes and progress of life and answers that life is a certain form in which proteins exist and that it manifests itself in the absorption of matter in its environment and its elimination, in growth, reproduction, sensitivity and , in some cases, consciousness. If anyone feels it is enough to know that he is a particular form of protein existence, which reproduces itself, grows, eats, excretes and feels, that he is a reservoir of several dozen liters of water, some carbohydrates and alkaloids, he can leave it as that. But if he is not satisfied, he must ask philosophy about the purpose, the reason, the goal of human activity; that is to say, pose the question in the moral sense as an inquiry about the value of life, in short raise Hamlet's question whether life is worth while. And however strange the question may be and though it may seem that man's life has everything in common with other living matter and that therefore he need not torment himself with this ancient puzzle, which is the hypothesis of all hypotheses and lies at the very root of everything, yet he has been doing so for thousands of years and trying to square his own circle. An animal does not ask whether it should be; a man does ask, because he is not an animal.

Montaigne's historical significance lies in the fact that he stands at the watershed between two types of answer to the question of life's meaning and that he substantiates the new answer by his whole work and life. Up until the dawn of the modern era, or more exactly up to the threshold of capitalism in European society, diverse varieties of the religious solution to life's meaning, according to which human life is determined by the gods, whether it is the Olympians who oblige earthlings to fulfill the *inexorabile fatum* or the Christian God who obliges them to accomplish what has been predetermined, succeeded one another. This worship of chance, of unknown natural and social forces, finds different outward anthropomorphic expression in the various gods and divinities of different lands and cultures, but philosophically it remains the same conviction that human life is determined by God, by fate, by the intangible, supernatural power of chance or predetermination; by a power which rewards, punishes and rules; that man is tossed about by powerful unknown forces; that he is condemned to resigning himself passively to the incomprehensibility of his lot and to shrugging his shoulders in perplexity over his own "fate." This philosophical attitude is simply an intellectual counterpart of the fundamental sensation of life, shared in various degrees by all the classes of earlier social formations, in which the truly fatally necessary fact of the division of labor and the class partition of society cast a long shadow over the view that any rebellion against the given conditions of life is unalterably vain. This is the dark shadow which lies on Gilgamesh's terrible question "Must I too die?," on the prophet's conviction that all is vanity, on the catastrophe of Oedipus' revolt against the decree of the gods, on the agony of Prometheus and on St. Jerome's flight into the desert. This pro-

found sense that one can neither understand nor control one's fate found both understanding and control in religion, in the illusion that there is an omniscient and omnipotent being, who can and must be influenced by faith, prayer and sacrifice. Thus class society reacted to the fundamental sensation underlying its life by creating certain metaphysical, religio-philosophical forms. The solution to the meaning of man's life that it found here was indeed illusory, but nevertheless the illusion was necessary and effective, for it enabled alienated man to return to his alienated essence, to God, at least in the form of ecstacy, thought and faith.

It is, of course, true that through the ages the hopes that perhaps life's meaning might be determined not by God but by man himself slumbered in mankind's subconscious, and that in certain periods, which were those of the rapid flowering of a particular society such as classical Greece, there emerged for a time, on the fringes of the cultural mainstream, individual glorious personalities and mythical symbols of a Promethean stamp, which places man's fate in his own hands and made him the creator of his own destiny. But these ideas returned behind the closed eye-lids of dreams, until the time when actual economic conditions of rising capitalism provided some support for humanism. If the illogicality and the absurdity of life followed from the incomprehensibility and apparent unalterability of the conditions under which the people of slave-owning and feudal societies lived, and if the mysteriousness of historical change called forth an equally mysterious answer to the mystery, the eyes that had dreamt so long, opened in wonder as soon as they caught a glimpse of the apparently infinite possibilities which nascent capitalism offered to man's initiative. Everything that happens in renaissance art and philosophy is in fact an expression of a break in the way people felt about life. For, without themselves knowing how or why, thanks to the expansion of productive forces people found themselves living under new conditions which enabled at least one class, the bourgeoisie, to form a new attitude to life and consequently also a new feeling about it and to express it philosophically and artistically in an entirely new type of man. If the great figures of the renaissance illustrate the secular, humanist character of the new culture in its various forms and provide milestones of the new feeling and thinking about life in Bacon's scientific method and in Leonardo's paintings, in Boccaccio's stories and in Bruno's revolt, in Copernicus' exactitude and in Michaelangelo's statues, no one expressed the actual philosophical essence of the transition to the new conception of life and its meaning better than Montaigne.

Montaigne gave a second type of answer to the question of life's meaning, according to which the meaning of life is our own I, our personality, and man is the master of his fate and freely determines the meaning of the world, of life and of his own self. This answer is directly connected with the social conditions that shaped the economic foundations on which the bourgeoisie built its independence, that is, with the real, factual freedom of enterprise, and thus created the widespread illusion among the bourgeoisie that in a rational society man will freely follow his own course. The personal happiness which came within the reach of the successful and courageous entrepreneur or rather of the whole class of enterprising bourgeois merchants

and craftsmen, could in fact be attained by hard work; it looked as if the conditions of life could be altered and the hopes which had earlier lain hidden in the fairy-tale riches of countries beyond the seven rivers now lay open to view in the chests loaded with the gold and treasure of the lands beyond the sea. And as man always believes that happiness lies in what he does not have, the contrast with his previous poverty made him feel that the meaning of life consisted in heaping up wealth as a guarantee of happiness. The way to it lay through the *etre a soi*, the belonging to oneself. The sturdy merchants were so permeated with this typically renaissance goal that they could not escape from it even after they in fact became so rich that they could afford to live in a castle and even give up working altogether and retire to their tower. Even there they did not stop trying to interpret the new meaning of life, but they robbed the *etre a soi* of its most important aspect. Pierre de Montaigne had an immediately economic objective for being himself; he was himself in opposition to the religious conception, in order to work and amass wealth. But his son Michel was himself without working, without regard to the work process, although of course his life was still based on the same marvellous learned renaissance secularity.

Montaigne's humanist answer to the problem has become obsolete in the atomic age, when a merely renaissance solution is an unsatisfactory as the religious solution once was. For today we answer the question of what life means in a third and again quite different way, because we know that man determines his meaning only in part and that objectively it is the society in which we live that determines the meaning of our life, that whether we like it or not our fate is determined by society and the people who make it up. The meaning of our personal life is predetermined by the social relationships into which we are born. The atomic age is a period of profound transformation in mankind, which is giving birth to a new type of man. Of course this transformation has nothing to do with what naive primers and cheaply lyrical slogans call the man of the future - the master of automated factories. It is the brutally dramatic and therefore the only true process in which Miller's salesman dies, all the conditions of the existence of entire social classes are completely remolded and the traditional values burst like colored balloons. That is why a really new, pure humanity is being born in the conflict and struggle with that which is through to be new while it is only a freshly made-up old routine. To the question what gives meaning to human life, what guides our journey, the question to which Montaigne answered simply that it is man and not God, modern man answers that it is society, because it really is so, even when man imagines that it is he himself. Therefore he realizes that his personal happiness is inseparable from the happiness of society, that he lives in a collective and that this remains true even when he feels lonely in it. Montaigne's solution was economically conditioned by the production relations of the renaissance, whereas the new solution, which lays stress on society, has its economic roots in the relations created by modern mass production. The new man who is emerging is giving greater scope to the social factor in his personality, he is shaping his personality in close relation to the social need, simply because he is involved much more directly, by his work and by his own interests, in the social structures than the renaissance or capitalist entrepreneur.

In contrast with the feudal conception of life's meaning, which starts from supra-personal, religious, and, so to speak, extra-human values, Montaigne started from what he took to be the universal needs and desires of concrete men in their personal lives. In this he was unique and philosophically absolutely original, and his ideas had to wait three hundred years before they were more thoroughly worked out and developed in a modern form by L. Feuerbach. But in order to become theoretically significant, the concept of concrete man, regarded as the creator of his own fate and his life's meaning, required that of abstract man as a counterpart. This abstraction, however, was no longer connected with the concrete conditions of living. Whereas previously history had been dominated by the Providence of God, now there floated through history - like the materialized emanation of a spiritualist seance - the abstraction of man, the immaterial ectoplasm of his needs and desires. Just as the historical process was deprived of its historical basis, its material links, and perverted to a mere struggle of ideas, so the life-process was impoverished by being reduced to mere intentions, aims, feelings and desires, to categories of individual and social psychology, to human consciousness. Moreover the abstract reflections about man omitted the most important point, the material conditions of human existence itself, the work and sexual processes, that is, the factors which bring man into society whether he wishes it or not. While the renaissance common sense took concrete man as the starting point for its reflections about the meaning of life, the materialist must go back beyond concrete man, that apparently prime cause, if he is not to be led astray by man's superficial concreteness but come to understand that which determines man himself and is therefore primoridal also for the solution to the problem of what life means. Behind concrete man he must discover the network of social relations which shape him. But to do so is to move away from mechanical materialism and towards new ideas. What are they?

To conceive the question of life's meaning materialistically does not by any means presuppose giving up Montaigne's starting-point, concrete man, which was correct. We must simply realize how this concrete man is bound to other concrete people, to society. As soon as we try to do this, however, we find ourselves obliged to go beyond Montaigne's horizon of personal happiness; we are then immediately faced with the question of social happiness, of universal prosperity. In other words, the need for personal transformations and solutions to life's meaning immediately recedes into the background before the objectively more truthful, more profound and theoretically more pertinent point of the need for *social* transformation. This must lead clear-thinking people to realize that personal and social happiness are interconnected. But then only two conclusions are possible: either to evade the laws of this interconnection by retreating into the isolation of one's personal I or to join in the conscious battle for a new society. Either seek one's own happiness in fighting to extend the happiness of society or wrap up one's chilly happiness in self-delusion and hug it close to oneself. Montaigne's solution to the problem of the meaning of life stands completely apart from the work process and from public life. The man of today must think differently from Montaigne because he lives differently from him. The essential components of his personal life, the work process, emotional life in love, family and friendship, as well as public life, are enough to prevent him from re-

tiring to a tower to meditate; they make fighting, struggle, action and active participation in the social relationships that determine us the objective meaning of present-day man. Thus the modern man of our era, the socialist, in fact finds happiness in the actual process of struggling for the happiness of others and the elements that make up his personal life, his work, his emotional and his public life, simultaneously form part of the life of society. His struggle on his own behalf is at the same time part of the class struggle, his *etre a soi* implies *etre pour les autres*, his search for a new man, a new I; his finding and losing of himself is at the same time an effort to rebuild society. The eternal challenge of the ever-recurring human problems becomes the unique, unrepeatable adventure of his life, as he battles to conquer wider freedom both for himself and for all others.

So in virtue of the dialectics of history, the modern solution of life's meaning is in fact a qualitatively new synthesis of earlier views. The religious view dedicated man to the supernatural forces generated by his own imagination, man belonged to God; the humanist solution, on the other hand, dedicated man to himself and rid him of his religious fancies. But it is only the modern solution, which approaches the meaning of life from the point of view of materialist dialectics, that dedicates man to himself and to the impersonal social factor at the same time, rids him of his secular illusions by showing him his place in society and thereby puts freedom into his hands. The same historical type of man - that is, the man of the bourgeois society - who in Montaigne's time discovered with wonder that the meaning of his life was his own personality, will three hundred years later gasp with the horror and despair of the doomed poets and of existentialist philosophy unless he has found a different, social, solution to the problem of life's meaning, the solution which is no longer today represented by any one individual but by the international socialist movement. In this extreme situation, the same kind of thinking as gave birth to Montaigne raises the questions, "Whither now, from man back to God or forward to society?"

The modern type of man, which is being molded by social conditions of a kind never experienced before, naturally also contains within itself that purpose which for Montaigne was the essence of man's vocation - the creation of a strong and individual personality of one's own, with a rich inner life. Just as in the socialist formation that is currently emerging we are taking over the cultural values of past ages in literature or in music, so we are also adopting the values of their life styles. To give up everything that the last four centuries in Europe, which were the era of the bourgeoisie's coming to power, contributed to the way people actually live is just as impossible as to give up Shakespeare, Rimbaud, Pushkin or Beethoven. And those people who oppose personality in the collectives, not understanding that it is precisely the strong, forceful, independent personality that makes the collective strong; are in fact, in their loyal enthusiasm, holding out their hands to those on the opposite shore who have always asserted that socialism destroys man's inner life, his personality. We are still indebted to Montaigne for having provoked one of the earliest modern attempts to create a way of life free of the clinging cobwebs of moralizing mythology and at last firmly based on a secular foundation. In his solution to the problem of life's meaning we see a personality of the bourgeois type, a personality whose ideal

was personal happiness, prosperity, the accumulation of things and of knowledge. Now that we are seeking socialist prosperity and the happiness of all, we are obliged to part company with him. Montaigne could find the meaning of his life in liberating his own mind from obsolete ideas. But today man cannot give his life meaning by exchanging one set of ideas for another, by changing the way he thinks, but only by taking action in order to liberate people, to win for them real freedom in their material situation in life; for as long as people are imprisoned by material conditions, there can be no freedom of thought but only the big cage of its constraint. The material liberation of man is a condition of his freedom of thought.

Montaigne was a humanist, he cultivated his own personality, he sought his own happiness with the help of philosophy and he realized that the world has no meaning apart from that which he could give it himself. Modern, socialist humanism created a higher and more concrete form of humanist when it set man in the center of events as their final meaning and when it took as its aim the development not of an individual personality in the abstract but of personality in a given society. The modern labor process, which unites and organizes people in the struggle for the happiness of whole classes, has transformed society and made the attainment of freedom, happiness and the realization of human potentialities possible. It has brought within the reach of the people the values which were, before, the exclusive property of the aristocrat, due to his exceptional position. Montaigne did indeed retire in resignation to his castle in the midst of the civil war, but he who follows his example in the midst of the present-day war between worlds is not of his kin. Our way does not lie through a pessimistic, muddled, inactive scepticism, wandering between truth and lie, but through the critical theory of active humanism. This is the watchword of the transformation through which we are currently living, a radical criticism of the forms of life and a struggle to change them. Today's humanism presupposes action, an overcoming of scepticism about the possibility of acting, it requires us to strive for a sane society and to believe that such a society is possible in spite of the pessimistic facts. The true philosophy of our time is pursuing Montaigne's effort further, in order to become anthropocentric once again -- but, of course, differently than in the middle ages -- humanistically, without myth. The present-day philosopher strives for the same thing as that for which the French aristocrat once strove, for concrete, wisely living man, for himself, for the man in every one of us, for the people inside people.

The scepticism and the isolation of the personality which were once progressive are, in our present circumstances, indications of the lazy cowardice of a dying class, and not the marks of a genius of the future as they once were. A modern Montaigne in the tower of his personality is only an antiquarian lover of yesterday's ideas, a tragicomic figure, making his fakir's rope rise into the sky, since his tower has been destroyed in an earthquake. A twentieth century Montaigne would be a counterfeit to the real Montaigne, even though he followed his master's example in every single detail. Montaigne's wisdom has been surpassed; in other words it has been absorbed into the present-day scientific view of the world and is no longer valid in its original form. That is why the philosophy of our time rejects

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Montaigne as an unhistorical model for the justification of intellectual bitterness and at the same time it further develops his humanist content. It rejects the seductive beauty of the isolated personality and parts company with it, in order to find something greater than the beauty of the abysses of personality, in order to find itself, the philosophy of the twentieth century. The present-day philosopher must, in the end, abandon Montaigne, in order to fulfill the poetic truth that "All men kill the thing they love."

And all men kill the thing they love,
By all let this be heard
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!

Oscar Wilde,
The Ballad of Reading Goal, 1896

VOLTAIRE

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