

Feb 2, 67 -

BOWMANS, F.P. : Montaigne: Essays, Ed. Arnold, 1965 (Studies in Fr. lit no. 10; foreword, Moore.)  
(to Prof. Dr. Univ. of  
Pennsylvania)

63 pp

7 Introduction:

There is not room in these pages to discuss Renaissance thought in detail, but we must warn against the false modernism involved in reading M into a founding father of the United Nations, an eighteenth-century philosophe, or a nineteenth-century pessimist.

I: (1533-1592) Rabécais pub. Pantagruel the year before his birth, Gargantua the year after. 6 years after he died Descartes was born. St. Barthélemy 1572 (but Edict of Nantes 1598 after his death).

II: difficulty of this day; read some short passages carefully; Flattard claimed that he could only be read 15 minutes at a time; it would be more correct today that he can only be read 15 pages at a time, but several hours may be profitably spent on these pages...

12: Several of the essays take the form of letters to Mme de Duras, Mme de Fair, etc., & they are all closer to the epistles than to any other antecedent lit. genre

13: Some essays contain nothing much but Seneca. [...] He mentions Plutarch some 70 times, and quotes or borrows from him 600 times! 15: He is rather antiq in using the vernacular to express philosophical notions - Calvin, and even Descartes, still preferred Latin [...] Despite his curiosity about cannibals & even Copernicus & despite the originality of his ideas about torture, tolerance & education, it is probt more enlightening to think of M as standing at the end of a road than to think of him as a pioneer. He builds on a heritage of thought which goes from the Renaissance humanists back to Homer. [...] he regards his intelligence as critical rather than as creative. [...] He shows no admiration for classical authors, does not hesitate to criticize them, does not feel that the antiquity of a source gives it any greater venerability...

16: In letters, what interests him is what he can discover about the man Socrates, and little else [...] so we must be very careful about what we mean when we call him a disciple of Plato [...] In all these claims, it is not the metaphysics which interest M, but the practical, moral conclusions [...] So his thought cannot properly be labelled Platonic, or Epicurean, or even Stoic [...] M, for instance, is never concerned with reconciling classical antiquity with the truths of Christianity, not because he considers Christian dogma unimportant but because he does not think any Greek author could possess the sort of validity which would bring him in conflict with it...

17: ...the task of the Essais - testing & knowing himself [...] while walking about in his book-lined study [...] we should pay attention to the titles M gave the essays [...] after the titles provide a hint to his central concern, and tell us much about how his mind is working...

23: Each man is unq, and can only be known in himself and by himself. Public reputation or fame are haphazard and usually determined by weightless exterior appearances. You alone can know yourself, and yourself is the only thing you can know with certainty. His quest for knowledge led him inevitably to autobiography...

24: M felt that you could not be both consistent & honest...

28: [Le brame] M is responding to a world which had lost any sense of the fixed and certain it might once have had. Religion had been put into doubt by the Reformation, customs by exploration, cosmography by Copernicus, the meaning of history & the practice of politics by political theory and the beginnings of philology and the science of history...

29: his doubts about causality made "self-reliance", in the fullest sense, central to all his moral thinking...

32: the best to see things as opposite seems to have been a deep, natural and pervasive one. Stylistically, it gives rise to sentences which are balanced in 2 parts, to paradoxes and even chiasmus. Whole chapters are antithetically organized [...] and within any chapter, thought after thought falls into one of the antithetical patterns...

37: the more we know about M, the more apparent it is that he was a devout Catholic. the more we know about history the more we see that he was really not such a peculiar Catholic (i.e. M the person he seems to have been; not M the writer one deduces from the book)

39: The whole purpose of the Apologe is to prove, not that reason contradicts faith, but that reason cannot contradict faith - because reason, which is self-contradictory, cannot prove or disprove anything [...] almost total absence of Christian concerns, which certainly suggests indifference, in page after page of the Essais... 40: he may bring everything into question, but he refuses to solve any of the questions, and so they never in any way really attack religion [...] no sign that M ever doubted the existence of God [...]

- BONNAR, F.P. Montaigne (suite) (Somme toute, petit livre bienisible; enseignements, clairs, menus; étude excellente) 2  
 comme introduction à M
- 41: His despair in philosophy is covered by his attitude in theology, so philosophical doubt can indeed give him a soft pillow on which to rest.
- 51: throughout M, such terms as glory, knowledge, science, are used in a sarcastic sense...
- 53: M [in his anecdotes] is almost a [[?]] author in his preference for rapid action, his desire to describe not events but personalities, and his concentration on one individual...
- 54: the Seneca amble ambles even more in M
- 57: [style: <sup>of</sup> continuity; no spaces; punctuation rare, used for emphasis and accentuation e.g. Et at beginning of sentences "peppers his prose"]
- 58: C. e.g. many pres. participles, esp. in A; constant mixing of present, past & future verbs; colloquialism; onomatopoeia, alliteration; double, triple adj's & verbs; parenthetical clauses; The 'C'est ...?' or 'c'est... un' constructions are almost his trademark.
- 59: M, by adding a wh, or aadj, or a clause, is always moving from the gen. to the partic. — and he does this above all by his images.
- 59: Gray suggests that there are only around a hundred similes in all the Essais. These are usually from the 1580 text, and evidently represent a conscious effort to do what authors ought to do [...] the salient feature of his imagery is that it serves not so much to illustrate his thought as to express it

Books: Villey, Pierre (essential): Les sources et l'évolution des Essais de M

- ✓ Frame, Donald: Montaigne's Discovery of Man, 1955
- ✓ Thibaudet (posthumous): Montaigne, 1963 (difficult to use but thought-provoking)
- ✓ Haydn, Hiram: The Counter Renaissance (1950) (on the period, helps place M). in JAS
- ✓ Gray, Floyd: Le style de M, 1958 (contains a useful bibliography).
- ✓ Sayce, R.A.: Two Elements in M (in Jr. Studs, VIII, 1954, pp 1-16)

FRAME, Donald M.: Montaigne: a biography (London, Hamish Hamilton, 1965)

- 11: his long critiq of human knowledge & reason, the "Apology for Raymond Sebond"...
- 12: fluent in Latin at the age of 6... 17: He may have regretted, even deplored, the heretical side of his heritage. However, he seems consistently sympathetic toward the Jews...
- 32: [Sainte Jeanne de Lestorme: niece of M] On the occasion of her canonization, the late Pope Pius XII acknowledged M's role and expressed his wish & belief that some day soon the Essays might be removed from the Index of Prohibited Books.
- 35: Men were executed for Lutheranism in Bordeaux in 1546...
- 38: His birth was anxiously awaited, since 2 children had already died, and Antoinette de Louppes had been carrying him for 11 months (sic.)  
 Cf. v. I p. 624: "Et moy je serous, par l'exemple de moy mesme, ceulx d'autre en [les sarrans] qui maintiennent la grossesse d'unge moy..."
- 38: nickname Nicéan, which his father loved and used in both his wills, even when his son was a married man in his 30s and a concierge in the Bordeaux Parliament...
- 53: [formal profession of Catholic faith before Parlement de Paris 1562] It has been said that M took the oath only because he had to; but the official report suggests that he did so gladly...
- 62: ... his 13 yrs in the Bordeaux Parliament... 63: La Boétie satisfied his deepest need, for complete communication. The lack of this later was one of M's reasons for writing the Essays...
- 89: [gold chain episode] Alexandre Nicelau & M. Maurice Rat have interpreted the episode as evidence of adultery between the 2 [M's frappin Arnaud et la femme de M, Françoise de la Chassaigne] [...] M's austere notion of marriage predisposed him for a pair of horns [solo M. Rat]
- 128: M's century was subject to boredom but not yet aware of it as a problem...
- 147: Nor does skepticism undermine his Catholic faith; indeed, it supports it by undermining its enemy, the Protestant trust in individual reason as judge of the meaning of Scripture...
- 149: Generally the early essays, the "Apology for Raymond S" (mainly 1576) and those composed before it, are critical, pessimistic, rather negative; they stress man's impotence, ignorance, and misery. The later ones, generally optimistic & positive, stress the great resources of man & life, for all their limitations.
- 150: ... nihilism and amorality. For M these 2 things are much the same. His Christianity virtually identifies the order of nature with the order of God. He sees God less in the Bible through revelation than - like Sebond, of all people - in the creation through reason. For him what is Christian may be natural or supernatural; what is natural is nearly always Christian...
- 161: [Apology for RS] ... a devastating critique of all dogmatic philosophy...
- 170: ... a defense of Sebond in little but name, which, as one critic has put it, "supports Sebond... as the rope supports the hanged man".... 175: The "Apology" is M's most thorough exploration and statement of the case for doubt...
- 180: [Apol du RS] The best human philosophy, in itself and as a basis for Christianity, is Pyrrhonism, or at least a pyrrhonistic view of our capacities...
- 182: (1577-80) If he had placed any hope in Christian ethics, he seems to have given it up by now. Though his faith is sincere, his God is far above man's moral or intellectual reach [...] The appalling practices of the time seem to prove that Christianity has little effect on conduct. [...] Without any overt - perhaps even any conscious - break, M seems to ignore Christianity as he seeks a man-centred moral code that man has no excuse to infringe...
- 191: (1578) the 1st fierce attack [of renal calculus]
- 198: No misanthropy: the spectacle of man's cockiness often makes him sound like one... 199: When M publishes the 1st edn of the Essays in 1580, he has stated or suggested all his key ideas but one - human unity & solidarity...
- 222: [le grand voyage en Italie] The trip helped make him not merely a citizen of Rome but in the fullest sense a citizen of the world, a representative man, aware of this fact, confident & ready to speak to and for all men...
- 290: (between 1588 ed and death in 1592) no important changes within the new material or from that of 1588; and the fact that M now writes no new essays!... more boldness & readiness to contradict his early views. He has delivered the substance of his message; what remains is to complete & sharpen it. & The greater boldness is evident chiefly in 5 areas: self-revelation, obscenity, his book and his plan, the evils of religion in his time, and his own independent morality... 302: Now the term vulgaire is often virtually synonymous with human. And 296: M's love of paradox and self-depreciation... ~~is exactly what we would expect...~~

FRAME, Donald M.: Did Montaigne betray Sébastien? in *Romanic Review*, 38, 1947, pp 297-329

297: ... some readers feel that his ideas about immortality and the good life are incompatible with the Christian belief he professed; but the Church in his time, even the Papal examiners, did not think so...

298: ... Of all the specialists in M only Arnauld considered him perfidious [in the Apologie], whereas Villey, Strawéki, Léillard, Lanson, Louis Lassard Jacob Zeitlin found him a frail believer but not unchristian...

299: Arnauld, Bourdaloue & Faure make much of M's remark "Nous sommes Chrétiens à mesure telle que nous sommes en Prophétie ou Sermains." But Jansen has shown how greatly they distort the meaning of this statement by quoting it out of context. It is not an explanation of the origin of religion in the soul, but a bitter denunciation of the religion of M's time...

300: Basel, who [sous Sainte-Béuve] had only 2 aims in all his life & all his work: to fight the Jesuits in the provinces, to ruin & annihilate M in the Pensees...

303: [Ste-Béuve sur l'Apologie] Nous sommes au centre : ici tout point, tout est mené, calculé, tortueux, ditant le contraire en apparence de ce q' le maître conduit à part soi et q'il entende... Il y a toute une comédie q'il joue, et dont il ne prétend faire duse q' qui le veut bien.

310: [Ste-Béuve] twists M and his book to the point of distortion. > 313 an outright misrepresentation of the declared purpose & conclusion of the Apologie de R S ...

316: M's attitude in both the translation & the Apologie seems to be that Sébastien is not simply weak or strong, good or bad; that he is weak but useful; his arguments are weak, but may be useful to the weak faith & the weak minds of men...

316: M's only important debt to him (Sébastien) is the idea that the base of all knowledge is self-knowledge  
321: If the text is innocent of treachery, what of the title? [...] it is rash to judge M's intentions in any essay by his title... (Frame here develops a theory that M had been influenced by Henri Estienne's Apologie pour Herodote, similarly misnamed says Frame)

323: (M) blamed by Rome for praising the Protestant poet Béza...

327: It is natural to assume that it was written at one time & to defend Sébastien. But nothing proves this, & much suggests the opposite. The theory of stratagem has not to my knowledge been refuted...

328: If the identification of Maynière is correct, then the date is almost certain. If the date is certain, then it is virtually certain that much of the Apologie was written before M was asked to defend Sébastien. And if so, it was probably written with no thought of defending Sébastien...

329: After all, Shad tried to prove what man & his intellect could do with religion, & he himself (M) was showing that they cannot do without it: he was criticizing reason to save faith.

HAYDN, Hiram: The Counter-Renaissance (NY, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950) 705pp!!

- I Intro. Renaissance = crowning of Petrarch 1341 > death of Bacon 1626 = a stretch of almost exactly 285 years that covers the transition from the medieval to the modern world...
- xii: (3 movements) <sup>PX</sup> 1<sup>o</sup> classical renaissance, or humanistic revival 2<sup>o</sup> Counter-Renaissance, since it originated as a protest against the basic principles of the classical renaissance 3<sup>o</sup> (Galileo & Kepler) = Scientific Reformation
- xiii: St Thomas adopted the phil. of Aristotle and "baptized" it, reason was made the able handmaid of faith [...] The trend moves slowly but ultimately toward the rational or natural theology of the 17<sup>th</sup> - toward Deism...
- xiv: Classical revival not open revolt against medieval view, but a continuation of the medieval tradition, but with a shift in its major areas of interest.
- xv: as characteristic of this 2nd movement [...] is stronger than its rejection of the established ecclesiastical system [...] The reformists of the C-R (the leaders of the early Reformation) turn with an exclusive enthusiasm to faith, regarding reason as the "devil's herald" [...] they share completely an anti-intellectualistic, anti-moralistic, anti-synthetic, anti-authoritarian bias.
- xvi: Luther & Montaigne both motivated by their aversion to the tyranny of "reason" and even by a similar disbelief in the validity of its powers...
- xvii: insistence upon the importance of 1st hand experience [...] their violent & execrative rebellion against their predecessors' ecclesiastical view of in-intellect & reason
- 4: Michelangelo, Luther, Montaigne, Calvin, Hieronymus Bosch, Rabelais, Paracelsus, Copernicus, Vesalius & Cornelius Agrippa - all these were leaders and (however unintentionally) collaborators in the greatest intellectual revolution the Western world had ever seen. Scrupful as each of them was of many of the others, they were all attacking - & in surprising parallel or complementary ways - the great central orthodox forces of Christian humanism, which had stood, only occasionally challenged, since the XV<sup>th</sup> century...
- 20: ...the nature of man's insatiable appetites over man the animal, child of a fertile but amoral nature, & his disfellowship of any possible understanding of God's dignity with his aversion that what we foolishly consider the universal laws of God & Nature are only "municipal laws"...
- 37: Erasmus is altogether too complex & subtle a thinker to admit of neat labeling, but surely his major work emerges as an effort to form "the philosophy of Christ" from a blending of Ciceronian humanism & the loftiness of mind & simplicity of "Saint Socrates"...
- 45: they [the Humanists] made little or no distinction between religious & rational activity between the province of theology & that of philosophy - & furthermore, that they were endeavouring to make of Eastern esoteric religion & Christianity one theology [...] tendency [...] to fuse completely religion & philosophy ... e.g. b: Crassus: "To be a philosopher & to be a Christian is synonymous in fact. The only difference is in the nomenclature..." When I read certain passages of these great men, I can hardly refrain from saying, "Saint Socrates, pray for me." [...] a single undogmatic "triumph of simple morality" = (the gospel & the writings of the classical moral philosopher merged) 46: And this tendency to think of Socrates & Seneca & Cicero & Cato as precursors of Christianity, an inclination foreshadowed in Dante & Petrarch, is characteristic of most of Erasmus's circle ... 46-47: [More's Utopia's rudimentary Deism] all the basic elements of <sup>17<sup>th</sup></sup> Deism, from that of Herbet of Cherbury on, are present in the Utopians' attitude... 47: [knowledge of East, Turkey, New World] led to some at least elementary ponderings in the direction of comparative religion (Capitan 1571) 48: The paper is a gradual but persistent one, away from the mere buttressing of faith with reason, through a fairly even balancing of faith & reason to the domination of faith by reason ... 48-9 (Middle Age, rationalism, Abelard, Scholard) was in the service of deism - the rationalism which we have been tracing through the Renaissance has slowly moved from this position to its opposite - the dispensing with the necessity of reason...
- 64: (this 1st generation of Renaissance humanists) turned [...] from the pre-eminently intellectualistic & speculative Science of God & the Scholastics to a preoccupation with the science of Man concentrating more upon the right living of life than upon the meaning of life 64 (not Aristotle now so much Cicero & Seneca...) 65: Nature-and-Reason, synonymous or mutually supplementary (rich!) constitutes an almost magical talisman [sick!] 65: ... reason in pursuit of moral virtue becomes more important than intellect in pursuit of the contemplation of truth...
- 66: came more & more to stress morality, rather than theology [...] main current ran through Northern Europe, and especially Germany, the Islands of England ... 66-67: the most forceful & influential humanistic opposition to the ethics of the Christian humanists came from the naturalistic humanists, who thought of nature as something quite different from reason - who used it as a catchword & a creed [...] Petrarch, Boccaccio, Lorenzo Valla, Ronsard > Rabelais, Montaigne, leaves its mark on Elizabethans Ralph Shakespear et al.
- 85: tract & fact, not theory; the particular, not the universal; the intuitive or intuitionist or empirical, not the speculative or intellectual or logical ... 87: many of the constituents of the C-R are evident in 17<sup>th</sup> Europe, and again in a figure like Pascal, in the
- (7<sup>th</sup>) (philosophical skepticism = Cornelius Agrippa; Erasmus familiar with concepts, and Rabelais so too) but after Agrippa it is Montaigne who most enthusiastically embraces the principles of this skepticism, and exploits all their possibilities to castigate the pretensions of the adepts of Scholastic science and of humanistic "Stoic scepticism" ... 89-90 (2 blocks in the book views & lives of scepticizing Cicero & Pyrrho, w/ Diogenes Laertius' lives of the Philosophers, "immensely pop") & Sextus Empiricus' Hypotheses.

GIDE André : Les pages immortelles de Montaigne (choisies et expliquées par) Corrêa, s.d. (acheté d'imp 1939)  
 (pp 7-44 = AG ; 45+ = Montaigne.) 228 pp.

- 8: l'abondance de ces citations qui font, de certains chapitres des Essais, un pudding compact d'autreux grecs et latins, nous ferait douter de l'originalité de M; il faut q' celle-ci soit bien rôtie pour dominer tout ce fatras...
- 9: l'autorité des anciens, et particulièrement d'Aristote, enfonçait la culture dans une sonnière et durant le XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle, l'Université de Paris ne forma qu'une école de pédants et des cuistres...
- 5: Il se peint pour se démasquer. Et comme le masq appartient bien plus au pays et à l'époq qu'à l'homme même, c'est par le masq surtout q'les pens diffèrent, de sorte q', dans l'être vraiment démasqué, nous pouvons reconnaître aisément notre semblable [Al. qui souligne] ...
- 15: "l'être véritable est le commencement d'une grande vertu" (II, 18) [...] ces mots admirables, q' Montaigne emprunte à Blutarq (qui lui-même les tient de l'hindou) je les fais miens; je voudrais les porter en tête des Essais, car c'est là surtout et partout l'important enseignement q' j'y porte...
- 17: "je ne peins pas l'autre, je peins le passage". (Les Allemands disaient: le Werden). Car M reste préoccupé du perpétuel écoulement de toutes choses, et, par ces mots, indiq la non-stabilité de la personnalité humaine, qui n'est jamais, mais ne prend conscience d'elle-même q' dans un infatigable devenir [...]
- 18: De tous les chapitres [qu'il écrit] [...] seul est nettement fastidieux; c'est le plus long de bcp., le seul q'il écrit avec application, suite et sens de composition: l'Apologie de Raymond de Sebonde, philosophe espagnol du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle, qui professa la médecine en France, à l'univ de Toulouse, dont M ayant péniblement traduit la Théologie Naturalis dans la prière de son père. [...] 19: Le chapitre 2 [...] est le premier écrit de M. Jam des plus célèbres, et des + souvent cités, car c'est un de ceux où la pensée de M. si démodée et naturellement vulgarisée, fait le + grand effort pour développer une sorte de doctrine et de dogme une consistance apparente à son inconstat scepticisme...
- 24: L'amour ressemble par avance dans la vie de M un grand rôle; mais bien plutôt la volupté [...] j'ai relevé dans les Essais<sup>25</sup> les passages où il parle d'elles (des femmes); il n'en est pas un qui ne soit importun ...
- 30: Chez quoi il parle du christianisme, c'est avec le plus étrange (on dirait presq parfois: la + malicieuse) impertinence. Il s'occupe souvent de la religion; jamais du Christ. [...] Quant à la sévérité qu'il marq à l'égard du catholicisme, il y ente à coup sûr bcp. de prudence; [petites "cavaleuses/palinodie(s)" insérées après coup] Ce passage [...] et d'autres semblables, on les dirait fichés dans son livre en manière de paratomes, ou mieux encore: collés comme ces étiquettes de « sirop » ou de « limonade », sur des bouteilles de whisky, en temps de régime sec [...] et je m'indignerai de cette cavaleuse palinodie, si je ne pensais qu'il en était peut-être besoin pour faire passer jusqu'à nous sa marchandise. « Il peut avoir pour très bon catholique, sans à n'avoir guère été chrétien», écrit excellemment sainte-beuve.
- 34: Ce q'il nous plaît dans le catholicisme, ce qu'il y admire et prône, c'est l'ordre et l'ancienneté ...
- 39: Ce q'il nous ensuive surtout, c'est ce q'on appela bcp + tard le libéralisme ...