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Montaigne: A Precursor to Freud

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Montaigne(1533-1595) Was a man full of paradox, a most modern thinker under the garb of one of the greatest 16th century philosophers. (See also Masud Khan, 1975). Reading his essays I was impressed like others by his psychological mindedness and also that, some 320 years before Freud, he intuitively discovered many of the findings of psychoanalysis and the activity of the unconscious. This paper aims at acquainting an analytically minded audience with the scope of Montaigne's discoveries as there are very few papers written about the essays by mental health professionals. I discovered that there are over 300 references to his work in the Pep-web, either in papers written which mention him in passing him or in articles quoting from his writings. Yet there are only a handful of analytic papers devoted to his work mostly in the French analytic journals, and only two articles in the English psychoanalytic literature (Canestri (2009) and Wolf and Gedo (1975) though there are of course many books written about him in the classical literature section. One of the most famous is 'Montaigne en Mouvement' by Jean Starobinski (1982) which has been translated into English.

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Montaigne: A Precursor to Freud

Dr. Francis Baudry

I. Introduction

Philosopher c'est apprendre à mourir '(Socrates)[1]

Montaigne(1533-1595) Was a man full of paradox, a most modern thinker under the garb of one of the greatest 16th century philosophers. (See also Masud Khan, 1975). Reading his essays I was impressed like others by his psychological mindedness and also that, some 320 years before Freud, he intuitively discovered many of the findings of psychoanalysis and the activity of the unconscious. This paper aims at acquainting an analytically minded audience with the scope of Montaigne's discoveries as there are very few papers written about the essays by mental health professionals. I discovered that there are over 300 references to his work in the Pep-web, either in papers written which mention him in passing him or in articles quoting from his writings. Yet there are only a handful of analytic papers devoted to his work mostly in the French analytic journals, and only two articles in the English psychoanalytic literature (Canestri (2009) and Wolf and Gedo (1975) though there are of course many books written about him in the classical literature section. One of the most famous is 'Montaigne en Mouvement' by Jean Starobinski (1982) which has been translated into English.

As an important figure, Montaigne's life and essays have been studied extensively by two literary scholars: Sarah Bakewell and Jean Starobinski. I will quote the latter in the course of this paper, but will first outline some of Bakewell's key insights as an introduction. She aptly observes that *"the Essays has no great meaning, no point to make, no argument to advance. It does not have designs on you; you can do as you please with it"* (Bakewell, 2010, p. 7). These essays, in her view, offer no overarching message—which makes writing about them a challenge. Bakewell addresses this difficulty by posing a question about life and offering twenty answers, each illustrating how Montaigne responded to it throughout his complex life.

I will first give a summary of his complex and rich life which he narrates so beautifully in his essays. This will also acquaint the reader with Montaigne's style so central to the appeal that the reader experiences while strolling through the nearly 1200 pages of the volume. I will next describe some of his essays, including the process of writing. After this necessary long introduction, I will spell out specifically many discoveries of Montaigne which seem to anticipate those of Freud. Some of these have been described in a book of essays written by literary scholars *Psychoanalytic Approaches to Montaigne* (1997) and also in Wolf and Gedo's paper.

II. Montaigne's Plan

Unlike the great Greek authors who wrote plays, with great psychological insight, Montaigne was able to spell out many of the nuances of our unconscious and origins of certain defense mechanisms including the role of sexuality in amazing detail. This was in part due to an acute capacity for honest self-observation and his emphasis on the process of writing as a tool to discovery, a bit similar to free association. The only weak point from a psychoanalytic perspective is his view of women rather characteristic of the XVIth century and its several limitations.

Montaigne was the first Renaissance author to create a literary genre out of self-revelation and self-exploration. It was based partly on the belief that each man carries within him the entirety of the human condition. Writing his essays also suggests that human observation is a worthwhile aspect of study—first for personal pleasure and eventually evolving to the scientific. Philosophy became transformed into psychology, aided in the late 1600s by the work of Descartes.

Montaigne is cautious about embarking on this road. He writes: 'Custom has made it a vice to talk about oneself and obstinately prohibits it, hating the boasting which always seems to be attached to any testimony about oneself. Instead of wiping the child's nose you cut it off.' (II, 6, p.424).

He justifies his efforts further: 'Here you have not my teaching but my study: the lesson is not for others, it is for me. Yet for all that you should not be ungrateful to me for publishing it. What helps me can perhaps help somebody else. Meanwhile, I am not spoiling anything: I am only using what is mine. And if I play the fool, it is at my own expense and does no harm to anybody. Such foolishness as I am engaged in dies with me: there are no consequences.' (II, 6, p.424).

That Montaigne achieved his goal is due to the fact that he does not consciously try to reach himself by

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[1] This means that to philosophize is to detach the soul from the body, and to teach us not to be afraid of dying. The usefulness of life lies not in its duration but in what you make of it.

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an effort, but rather avoids artificiality by simply observing what emerges without censoring. It is a prelude to free association. The only prior example in trying to attain a view of the self would be St. Augustine in his *Confessions*, which apparently Montaigne did not read. In his introduction to the reader, he is both openly self-confident, hidden under a seductive openness, skilfully warning the reader not to waste his time in reading him!

"You have here reader a book whose faith can be trusted, a book which warns you from the start that I have set myself no other end but a private family one… Here I want to be seen in my simple, natural, everyday fashion without striving or artifice, for it is my own self I am painting. Here drawn from life you will read of my defects." He ends his preface as follows:

"And therefore, Reader, I am the subject of my book: it is not reasonable that you should employ your leisure on a topic so frivolous and so vain." March 1st, 1580. (Screech, p. lxiii).

We would have to wait nearly 400 years before another author, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in his *Confessions*, would make himself the subject of a book. In contrast to Montaigne, Rousseau was an angry, rather bitter man who had had a most unhappy childhood.

III. What is an Essay?

It is not easy to translate the French word 'essai' into English. The closest I can come to is 'trial effort', which suggests a degree of tentative uncertainty, an incomplete first stage, waiting to see what the result might be before proceeding further. (Telle, 1968). The scope of his *Essays* is truly amazing. The English edition of his works totals 1,283 pages. This includes 94 separate essays which were composed over a 20-year period. Reading the essays is a bit like traveling inside the mind of a very knowledgeable, cultured man, very familiar with great Greek and Latin authors such as Lucretius, Tacitus, Cicero, Heraclitus, Plato, and many other important historical figures, including several kings. At least one great author from the past is quoted in every essay. In search for truth, Montaigne justifies his reliance on the past: 'I think it is less risky to write about the past than the present[2], since the author has only to account for borrowed truth.'

The essay *'On Schoolmaster's Learning'* (I:25) reveals the ambivalence he felt towards his father's strict, controlling behavior in overwhelming him with Latin and Greek literature.

He was caught between his admiration of schoolmasters selected by his father and the frequent ridicule they were subject to in comedies, being seen as pedantic—having knowledge but unable to use it in any way. Montaigne stated that our minds are swamped by too much study and by too much matter, just as plants are swamped by too much water (p.151).

It should be added that Montaigne had a purpose in writing in French rather than Latin. In an essay *'On Some Lines of Virgil'* (III, 5, p.97), dealing very openly with sexuality in both genders, including all its organs and actions, he makes it clear that he thought many of his favorite readers would be women and that they would not be well-versed in Latin. He assumed they would take this essay in their private chambers. I will deal with this essay a bit later.

IV. Montaigne's Life and Character

Montaigne's life itself is a mixture of paradoxes not usually associated with the life of a great writer. Prior to a literary career, Montaigne had a government job for many years. He was first a Conseiller in the parliament in Bordeaux and eventually became mayor of Bordeaux for two successive terms during one of the most bloody and disturbed periods in the history of France, the period of the massacre of St Barthelemy and of the religious wars which tore the country apart.

Following in the footsteps of his father Montaigne first became a devoted public servant He helped negotiate between opposed religious factions and gave frequent counsel to Henri III and later Henri de Navarre the future king Henry the IV. He went to the court in Paris and traveled widely. In 1581 after having finished the first two volumes of his essays, Montaigne found himself traveling to Germany for a political trip. He was obviously held in high esteem. and was elected mayor of Bordeaux and reelected in 1583 for 2 more years.

As a political figure, Montaigne tells us that: "My voice is so strong and booming that when I have needed to have a word in the ear of the great on a matter of some gravity, I have often put them to the embarrassment of asking me to lower it." (III,13, p.1235) It is amazing how Montaigne was aware of the psychology of using his voice, and his capacity for self-humor. He continues:

"Volume and intonation contribute to the expression of meaning. It is for me to control them so that I can make myself understood. There is a voice for instructing, a voice for pleasing, or for reproving… When I am barking at my footman with a rough and harsh voice, a fine thing it would be if he came to me and said: 'Speak more softly, Master, I can hear you quite well.'" (III, 13, p.1235) Montaigne clearly enjoyed alternating banter and seriousness.

His father, from a devout catholic family, was also in the government in the town of Perigueux and became the mayor of Bordeaux. His mother (Antoinette de Lopez) of Spanish origin came from a Morrano well to do family from Aragon. Her family lived in Toulouse and was a business associate of the Eyquems. She

[2] By 'the present' Montaigne means contemporary external events, not his own thoughts or opinions.

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played an obscure role in his life. She is only mentioned twice in the essays. Wolf and Gedo(1975) suggest that the castle of Eyquem, the dowry she brought to the marriage, did not afford her the respect she deserved and that in her old age she bitterly complained about having been victimized by both her husband and her son. It was inferred she was rather cold and self centered.[3]

Montaigne was born the third child of 11 children and the oldest to survive. For the first 3 years of his life he was sent to live with a peasant family supposedly to develop close bonds with ordinary people. Montaigne writes about this unusual event: 'God gave me a good father (who got nothing from me apart from my acknowledgement of his goodness-one cheerfully given); from the cradle he sent me to be suckled in some poor village of his, keeping me there until I was weaned- longer in fact- training for the lowliest of lives among the people. He adds that his father hoped boys brought up in this manner would become accustomed to frugal and severely simple fares that they have to clamber down from austerity rather than scrambling up to it.' (3,13, p.1249) As if Montaigne feels he needs to justify this behavior further he adds; 'My father's humor had yet another goal: to bring me closer to the common- folk and to the sort of men who need our help; he reckoned that *he should be brought to look kindly on the man who holds out his hand to me* rather than on one who turns his back on me and snubs me. Montaigne adds that 'the reason why he gave me godparents at baptism drawn from people of the most abject poverty was to bind me and join me to them.

On his return home he was completely taken in hand by his devoted and strict father. The latter hired Latin speaking servants who spoke to him only in Latin and a German tutor to speak to him only in that language. He purposely was not taught French for several years. His father died when Montaigne was 35 in 1568 and his mother amazingly outlived Montaigne. She lived most of her life close to him.

A bit like Don Juan he began to pursue women very early: 'There is indeed some worry and wonder in confessing at what tender age I happened to fall first into Cupid's power- happened is indeed right for it was long before the age of discretion and awareness-so long ago that I cannot remember anything about myself then. You can wed my fortune to that of Quartilla who could not remember ever having been a virgin'. (3,13, p1234).

Montaigne married in 1565 Francoise de la Chassagne from a noble family and had 6 daughters only one of whom survived infancy. The first, Toinette died in 1570 at age 3 months. Montaigne obviously missed not having sons as this deprived him from reliving with his sons the sort of relationship he had enjoyed with his father. In 1571 Montaigne returned to his estates and started writing his essays, but he continued his political career at the same time traveling widely. His relationship with his wife was amicable but calm. Montaigne felt that passionate love was detrimental to freedom. He wrote that he was unsure whether he would not prefer' having produced a perfectly well formed product with the acquaintance of the muses rather than the acquaintance with his wife!.' As Montaigne enjoyed joking, it is not clear whether such statements should be taken at face value. This rather misogynist attitude towards women is however often exemplified throughout his work. In his last essay Montaigne quotes Alcibiades as 'asking in amusement how Socrates could put up with the sound of his wife's perpetual nagging he replied "just like those who get use to the constant grating of wheels drawing water from a well" (3,13. p1128)

In his adult life Montaigne first became an important political figure in Bordeaux where in 1557 he met the true love of his life, the writer La Boetie who died 5 years later (I will come back to the importance of La Boetie a bit later).

Later in life he was plagued by a number of illnesses including renal stones starting at age 40 which at times caused him much pain. As a result he wrote extensively about the importance of coming to terms with illnesses you could not control: 'I am of Crantor's opinion that we should neither resist illnesses stubbornly and rashly nor succumb to them out of weakness but yield to them naturally, according to our own mode of being and to theirs. We must afford them right-of-passage and I find that they stay less long with me who let them go their way.'(3,13, p.1235). One of Montaigne's most endearing traits was his honesty and his desire not to hide something contrary to be discovered after his death. In the essay (1,7) titled 'That our deeds are judged by our intentions and completed just before he died. He wrote: 'If I can I will prevent my death from saying anything not first said by my life' (p.29).

As one proceeds many characteristics of Montaigne's personality become evident: his equilibrium, his calm demeanor. He does not appear to have grudges or grievances. He seems happy, at peace with himself and willing to share whatever comes down his path without attempting to hide or cover up any aspect of his personality including his faults and weaknesses. He describes without shame in almost a detached manner his transitory impotence including some psychological antecedents and arrives at interesting views about the relation of his body to his mind. He is not stubborn, rather quite humble at the same time that there is a hidden narcissistic streak feeding his urge to write which he skilfully hides vi the opposite attitude. He also warns us that he is 'mal forme (poorly put together) and it is too late for him to be able

[3] I could not find data on which the above speculations were based. There is a brief passage I will quote which expands a bit on this way of upbringing. Both Wolf and Gedo are self psychologists.

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to change so we should not take him as a model! His motto was Que Scay-je ('What do I know') accompanied by the portrayal of a scale. He was clearly influenced by Socrates 'connais toi toi meme'. He portrays himself as a man welcoming the ideas of others, not insisting he must be right, open to dialogue and willing to admit he was wrong without shame or anger. He respects the truth even when spoken by someone he dislikes.

I will first describe one rich essay as it is unusually revealing about Montaigne's character and attitude towards life. It is the 6th essay in the second book titled 'On Practice'. written in 1569. My reason for dwelling on this essay is that it contains the detailed narrative of Montaigne's most frightening encounter with death. This will demonstrate Montaigne's unusual capacity for insightful description of his slow recovery including the re-emergence of self awareness and of returning memory. In a brilliant first section, he first describes how we can approach the experience of death through sleep:

'Our ability to fall asleep which deprives us of all action and sensation is useless and unnatural were it not that Nature by sleep teaches us that she has made us up as much for dying as for living and already in this life shows us that everlasting state which she is keeping for us when life is over to get us accustomed to it and to take away our terror (p.417-418)' He continues that it is not the moment of death which is frightening since it is so brief, it is the approaches to death which fill us with terror. It is: 'the power of imagination which makes the true essence factual sickness bigger by half (p.418). This certainly predates Freud's discovery of the role of fantasy in mental life.

Without any forewarning Montaigne then turns to what could have been an uneventful horseback ride in his estate. Suddenly seemingly out of nowhere, one of his servants who wanted to show off and get ahead of his companions, came barreling by on a huge farm horse crashing into Montaigne causing his horse to topple over. Montaigne fell, lost consciousness for a few hours and was feared dead by his terrified servants who carried him back to the chateau. This incident where he almost could have died further aroused his anxiety about the fragility of life. It could be taken away at any moment. Yet as though a dispassionate observer he gave his narrative of the event: the huge brown colored stallion barreling into him falling over his face bleeding cuts over his body several feet from his horse and his sword several meters away. Of course he could not remember what happened after he fell, but he obviously gathered the details from his domestics and constructed the narrative afterwards. When his servants straightened him up 'I threw up bucketfuls of pure clotted blood and I had to do the same several times on the way' (2:6 p.419) The closeness he came to death itself deeply impressed him. It could happen anytime. His sensations were closer to death than to life. One of the first things he did even in a preconscious state was 'to order a horse to be provided for my wife whom i saw struggling and stumbling along the road which is difficult and steep'. It might appear that such thoughts must have risen from a soul which is awake: nevertheless I played no part in them: they were empty acts of apparent thinking provoked by sensations in my eyes and ears' This again is a good prelude to the concept of splitting in part precipitated by the trauma of the fall.

As he describes his slow recovery he becomes aware of the power of his unconscious. He writes: Everyman knows from his own experience that he has a part of his body which often stirs erect and lies down again without his leave. Now such passive movements which only touch our outside, cannot be called ours (II, 6,422). This is an obvious reference to his erectile issues.

He obviously suffered from a concussion. Semiconscious he saw his house but did not recognize it. He felt no affliction for himself or others, rather a kind of lassitude and utter weakness without pain. Clearly in an altered state he writes (later) I was offered several medicines: I would not take any of them, being convinced I was fatally wounded in the head. It would have been-no lying- a very happy way to die'.(II, 6 p.423) Montaigne then gives us very accurate description of his slow recovery:

'When I began to come back to life and regained my strength, which was two or three hours later, only then did I feel myself all at once linked with pain again, having all my limbs bruised and battered by the fall; and I felt so ill two or three nights later that I nearly died a second time, but of a livelier death! (LL, 6, p. 423) Montaigne then shares with us the slow regaining of memory: 'The last thing I could recover was my memory of the accident itself; before I could grasp, I got them to repeat several times where I was going, where I was coming from, what time it happened. As for the manner of my fall, they hid it from me for the sake of the man who had caused it and made up other explanations. But some time later the following day, when my memory happened to open up and recall to me the circumstances which I found myself in on that instant when I was aware of that horse coming at me (for I had seen it at my heels and already thought I was dead, but that perception had been so sudden that fear had no time to be engendered by it), it appeared to me that lightning had struck my soul with a jolt and that I was coming back from the other world. (II, 6, p. 423).

What does Montaigne tell us of what he learned from this terrifying incident: 'In truth to inure yourself to death, all you have to do is to draw nigh to it' II, 6 p.424). It is significant that nowhere in his recounting of this terrifying incident does he blame his foolish servant for crashing into him. He does not express anger nor

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ever the wish to punish this man for his irresponsible behavior which nearly killed him.

V. Montaigne and la Boetie[4]

As mentioned before, the relationship with La Boetie was central to many aspects of Montaigne's psychology and very much a factor in his deciding to write his essays. A bit like Freud and Fliess, he developed an intense erotic attachment to his friend, saying, in explaining the relationship, the famous line: "*Parce que c'était lui, parce que c'était moi*" — "Because it was him, because it was me." This suggests an unexplainable necessity, having little to do with external reality, more like a *coup de foudre*, an unexplained, intense, explosive love like a union between two souls. Early in their relationship, La Boetie chided him for his many amorous escapades in his young adulthood. His grief over the latter's death stimulated him to write his essays partly in memory of his friend, but also as an identification with his friend and as a way of continuing a dialogue with him after death, especially since La Boetie gave Montaigne his entire library. Montaigne's desire to retreat in his tower was, for him, a way of dealing with his melancholy over the loss of his friend and also of his father, who died a few years after La Boetie. His loss fostered his creativity. He began writing his essays in 1570 while still continuing his political life. He tells us: "Recently I retired to my estate, determined to devote myself as far as I could to spending what little life I have left quietly and privately." (I, 8, 31).

We do not know if the relationship was ever consummated, but I suspect it was not. Montaigne emphasizes the importance of soul love as a basis for *Amitié* (I, 28), in contrast with sexual union, which is intense but vanishes after it is carried out, leaving no trace. He downgrades licentiousness in contrast to the loving relationship, which needs to be sacred and revered. "He shared the Platonic theory of mutual love that by kissing each other, lovers exchange souls and so literally 'live' in each other" (III, 5, p. 996). He makes clear that for him, women are incapable of responding to such familiarity (i.e., loving friendship) and mutual confidence to sustain that holy bond of friendship, nor do their souls seem firm enough to withstand the clasp of a knot lasting and so tightly drawn (I, 28, p. 210). The essay on *Affectionate Relationships* (I, 28) was to have been followed by 29 sonnets from La Boetie, but it was later decided by Montaigne to delete them from the final version. It may be relevant that Montaigne did not marry until three years after his friend's death. It will not be a surprise that mourning and death became a major topic in the essays, to which I will return.

As his friend was also a writer, composing his essays allowed Montaigne another path to identify with him. Montaigne also quoted from La Boetie's works in his essays and devotes one full essay to his sonnets. It is significant that the second essay 'On Sadness' allows us to come closer to the man. Knowing that Montaigne was deeply involved in the mourning of his friend, we are surprised to read that he considers himself among those who are most free of this emotion. Only in the course of reading do we discover that what he defined as sadness is an exhibitionistic display of emotions which he contrasts with the genuine deeply felt grief of melancholy such as occurred with the death of La Boetie.

VI. Organization of the Essays

One has to give up the idea that the title of each essay will be followed consistently or even broached except for the opening lines. His titles themselves can be even disorganized or, or sometimes playful 'Comme nous pleurons et rions d'une même chose' (book I, 38) or On a Monster child (book II, 30) or ': One is punished for defending a fort without a good reason.(I, 14).

He does not follow a well defined course. Rather like a bee going from one flower to another he interrupts himself, changes topics and drops the subject entirely or more likely will show how the ancient latins or even asiatic kings illustrated the point he wants to write about.

Until one gets used to it, you get the impression of penetrating into the room of a messy teenager, with clothing and books all over the place, wondering: "How did your mom allow you to get away with all this disorder!" But wait — in his own way, we are led to discover an extraordinary mind. In some ways, he is quite proud of not reaching for perfection. He writes (III, 5, p. 989): "I may correct an accidental slip (I am full of them, since I run on regardless), but it would be an act of treachery to remove such imperfections as are commonly and always in me."

What stands out most when you immerse yourself in his pages is his sensitivity to the world around him, his acute perception of himself, and his willingness to be open with all his faults, including those he is ashamed of, adding a touch of humor. He wrote in his last essay: "I am past the age of elementary schooling, old age has no other concern than to look after itself" (III, 13, p. 1231). Here are some of the titles of his essays to convey the breadth of his interests: From Book I: 'Our emotions get carried away beyond us', 'On liars', 'On idleness', 'On fear', 'One man's profit is another man's loss', 'On cannibals', 'On smells'. From Book II: 'How our mind tangles itself up', 'On not pretending to be ill'.

The essays were written during two periods; the first which included books 1 and 2 were composed between roughly 1572 and1580 and sent for publication. Book 3 was finished around 1588. Montaigne. also

[4] See also Charpentier Francoise(1988) Figure de la Boetie dans les Essais de Montaigne; Rev.fr.psychanal (52,(1):175-189)

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made many changes and additions as he matured and became more confident in his purpose. As he made progress the tone of his work changed, becoming more self revealing and less abstract.

He states very plainly in his last essay he ever wrote that in contrast with some kings who use their death as a permission to their followers to punish someone they did not dare kill when they were alive: 'If I can I will prevent my death from saying anything not first said by my life'(I, 7, P29).[5]

VII. Freud and Montaigne

Before tackling Montaigne's anticipation of psychoanalytic findings It is necessary to review how and when were psychoanalytically minded writers drawn to this extraordinary set of writings. I was surprised to see only 2 articles written by analysts on Montaigne. One by Canestri examines the psychology of old age and the use of diversion to manage getting old. The other by Wolf and Gedo (1975) also examines in detail some of the connections between Montaigne's discoveries and those of Freud. As mentioned before some essays using psychoanalytic theory were written by literary scholars I will mention one close to my thinking:' "Lire outre ce que l'auteur y a mis' by Gisele Matthieu-Castelani (p.5-17 in Montaigne Studies (1997).

It should be said first that there are aspects of Montagne's life where he parallelled Freud. One most obvious example is the nature and function of deep male friendship: Montaigne and La Boetie, versus Freud and Fliess. In each case the fantasies around the relationship provided emotional support, an important paternal transference and an outlet for passionate non carnal homoerotic feelings, and finally a role as a self object in the Kohutian mode also fostering meaningful creativity.

Perhaps Montaigne's greatest discovery was to observe calmly his mind in action, a prelude to free association. 'it seemed to me that the greatest favor I could do for my mind was to leave it in total idleness, caring for itself, concerned only with itself, calmly thinking of itself I hoped it could do that more easily since with the passage of time it had grown mature and put on weight[6]' (I,8,31) But to his surprise what he discovers instead is a prelude to free associations:' On the contrary {my mind} it bolted off like a runaway horse[7], taking far more trouble over itself than it ever did over anyone else; it gives birth to so many chimeras and fantastic monstrosities one after another without order or fitness, that, so as to contemplate at my ease their oddness and their strangeness, I began to keep a record of them hoping in time to make my mind ashamed of itself. (p.31) He labels his effort as 'farouche and extravagant' (fearsome and excessive). He writes further (3, 5, p.961);'

'But what displeases me about my soul is that she usually gives birth quite unexpectedly, when I am least on the lookout for them, to her profoundest, her maddest ravings which please me the most. Then they quickly vanish away because then and there I have nothing to jot them down on; it happens when I am on my horse, or at table or in bed-especially when on my horse, the seat of my wildest musings. 'by describing in great detail the workings of his mind Montaigne antedates then discoveries about the self (Grossman 1962) including the split between the experiencing self and the observing self. But the self is also defined as the true being which remains eternally one and unchanging. What is most admirable is that Montaigne understood the great value of what would have been considered as garbage by traditional philosophy.

One of the most significant discoveries of Montaigne is to discover three different levels to his productions first the clear and distinct ideas of reason (mirroring Freud's concept of the descriptive conscious of the topographic theory,) second the level of more subtle ideas and emotions less accessible and detached from the first layer including dream images which can disappear (Freud's preconscious). The third layer is what is discovered by the work of self observation clearly related to Freud's level of the descriptive unconscious. (see also Mathieu–Castellani 1997). It includes ideas, images, sensations not apparently connected to what Montaigne sees as his functioning mind and suddenly emerging unbidden in a disorderly fashion sometimes with no apparent meaning. Montaigne emphasizes here the power of instincts to bring to the surface another he at times does not recognize.

Without meaning to, he also foresaw some analytic concepts such as displacement as the following essay suggests: 'How our soul discharges its emotions against false objects when lacking real ones' (vol I, 4). He quotes Plutarch saying: 'of those who dote over pet monkeys or little dogs that the faculty for loving which is in all of us, rather than remaining useless forges a false and frivolous object for want of a legitimate one'(p.19).

In another essay (III, 11, p. 1161), he beautifully describes rationalization: "I realize that if you ask people to account for 'facts', they usually spend more time finding reasons for them than finding out whether they are true. They ignore the 'whats' and expatriate on the 'whys'."

Anticipating Freud he understands intuitively the value of free associations including paying attention to his dreams. He says:

[5] See Canestri(2009) for a consideration of the significance of old age in in Montaigne and in literature

[6] It is not entirely clear what Montaigne is expressing in his comparison of his mind with an overweight body

[7] It is likely that the metaphor of the horse is a reminder of the horse which nearly killed him earlier.

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I do not dream much: when I do it is of grotesque things and of chimeras usually produced by pleasant thoughts, more laughable than sad. And although I maintain that dreams are loyal interpreters of our inclinations, there is skill in classifying them and understanding them.(3, 13 p.1247).

He is astute in understanding human emotions anticipating Freud. For example he writes, ahead of Shakespeare's Othello[8]: 'Of all the spiritual illnesses jealousy is the one which has more things to feed it and fewer things which cure it (3, 5, P 977).

He is also aware of the advantage of fantasy over reality. He writes: 'And was Luna's humor not clearly lunatic when being unable to enjoy her beloved Endymion she went and put him to sleep for several months feasting herself on the enjoyment of a boy who never stirred but in her dreams. (3, 5, p.99).

Like Freud he notes 'the fact that our delights and our waste matters are lodged higgedly-piggedly together. and that its highest pleasure has something of the groanings and destruction of pain' (3, 5 p.992).

VIII. Montaigne and Sexuality

There are two essays in which Montaigne deals openly with sexuality and their different manifestations in men and women: 'On the power of imagination' and 'On some lines of Virgil'. in which he stresses the danger of women's sexuality for men and the failures of sexual union to satisfy some of the soul's desires.

There is perhaps no other topic which preoccupied Montaigne as much throughout his life. This is based on a number of reasons combining biological, psychological, and relational issues First Montaigne suffered his whole lifetime from a feeling of inferiority because his penis was far too small and inadequate to fulfill his needs. He suffered from periodic impotence and attempted to compensate for this insufficiency in a variety of ways. Writing became a pleasurable substitute for his deficient sexuality. He delighted in quoting from famous greek and latin authors on this topic reassuring himself that he was in good company. He feared that women could not love him properly.

He quoted Horace writing:

I am ashamed to find myself amid this green and ardent youth, whose member firmer stands in its undaunted pride, than a young tree upon a mountain side'(book 2,18.666). His persistent feeling of sexual inadequacy found two outlets. Montaigne used ancient poetry as Starobinski puts it 'as a prosthesis to make up for a deficit in the French language and for its taboos. (Starobinski 1982, p.206. This is reminiscent of Freud who used Latin to express sensorially certain feelings which German could not.

In one example Freud recommended the following treatment for one of his neurotically troubled female patients. Penis normalis dosim repetatur!' Here is Montaigne referring instead to the impact of having sex on a man; ''It is health bringing and appropriate for loosening up a sluggish mind and body; as a doctor I would order it for a man of my mold and disposition as readily as any other prescription so as to liven him upland, keep him in trim until he is well on in years and to postpone the onset of old age (3, 5, 1009).

The essay on some lines of Virgil deserves some closer attention as it reveals some of Montaigne's most personal views on sexuality. In this essay Montaigne does not quote the lines from Virgil which inspire him, until 12 pages of this over 60 pages long essay, in fact one of the longest he composed. The lines from the Aeneid VIII describe an erotic moment between Venus and one of her lovers. Not until this point in his essays does Montaigne broach the topic of sexuality and the difference between men and women in as great details, including the most intimate aspects of their relation including disturbances in his own sexual functioning. What would motivate him to do this? Shame, guilt or the wish to tease the reader or more on the surface a disinterest in orderliness and the wish to proceed in his own personal style of disordered order. Montaigne introduces the lines from Virgil by saying:'

Poetry can show us love with an air more loving than love itself. Venus is never as beautiful stark naked, quick and panting as she is here in Virgil. This suggests that Montaigne put greater value in the fantasy, spiritual aspects of love as was typical of the renaissance rather than on the purely carnal enactments. He adds that few men have married their mistresses without repenting of it. In general he does not see women as able to prefer the more spiritual aspects. He writes:' When Socrates was asked whether it was more appropriate to take or not to take a wife he replied" whatever you do you will be sorry" (3, 5, p 961). He adds: 'By my own design I would have fled from marrying wisdom herself if she would have had me. And a bit later: 'Most of my doings are governed by example not by choice (3, 5, p 962).

This essay openly confronts gender change, sexuality, penis envy and impotence due to castration anxiety and its management in men, again anticipating Freud's discoveries On one of his trips passing through Vitry le Francois, Montaigne met an old man who until age 22 was known as a girl called Marie. He said that Marie had been straining to jump at this time and his male organs suddenly appeared. He was named Germain and remained unmarried, developing a full

[8] After finishing this paper I came across the book 'Shakespeare's Montaigne' (2014) in which the editor Stephen Greenblatt pointed out that in all likelihood Shakespeare read The Florio translation of Montaigne and actually used two of his essays in his plays. This includes 'On the affection of Fathers for their Children for King Lear and "On the Cannibals' in the Tempest'' where there are a number of references including the name of the character Caliban clearly derived from the word cannibal.

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beard. Was this a case of transgender rather than hermaphroditism?

Montaigne then quotes a song from girls in the village warning each other not to take great strides lest they become boys like Marie Germain (I am not sure whether this is a fear or a wish!) Montaigne adds that it is not surprising that this sort of occurrence happens frequently. For if the imagination does have power in these matters, in girls it dwells so constantly and so forcefully on sex that it can (in order to avoid the necessity of so frequently recurring to the same thoughts and harsh yearnings) more easily make that male organ into a part of their body, (I, 21, p.121). Montaigne dwells at length on the general fragility of male members particularly vulnerable on the first encounter anticipating Freud's discovery of castration anxiety: He writes: Married men have time at their disposal: if they are not ready they shouldn't try to rush things. Rather than fall into perpetual wretchedness, by being struck with despair at a first rejection, it is better to fail to make it properly on the marriage-couch full as it is of feverish agitation and to wait for an opportune moment more private and less challenging. He adds that women are wrong to greet us with those affected provocative appearances of unwillingness which snuff out our ardor just as they kindle it (p.114) In another passage he refers to the power of the male member to become erect when it is not desired. This suggests two possibilities: either Montaigne was embarrassed to be aroused by other women or second that he was embarrassed by the intrusion of sexual arousal with La Boetie. We shall never know which or both are accurate,
In the same essay Montaigne gives vent to rather misogynistic attitudes towards women along with fearsome power. He mentions that:' In antiquity it was held that certain Scythian women were animated by anger against anybody; they could kill him simply by looking at him.[9]

A bit later he gives an accurate description of what Freud would later describe as the unconscious.: Our members have emotions proper to themselves which arouse them or quiet them down without leave from us. How often do compelling facial movements bear witness to thoughts which we were keeping secret so betraying us to those who are with us.? (p.117) He describes the close stitching of mind to body, each communicating its fortunes to the other. (p118).

As an Astute Observer of Projection he States;'

'It has angered me to see husbands hate their wives precisely because they are doing them wrong. At the very least we should not love them less when the fault is ours; at the very least they ought to be made dearer to us by our regrets and our sympathy. (3, 5 p 962). He is also aware of the trauma that angry parents may impose on future generations:' he writes of certain women: 'I know of some who sincerely complain that before the age of discretion they were dedicated to debauchery. Vicious parents may be the cause, or the force of necessity which is a cruel counsellor. (3,5,981).

In the latter part of this essay Montaigne highlights what he sees as the difference between men and women. The passage I am quoting was added after the essay was finished as an addendum. I am not sure whether the attitudes he ascribes to men is more than a projection of his own views! He writes again using the ancients as a screen:

'A young Greek called Thraconides was so in love with love, that having won his lady's heart he refused to enjoy her so as not to weaken glut and deaden by the joy of lying with her that unquiet ardor in which he gloried and on which he fed.(3,5 997).' he continues 'Foods are better when they are dear. Think how far kisses, the form of greeting peculiar to our nation, have had their grace cheapened by their availability. Montaigne is horrified by the thought of a body giving itself to him but lacking love. He is following the ideal of platonic love. He warns the danger women represent for men: 'He feels the role of women should be to 'accept, obey and consent. He adds: 'this is why nature has made them able to do it at any time: we men are only able to do it occasionally and unreliably' (3,5,1001) Montaigne sees women as ;'suffering from a base disorder which drives them to change so frequently and which impedes them from settling their affections firmly on one person whatsoever as we can see in that goddess Venus to whom is attributed so many changes of lovers'. (3,5,1001) It seems in his view that the danger of being unable to satisfy a woman is ever present. Women seem to seek more carnal satisfaction than real love.

Montaigne was also untrusting of women's capacity for deep love. In an essay; 'On three good wives'(2, 35. p.842) he wrote:

"It is no good widows tearing their and clawing their faces. I go and whisper straight in the ear of their chambermaid or private secretary" How did they get on? What were they like when living together? I always remember that proverbial saying: Jactantius moerent qua minus dolent[10] {women who weep most ostentatiously grieve least}.

I believe that the last paragraph of the essay deserves full attention as it reveals Montaigne's deepest wishes and fears. The entire process of writing becomes a substitute sexual outlet. Montaigne may feel a bit embarrassed in dealing so openly with the topic of impotence that he apologizes near the end referring to 'these infamous jottings which I have loosed in a diarrhea of babble -a violent and at times morbid

[9] This may be related to the power of the Medusa who could turn men who looked at her into stone

[10] Tacitus annals II

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diarrhea. Embarrassed by the almost uncontrollable flow of words (this essay is one of the longest, almost 71 pages) Montaigne then quotes some lines from Catullus:

'As when an apple secretly given by her admirer breaks loose from the chaste bosom of a maiden as she starts to her feet on hearing her mother's footstep, forgetting she had concealed it beneath her flowing robes; it lies there on the ground while a blush suffuses her face and betrays her fault.(3, 5 1016) Starobinski analyzes this poetic quote: 'The analogy has to do with making visible what is hidden.' The passage casts Montaigne in the role of a young maiden whose love is revealed by the token she is incapable of hiding. The power of poetry manifests itself one last time: it is rejuvenating, feminizing. It evokes the contact between the ripe fruit and the young breast in all its red heat. (Starobinski, 212) The apple then is clearly the gift Montaigne like a young maiden bestows upon us through his essays, a hidden love prize warm and erotic which also leads to the author's rejuvenation and transformation into a young blushing maiden. The apple is also a reminder of the apple Eve gave to Adam combining the awakening of knowledge with that of guilty sexuality.

IX. Last Essay: On Experience

This last essay could not be completed as Montaigne died before actually finishing it. It summarizes many of Montaigne's ideas about how to live one's life and deal with bodily ailments and concerns about his declining health Based on Epicure's philosophy his basic tenet was to take the time to live, to enjoy the current moment and not to rush: 'Festina lente' (rush slowly) as Erasmus said. The opening sentence of this last essay explains the title and is a quote from Aristotle's beginning of Metaphysics;' No desire is more natural than the desire for knowledge. We assay all the means that can lead us to it. When reason fails us we make use of experience.

It is very central to Montaigne that priority is given to feeling rather than pure intellectual knowledge." In this universe of things I ignorantly and negligent let myself be guided by the general laws of the world. I shall know it well enough when I feel it'(2,6,379) Does this not anticipate the emphasis Freud placed on the role of feelings and the defensive possibility of intellectualization.

Montaigne's curiosity and search for more is endless;'

'It is only our individual weaknesses which make us satisfied with what has been discovered by others or by ourselves in this hunt for knowledge: an able man will not be satisfied with it. (3, 13 p 1211) His technique is well defined: I study myself more than any other subject. That is my metaphysics that is my physics (3, 13, p.1217).

Montaigne is very astute in how we don't like to hear criticism;(3, 13, 1222) You need good strong ears to hear yourself frankly judged; and since there are few who can undergo it without being hurt those who risk undertaking it do us a singular act of love, for it is to love soundly to wound and vex a man in the interests of his improvement.

Dealing with his increasing renal colic occupied much of his preoccupations. He wrote:

But is there anything so delightful as that sudden revolution when I pass from the extreme pain of voiding my stone and recover in a flash the beautious light of health full and free as happens when our paroxysms of colic are at their sharpest and most sudden. (3,13p.1241). Montaigne devised the best way to deal with his pain; 'Just put up with it that's all you need no other prescription: enjoy your sport, dine ride, do anything at all if you can: your indulgences will do you more good than harm. (3,13,1242). He adds a bit later:' anyone who is afraid of suffering suffers already of being afraid.

'We must learn to suffer whatever we cannot avoid. Our life is composed, like the harmony of the world of discords, as well as of different tones sweet and harsh, sharp and flat, soft and loud. If a musician liked only some of them, what could he sing?

As expected death preoccupies him throughout this last essay;' You are not dying because you are ill, you are dying because you are alive. Death can kill you well enough without illness to help her'(3,13,1239) one of the ways he manages his preoccupation with death is to focus on the immediate present'.

When I dance, I dance. When I sleep, I sleep; and when I am strolling alone through a beautiful orchard, although part of the time my thoughts are occupied by other things, for part of the time too I bring them back to the walk, to the orchard, to the delight of being alone there and to me.(3, 13, p1258).

As he ponders the course his life has taken he comes to terms with the best way to look at his trajectory: Our duty is to bring order to our morals not to the material for a book not to win provinces in battle but order and tranquility for the conduct of our life Our most great and glorious achievement is to live our life fittingly. Everything else– reigning, building, laying up treasure- are at most tiny props and small accessories. In one of the latter pages he clarifies how he comes to accept the inevitability of death:

'That is why I so order my ways that I can lose my life without regret, not however because it is troublesome or importunate but because one of its attributes is that it must be lost. Above all now when I see my span so short, I want to give it more ballast; I want to arrest the swiftness of its passing by the swiftness of my capture, compensating for the speed with which it drains away by the intensity of my

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enjoyment. The shorter my lease of it the deeper and fuller I must make it.

X. Conclusions

I can find no better way to conclude my paper than with a quote from Voltaire who wrote about Montaigne in a letter from Paris to Comte de Tressan in August 1746:

'He bases his thoughts on those of the celebrated figures of antiquity; he weighs them up; he wrestles with them. He converses with them, with his reader and with himself. Always original in the presentation of his objects, always full of imagination, always a painter and what appeals to me is that he was always capable of doubt'.

In a sense we profited from Montaigne's sexual inadequacy, as it prodded him to write one of the richest and detailed descriptions of one of the greatest minds of the 16th century as enriched by an encyclopedic knowledge of the greatest Greek and Latin authors.[11]

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[11] After i finished the paper a colleague told me about a Florida State University thesis by Jennifer Countryman (2012) with the title. Two ways to think or Montaigne and Freud on the Human Paradox. Although the topic relates to my work it is written in a very abstract manner and is not well related to my approach. I also was informed by an editor of the existence in Montaigne studies of an issue titled 'Psychoanalytic Approaches to Montaigne. I quote one article which was relevant by Mathieu-Castellani.

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