Bodies of Wisdom: Philosophy as Medicine in Montaigne and Pascal

Johanna C. Magin

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2015

ABSTRACT

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In "Bodies of Wisdom," I reassert the primacy of the body in the philosophical practices of two early modern French authors, Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) and Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), whose writings have been associated with the ancient tradition of "philosophy as a way of life." Harkening back to the Classical understanding of philosophy as a form of medicine, these authors' works rely a good deal on somatic and/or medical terminology to describe states of the soul and philosophical practices more generally. While there exists a wide body of literature that addresses the medical analogy in Hellenistic philosophers, few commentators have ventured to read the analogy *literally*, and none thus far have done so for authors of the early modern period. In this dissertation, I reclaim the literal relationship between medicine and philosophy by examining instances in both authors where descriptions of health and illness can be read both metaphorically ("spiritually") and literally ("somatically"). Philosophy is not just *like* medicine in that it seeks to bring about individual well-being; it *is* medicine in the fullest sense, because the exercises intended to bring about well-being must pass through the body in order to give lasting shape to the life of the practitioner.

Many scholars have acknowledged Pascal's inheritance of Montaigne's moderate skepticism, and as one of history's most astute – and sometimes acerbic – readers of Montaigne, Pascal was uniquely poised to highlight those aspects of Montaigne's philosophy that attenuated the reader's belief in the power of human reason. This meant

that for both authors, there had to be some more reliable alternative to the reasoning mind to arrive at an understanding of truth. The body, it turns out, served just such a purpose. Although Montaigne and Pascal had very different purposes in writing the *Essais* and the *Pensées*, respectively, I show how a mutual concern for empirical certainty amidst the tenuousness of philosophical and religious opinion precipitated a return to bodily experience, as the most viable means of knowing the self and the world.

Despite the widespread conception of the early modern period as one of "thoroughgoing" – and one might say, Cartesian – dualism between body and mind, I argue that Montaigne and Pascal are evidence of a countertrend: their writings suggest that we cannot think our way to philosophical virtue; we must *enact* that virtue through our bodies, using them as tools for interpretation and modification of our internal states. I thereby call into question a distinction that is commonly made between somatic techniques, on the one hand, and spiritual exercises, on the other, in much of the literature on philosophy as a way of life. The implications of this are far-reaching: if the suffering that philosophy purports to treat is at once spiritual and somatic, then the "spiritual" exercises designed to address this suffering also borrow a great deal from the *soma*, and should be advertised as such. Further, if spiritual health is indeed contingent on our relationship to the *soma*, then the classic definition of philosophy as a "spiritual" practice (namely, one associated with the *logos*) needs to be expanded to include the material and/or somatic dimensions of the discipline.

Although I try to provide a clear roadmap for how these authors go about spiritual healing, I recognize that the trajectory to spiritual health is seldom very direct. Surely, we can find examples of somatic exercises that appear to have a predictable effect on the

mind and, inversely, spiritual exercises that yield positive physical results. However, the process of effecting change and training for virtue is almost never unidirectional. The constant trafficking between body and mind, evidenced most abundantly by the passions, belies a much less tidy relationship between the two faculties. To describe this relationship, I rely both on early modern medical therapeutics and on Pierre Bourdieu's twentieth-century conception of *habitus*. Viewed through the lens of *habitus*, the practice of philosophy can be conceived as a process of embodiment, wherein the practitioner appropriates and accommodates *in a bodily way* the virtues traditionally aligned with the good life—before realizing that, as *habitus*, he or she is always, already well-adapted to the good and thus endowed with a certain form of health from the beginning.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe much gratitude to Pierre Force, whose course "Montaigne, Descartes, Pascal" planted the first seed for this project back in 2009. A rare example of an advisor who models both magnanimity and steadfast rigor, he has been an exemplary guide to scholarly integrity these last seven years. A warm thanks to Bachir Diagne, who exuded the sort of compassion that helped to keep this project rolling, and whose philosophical sensibility enlivened my interest in this topic. And many thanks to Antoine Compagnon, who, perhaps more than anyone, demonstrated the value of close reading and technical precision up until the very end of this project. Thanks as well to Kathy Eden and Matt Jones for generously offering to sit on the committee; their work in the respective fields of rhetorical hermeneutics and the history of science has proven invaluable to me. Another key player has been Jean-Charles Darmon (Paris-CNRS), who helped me to navigate some of the disciplinary and temporal divides of this project while I was in Paris on the Lurcy Fellowship in 2013-2014.

I would also like to acknowledge the professors I had years ago at the University of Chicago – Robert Morrissey, Philippe Desan, and Thomas Pavel – for having provided the first laboratory for thinking about many of these issues. In addition, the digital humanities project ARTFL, developed at Chicago, continues to enrich the possibilities of Montaigne scholarship as we know it and early modern scholarship more broadly.

Heather Ohaneson, the dearest of dear friends, has been both a lively intellectual companion these last few years and a levelheaded source of support. I am deeply grateful to my parents for fearlessly showing interest in whatever I pursue—and for setting the bar very high. And a special thanks to a certain Berber from mid-Atlas Morocco, Omar, who

has made my life large enough and loving enough to genuinely enjoy these last few years of dissertation writing: اركش..

Finally, if it were not for the many other outlets I've had for "embodied" practice, this dissertation simply would not have been feasible. Much gratitude to the Zen Center of New York City/Fire Lotus Temple, where I spent over two years in residency at the outset of this dissertation. Limitless gratitude goes to my teacher, Shugen Sensei, and to all the monks and laypeople who, everyday, are putting to practice the ancient discipline of meditation. The 5Rhythms dance community, of which I've been a part for six years, has (literally) allowed me to move and test the ideas that are central to this thesis. And I am deeply grateful to my Alexander Technique teacher, Hope Martin, for creating a space in which embodiment is possible.

For my parents

and all the lives unlived,

and *habibi*,

the finest embodiment of wisdom I know

Introduction

Genesis of the project.

In a somewhat surprising close to the final book of the *Essais*, Montaigne invokes the Greek god Apollo, protector of two closely allied virtues, health and wisdom. This comes just after Montaigne has extolled the wonders of being fully human, rejoicing in the fact that even on the world's highest throne we are still left sitting on our own rump. "Les plus belles vies," he pronounces, "sont à mon gré celles, qui se rangent au modelle commun et humain avec ordre : mais sans miracle, sans extravagance."[1] There is nothing special required to live a full human life—and yet, without the twin fruits of health and wisdom, we are left in a rather sorry condition in old age. Perhaps this is why Montaigne, nearing the end of his own life, took refuge in a mythological god-figure who was Antiquity's championed protector of these two virtues: "Recommandons la [vieillesse] à ce Dieu [Apollon], protecteur de santé et de sagesse : mais gaye et sociale." Montaigne probably did not have in mind the fierce young warrior-god who brought death and destruction at the single shot of an arrow. In evoking joy and sociability ("mais gaye et sociale"), he was more likely conceiving of Apollo in his effeminate guise, strumming his lyre in a leisurely setting. To further illustrate his wishes for old age, Montaigne goes on to cite four verses of Horace that act as a prayer for a fruitful end to one's life: "*Frui paratis et ualido mihi / Latoe dones, et precor integra / Cum mente, nec turpem senetam / Degere, nec Cythara carentem.*" ["Accorde-moi, fils de Latone, de jouir des biens qui me sont acquis, à la fois en pleine santé et l'esprit intact, je t'en supplie, et de ne pas trainer une vieillesse honteuse, privée de la cithare." --Horace, *Odes*, I, XXXI, 17-20] (III:13,

[1] Michel de Montaigne, *Les Essais*, ed. Jean Balsamo et al. (Paris: Gallimard (« Bibliothèque de la Pléiade »), 2007), III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1166. Subsequent references to the text will be made in the form of (book:chapter, chapter title, page number).

"De l'Experience," p. 1167) Health and wisdom resurface here – "en pleine santé et l'esprit intact" – as the two essential conditions that enable the poet to not just pursue, but enjoy, the good life he has cultivated, tranquil and at ease, accompanied by the beauty of music and poetry. This depiction of old age is distinctly philosophical in that it posits tranquility and *otium* as the ultimate goods of a human life—an ideal that Montaigne seemed to understand quite well, poised as he was for solitary reflection amidst his tower of books in the final decade of his life. It is a critical passage in the *Essais*, both because of its appearance at the very end of Book III and because it exposes Montaigne near the end of his own life, distilling his philosophy to a handful of ideals that he held most dear: health, wisdom, and enjoyment. Much could be made of the fact that Montaigne cedes his final words to the Roman lyric poet, as if strumming his own lyre by the mere act of citing these verses. But more important in my mind is the prominence he assigns to health and wisdom, as the two essential – and complementary – features of a life well lived. If wisdom alone is not enough, what is it about health and the body that remains essential to tranquility and the good life?

Assigning health and wisdom to equal ground was not a surprising move for an author who took his bodily health just as seriously as his intellectual integrity. Nor was it surprising to find health considered alongside wisdom in the philosophical traditions of ancient Greece and Rome. If wisdom (Gr. σοφία; Lat. *sophia*) is now considered the property of philosophical practice – evocative mainly of intellectual activity – it is worth noting that it had a much broader purview in the original Greek. Wisdom, in the beginning, had much to do with the body. Before soaring to theoretical heights, it often referred to the skills involved in producing a work of art, practicing well one's trade,

playing a musical instrument, or knowing how to treat a sick patient. Being wise did not always mean that one possessed a detached appreciation of the cosmos as a whole (as the Platonic definition might suggest), or that one had mastered all the modes of discourse (consolation, instruction, exhortation, etc.) valued by the major Hellenistic schools—but that one *practiced well* one's art form or trade. With Aristotle, wisdom still had a rightful place alongside the very practical concerns of health and physical labor, and so its relationship to disciplines like music and medicine proved more than merely incidental. This has been shown even in instances where Aristotle uses *sophia* (the more traditional – and theoretical – application of wisdom) in conjunction with the arts and handicrafts[2] to denote the sort of intelligence or know-how usually grouped under the term *technê*. The conjunction between wisdom and practical know-how is most obvious, however, in Aristotle's use of *phronesis* (Gr. φρόνησις, often translated as "practical wisdom" or "prudence"), a term that appears in contexts concerned with the practical application of knowledge, whether for the cultivation of virtuous conduct or good health. If we turn to section 1199 of Aristotle's *Magna Moralia*, we find a pointed example of *phronesis* (translated below as "wisdom"[3]) as it might apply to the practice of medicine. In a rather

[2] Joseph Owens, "Aristotle's Notion of Wisdom," in *Apeiron: A Journal for Ancient Philosophy and Science* 20:1 (Spring 1987): 1. Incidentally, just as I was discussing the lyre in the case of Montaigne, Owens cites the legend of a flute-playing contest between Marsyas and Apollo (reported by Xenophon), where the term *sophia* was used to describe musical proficiency.

[3] The original Greek reads φρονήσεως (*phronesis*), sometimes translated as prudence. The Loeb edition opts for this latter translation: "Or should we not rather deny that Prudence accompanies the unjust; since (as it seems) he does not consider or discern the difference between what is absolutely good and what is good for himself, but falls into error concerning it? / The fact is, that the power of Prudence rightly to distinguish what is good finds a parallel in the realm of medicine. We all know what is absolutely and essentially healthful and health-giving; that such, for instance, are hellebore and elaterium and the applications of knife and cautery. And yet we lack the science of medicine; since we are still ignorant of what is good in particular cases. We do not know for whom a particular treatment is good, or when, or under what conditions. All this the physician knows; for without it medical knowledge is not complete. Thus, even while knowing what is absolutely healthful, we yet lack medical science; the general knowledge does not involve the particular. / Now this is exactly the case of the unjust man. He knows that supreme

lengthy description, Aristotle opens with the example of justice to suggest that wisdom is knowing what is good in particular cases:

> For the unjust man does not discern and is not able to judge between what is good in itself and what is good for him, but makes a mistake. But this is the province of wisdom, to be able to take a right view of these things (just as in matters of medicine we all know what is absolutely wholesome and what is productive of health, that hellebore and an aperient and surgery and cautery are wholesome and productive of health, and yet we do not possess the science of medicine), for without it we no longer know what is good in particular cases, just as the doctor knows for whom a given thing is good and when and in what disposition; for herein the science of medicine displays itself. Now we may know things that are absolutely wholesome, and yet not have the science of medicine attendant upon us; and the same is the case with the unjust man. That in an absolute sense autocracy and government and power are good, he knows; but whether they are good for him or not, or when, or in what condition, that is what he does not also know. But this is just the business of wisdom…[4]

"The business of wisdom," as Aristotle puts it, is knowing not only what is good in the absolute sense but what is good for a particular person in a specific time and place—the dual perspective that every physician, like every just man, must maintain in order to apply his science to individual cases. Knowing that hellebore, aperient, surgery, and cautery are generally recommendable is no guarantee that we possess the *science* of medicine—that we are skillful at applying those remedies to particular patients. Knowledge, in other words, must be combined with skill in order to make wise decisions, whether in applying laws to specific cases or medical doctrine to individual patients. The same is true of moral judgment. Wisdom results from *discernment*, illustrated by the just

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power, and rule, and authority are in themselves good things; but he is still in ignorance whether for him they be good or not; or if they are when they are good and under what conditions. This latter knowledge is the special province of Prudence or Practical Thought." (Aristotle, *Metaphysics* (vols. 10-14), trans. Hugh Tredennick et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), *Magna Moralia* Book II:3; 1199a28-b5. DOI: 10.4159/DLCL.aristotle-magna_moralia.1935.)

[4] Aristotle, *The Works of Aristotle*, ed. and trans. W.D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1915), *Magna Moralia* Book II:3; 1199a28-b5. HathiTrust Digital Library: http://hdl.handle.net/2027/wu.89089990824.

man who is able to "judge between what is good in itself and what is good for him." For Montaigne, cultivating this mind of discernment was as crucial to maintaining good bodily health as it was to appropriating the virtues he admired in the lives of great philosophers and politicians. Philosophy as a living practice presupposes this sort of discernment because "what is good in itself" is useful to the philosopher only insofar as it corresponds to the concrete exigencies of individual existence. "Philosophy as a way of life," a term popularized by the Classical philologist Pierre Hadot,[5] provides a particularly potent testing ground for this type of discernment.

Unfortunately, in Montaigne's experience, this discernment – and along with it, the moral component of medical practice – was often blurred, misconstrued, or outright absent. Physicians, like philosophers, lost the respect of many non-medical humanist writers, because they often used their art to profit from the layperson's ignorance. What happens when advice-giving functions within such an imbalance of power, where sympathetic understanding is replaced by the commoditization of services? For one, the diagnosis and treatment may be subject to error. The moment a "professional" intervenes – as in Montaigne's "ceux qui font profession de ces arts" – there is a sense of objectification, some would argue, that adversely affects a person's ability to make fair and accurate judgments. Such is the case, Gadamer claims, of the interpreter who has become alienated from his object of interpretation by the "objectifying methods of modern science."[6] Gadamer rightly calls this a case of "false objectification," because human experience cannot be objectified in the way that other inanimate objects may be

[5] See especially Pierre Hadot, *La Philosophie comme manière de vivre* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001) and Idem, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique ?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995).

[6] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer et al. (New York: Continuum, 2004), 312.

objectified by modern scientific instruments. Ideally, the physician, like the philosopher, would think *along with* his patient, considering him as much a subject as an object of interpretation.

If overused, objective knowledge, like the common acceptation of *sophia*, is ultimately inimical to the doctor-patient and philosopher-disciple relationships. Not only can it result in error; it misses the moral character of the relationship entirely. Again, Gadamer offers a lucid summary of the problem: "moral knowledge, as Aristotle describes it, is clearly not objective knowledge—i.e., the knower is not standing over against a situation that he merely observes; he is directly confronted with what he sees. It is something that he has to do."[7] This sort of knowledge, *phronesis*, is the knowledge required of physicians and philosophers alike who aim to practice their disciplines well. Although Aristotle uses medicine as an analogy for how a just person should practice *phronesis*, *phronesis* can also be applied *literally* to the physician-patient relationship. Medicine, for Montaigne, was not only a *technê*, as it was for most Ancients. He, like other humanists, thought that medicine ought to be imbued with the same sort of subjective discernment that moral judgment required in the case of philosophy: the "deliberating with oneself"[8] that Gadamer associates with *euboulia* (a term similar to *phronesis*; commonly translated as good counsel or sound judgment) needed to be present in medical settings. This is not because *technê* itself is useless,[9] only that it is incomplete.

[7] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 312.

[8] Ibid, 318.

[9] Montaigne affirms that there is legitimate healing to be found in such knowledge: "Je ne dy pas qu'il n'y en puisse avoir quelque art: qu'il n'y ait parmy tant d'ouvrages de nature, des choses propres à la conservation de nostre santé, cela est certain. […] Je ne desadvoue pas l'usage, que nous tirons du monde, ny ne doubte de la puissance et uberté de nature, et de son application à nostre besoing." (II:37, "De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres," p. 804)

We need *phronesis*, and more specifically *euboulia*, because, having strayed from nature's wisdom, we have lost our ability to properly apply the *technê* that has always been at our disposal.[10] Theoretical knowledge – or what Montaigne calls "des inventions de nostre esprit : de nostre science et art" – is no guarantee for the intelligent application of nature's wisdom. *Phronesis*, on the other hand, ensures that the physician acts according to what is right with regard to the whole person, and not just according to what is expedient for restoring a patient's health. This is ultimately what gives medicine and philosophy their common ground and what makes them such complex, precarious endeavors. Given how frequently physicians and philosophers failed in this regard, it is perhaps no wonder that Montaigne turns to Apollo in the final chapter of the *Essais* to safeguard his health and wisdom—rather than to the "professionals" of medicine and philosophy.

The architecture of the argument.

In this dissertation I take as my point of departure two early modern French authors, Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) and Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), both "philosophical" in their own right, but who exercise a form of wisdom that extends to the most practical concerns of everyday life, much like Aristotle's notion of *phronesis* above. For them, wisdom is not separate from the body; it is practical and particular; and it overlaps significantly with discussions of health and healing. In fact, any philosophy that spurns or neglects the body is seen as gravely misguided, and a way of life not worth following. Montaigne's unapologetic decree, "Moy qui ne manie que terre à terre, hay

[10] Again, Montaigne elucidates: "Je me deffie des inventions de nostre esprit : de nostre science et art : en faveur duquel nous l'avons abandonée [i.e. la nature], et ses regles : et auquel nous ne sçavons tenir moderation, ny limite." (II:37, "De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres," p. 804)

ceste inhumaine sapience, qui nous veut rendre desdaigneux et ennemis de la culture du corps" (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1156), could not be a clearer plea for the body's importance in the scheme of a human life. Pascal's warning, "Car il ne faut pas se méconnaître, nous sommes automate autant qu'esprit,"[11] serves as a similar, albeit more oblique, reminder that the body is a force worth reckoning with in our pursuit of the good. It is "l'automate" – and not the mind – that ensures our advancement along the spiritual path, for custom acts directly on our automaton nature, inculcating our mind through the force of physical habit.

This recognition that the body ought be included in our philosophical development was hardly new. It reflected the longstanding alliance between the disciplines of philosophy and medicine, starting in Antiquity and continuing well into the early modern era. Although one might consider the relationship between medicine and philosophy, or health and wisdom, from a variety of different angles, I focus in this dissertation on the hermeneutical problems and somatic language that govern them both. I do not propose an institutional or doctrinal comparison of the two; that I leave to the many excellent historians of medicine, such as Owsei Temkin, Ludwig Edelstein, Pedro Laín Entralgo, Andrew Wear, Nancy G. Siraisi, and Roger French.[12] The problem posed

[11] Blaise Pascal, *Œuvres complètes*, t. II, ed. Michel Le Guern (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), *Pensées* fr. 671. Subsequent references to the *Pensées* will be made in the form of (LG fr. #).

[12] See especially Owsei Temkin, *The Double Face of Janus and Other Essays in the History of Medicine* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1977); Idem, *Galenism: Rise and Decline of a Medical Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973); Ludwig Edelstein, *Ancient Medicine: Selected Papers of Ludwig Edelstein* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987); Pedro Laín Entralgo, *The Therapy of the Word in Classical Antiquity*, trans. L. J. Rather et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970); Nancy G. Siraisi, "Anatomising the Past: Physicians and History in Renaissance Culture," *Renaissance Quarterly* 53 (2000): 1-30; Idem, *History, Medicine, and the Traditions of Renaissance Learning*. *Cultures of Knowledge in the Early Modern World (*Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008); Idem, "Medicine and the Renaissance World of Learning," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 78 (2004): 1-36; Andrew Wear et al., ed., *The Medical Renaissance of the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Roger French, *Medicine Before Science: The Rational and Learned Doctor from*

to both the physician and the just man is chiefly one of *application*, a problem that has come to define the field of hermeneutics.[13] How does one apply universal or absolute principles to specific and variable objects such as the body or human conduct? And what does a "successful" application look like in either philosophy or medicine, whereby part and whole merge into a "harmonious tension"[14]?

The problem, at least rhetorically, with relating these two terms is that philosophy and medicine have often been treated as analogical counterparts, whose subject matter is similar, but not the same: one is said to deal with the body, and the other with the mind. A significant aspect of this study challenges the traditional understanding of the relationship between medicine and philosophy – and by implication, between body and soul – as purely analogical. By opening the dissertation with an argument for the primacy of individual experience in both medical and philosophical hermeneutics (Chapter 1), I am able to show how that experience, manifest in the body, complicates the Classical understanding of philosophy *as* a form of medicine (Chapters 2 and 3). I argue instead that philosophy *is* a form of medicine, in the same way that spiritual health is predicated on physical experience.

Beginning with Epicurus' well-known claim that it is the duty of the philosopher to "expel the suffering of the soul," drawing an obvious parallel to the physician who is

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the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and Roger French et al., ed., *The Medical Revolution of the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[13] Gadamer claims that this is in fact the "central problem" of hermeneutics. See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 313.

[14] I borrow this phrase from Jean Starobinski and his analysis of moderation or the middle way in Montaigne.

charged with relieving the suffering of the body,[15] commentators have long maintained that the philosopher *acts like* the physician in the way that he attends to his disciple in order to bring about well-being. The basic understanding in Antiquity was that the physician provided cures for bodily ailments, while the philosopher provided existential relief to the mind and soul, each administering aid according to his specific domain of expertise. But the problem with this analogy is that it does not reflect the imbrication of mental and bodily criteria in most physicians' diagnoses and fails to recognize many philosophers' penchant for using medical categories to explain psychological dis-ease. The most widely recognized practices, such as those of the Hippocratic and Galenic physicians, combined knowledge of anatomy, exercise, dietetics, the humors, emotions, temperament, and one's way of life to formulate a reasonable hypothesis about the causes and cure of a disease. A good physician did not just submit his patient to a physical examination; he took into account the patient's description of the disease, possible environmental factors, and even the products of the patient's imagination. The analogy, if maintained too strictly, goes against this holistic view of human dysfunction by partitioning off "mental" and "bodily" experiences, thereby disregarding the fact that Ancients and Early Moderns alike acknowledged the constant interaction, and even indistinction, between these two varieties of experience. The language of medicine would often bleed into the realm of the philosophical, and hence, we have such expressions as

[15] Epicurus is quoted here by Porphyry in the *Ad Marcellam* (ch. 31): "Empty are the words of that philosopher who offers therapy for no human suffering. For just as there is no use in medical expertise if it does not give therapy for bodily diseases, so too there is no use in philosophy if it does not expel the suffering of the soul." (A.A. Long et al., ed. and trans., *The Hellenistic Philosophers (vol. 1): Translations of the Principal Sources, with Philosophical Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 155.) An alternative translation renders suffering as "passion": "Empty is the discourse of that philosopher by which no human passion is healed. For just as there is no benefit from medicine if it does not heal the bodies' diseases, neither is there from philosophy if it does not purge the passion of the soul." (Porphyry the Philosopher, *To Marcella*, trans. Kathleen O'Brian Wicker (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 73.)

"the sickness of the soul" (*la maladie de l'âme*) or a soul "covered in ulcers" in the case of Pascal. Moreover, philosophers would frequently frame their discussions of spiritual alienation in terms of physical disease: on the one hand, we have Pascal's claim that our greatest illness (our "maladie principale") is our misdirected curiosity of things we shall never know, along with our insensitivity to the question of salvation; and on the other hand, we have Montaigne's blanket statement that our most savage illness as human beings ("de nos maladies la plus sauvage") consists in hating ourselves ("mespriser nostre estre"). At a cursory glance, these descriptions can be read metaphorically: being ill-at-ease with ourselves and the vaster world could be called an illness of sorts (paradoxical in that it is universal to all human beings), while the opposite condition, tranquility, could be called a form of health. In other words, we *can* read depictions of spiritual illness as just that—spiritual, or confined to some idea of the mind or soul. But in this dissertation, I argue that the metaphorical or figurative descriptions of illness in Montaigne and Pascal are rarely only metaphorical; they belie physical or somatic referents and, in turn, demand physical or material practices as the cure. Spiritual sickness and health, I contend, *is physical* in that it is always contingent on how the author relates to and directly uses (or abuses) his body. I also argue that illness is rarely conceived as exclusive of health—health connoting wholeness or harmony. It is instead considered an occasion to further cultivate the qualities necessary for salvation, as Pascal demonstrates in his *Prière pour demander à Dieu le bon usage des maladies*, or a signal to pay greater attention to the natural processes already going on in our bodies, as Montaigne attests to throughout the *Essais*. Illness is more often a reminder to re-*member*—to come back to the body, incorporating the lost or neglected parts into the whole. In Chapter 2, I open

with the question, *what is spiritual illness and health?*, which then opens the door to Chapter 3, where I let the authors themselves answer in terms that are decidedly somatic and, in some cases, medical. Moving from an analogical reading of sickness and health to a literal one reveals the main point of this dissertation in surprisingly simple, yet supple, terms: dis-ease, in the philosophical sense, is disease quite literally, which provides a compelling example of *syllepsis* in the early modern understanding of illness.[16]

In returning our focus to the body in these authors' descriptions of spiritual health, I am not suggesting that the body functions in opposition to or separate from the mind or soul. In fact, one definition of health, which seems to be supported by both authors, is having all the parts of oneself in proper alignment, so that no one part works in opposition to the whole. I consider the *soma* to be the most inclusive aspect of human experience, the very aspect that exposes the underlying mechanism of habit formation, a key ingredient for developing virtue. One of Pierre Bourdieu's central claims in his theory of *habitus*[17] was that we learn through the body ("nous apprenons par corps") and, it turns out, his model for learning through the body helps to explain the ways these authors appropriate what is foreign and render it familiar. Whenever we accommodate an unfamiliar word, idea, or behavior, we are doing so through our bodies, whether or not we intend it or are even aware of it. *Habitus* describes well the absolute conjunction of body and world that makes familiarization and accommodation possible in the first place. The trajectory towards health could be described as nothing other than a progressive

[16] *Syllepsis* (from the Greek σύλληψις, meaning "taken together"), as used here, is intended to refer to any word (such as health) that can apply both literally and metaphorically to the other words in question (such as body and soul). In grammar and rhetoric, it is also used to designate a word that is made to refer to two other words in a sentence, while properly applying to only one of them.

[17] In this dissertation I draw from Bourdieu's *Méditations pascaliennes* (Paris: Seuil, 1997) and *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992).

familiarization with *habitus*, the embodied subject that seamlessly belongs to and acts upon his or her world. With this familiarization, the subject becomes aware of belonging itself, a form of physical and spiritual healing. Therefore, we need the body not just as a screen on which to read the inner movements of the mind or soul, but as the medium itself for spiritual awakening. In Chapter 4, I provide a more complete picture of how this occurs: we learn through the bodies of others and through paying attention to our own. The lessons we learn are by and large philosophical, rarely destined for the annals of medical *doctrina*; and even traditional medical practices, such as Hippocratic case-taking and Galenic diagnostics, provide insights that are not limited to the body alone. These authors use information about their bodies to become familiar with their entire selves, which necessarily puts them in touch with their belonging to the whole.

The choice of Montaigne and Pascal.

Although neither author was considered a "medical" writer in his time, both authors' descriptions of the good life, and the obstacles to it, feature the body – both figuratively and literally – and make abundant use of somatic terminology to illumine the qualities essential for the good life. As eclectic writers and thinkers, they were each uniquely poised to consider the ramifications of the body, and embodiment more generally, across a wide variety of disciplines. Montaigne, writing in the turbulent 1500s in France, offers his own share of commentary on the conflicting views of the body, the tenuousness of medical and philosophical authority, as well as the merits of individual experience over doctrine and dogma. Pascal's more oblique commentary on the body in the context of medicine, religion, and philosophy borrows a great deal from the author of

the *Essais*, while at the same time reconfiguring the body's importance to serve his ultimate aims, faith and salvation. I include Pascal in this project not only because he is considered one of history's most insightful readers of Montaigne, but, more to the point, because his readings of Montaigne (both in the form of direct commentaries and borrowed ideas or phrases) tend to highlight precisely those aspects of human experience that make the body seem all-powerful: custom, the imagination, and the passions. For both authors, human judgment and reason are unreliable guides for attaining absolute truth, because the imagination and emotion constantly impair our ability to objectively vet situations that concern us personally. Reason and logic will also never convince us of something we know to be true only in our bodies, so strong is the sway of our imagination and custom. Fear is a case in point. Place a philosopher on a high plank overlooking empty space (Pascal[18]) or in a cage suspended from the towers of Notre Dame (Montaigne[19]) and he will tremble, quake, perspire, and gape at the possibility of his own death, much as reason might reassure him that the support beneath him will not let him fall. Fear is compelling precisely because it is felt immediately in the body, and is not just a hypothetical event in the mind; therefore, it has the ability to persuade. There is no way of being removed from the bodily experience of fear once it has arisen, because custom and habit have, in a sense, already done their work, by making our bodily

[18] "Le plus grand philosophe du monde sur une planche plus large qu'il ne faut, s'il y a au-dessous un précipice, quoique sa raison le convainque de sa sûreté, son imagination prévaudra. Plusieurs n'en sauraient soutenir la pensée sans pâlir et suer." (LG 41)

[19] "Qu'on loge un philosophe dans une cage de menus filets de fer clair-semez, qui soit suspendue au hault des tours nostre Dame de Paris ; il verra par raison evidente, qu'il est impossible qu'il en tombe ; et si ne se sçauroit garder (…) que la veue de cette haulteur extreme, ne l'espouvante et ne le transisse. (…) Qu'on jette une poultre entre ces deux tours d'une grosseur telle qu'il nous la faut à nous promener dessus, il n'y a sagesse philosophique de si grande fermeté, qui puisse nous donner courage d'y marcher comme nous ferions si elle estoit à terre." (II:12, "Apologie de Raimond de Sebonde," p. 631)

response thus and not otherwise. The *habitus* has already been formed, in other words, and is unlikely to begin seeing itself in a different light. However, the experience of a passion such as fear can also represent a turning point in the author's philosophical trajectory: either the body's response may be seen as a limiting condition to self-mastery (and indeed it is if we keep to the Classical notion of philosophy as the attainment of the divine *logos*, synonymous with logic and reason), or it may be recognized as a powerful tool for learning and growth. In the latter case, the first step would be to recognize the influence of the imagination on our decision-making, and both authors do this by calling attention to the power of the bodily response of fear to obscure our rational view of most situations. The second step would then be to use the imagination for our benefit; both authors do this as well by proposing a number of "imagination exercises" meant to elicit a strong emotional response from the reader, which is then intended to adjust the reader's understanding of himself in relation to the "whole."

An example of such an exercise that illustrates Pascal's indebtedness to Montaigne[20] (and further back, to the Stoics and Epicureans[21]) has us imagine ourselves in vast space, as spectators to the majesty of the divine and infinite, in order to evoke a sense of awe and bewilderment. Although Pascal's version of the exercise is arguably better known than Montaigne's, the same core principle is at work in both: by having the

[20] The comparison of these two passages was inspired by the work of Bernard Croquette: see Croquette, *Pascal et Montaigne: Etude des réminiscences des* Essais *dans l'œuvre de Pascal* (Geneva: Droz, 1974), 38.

[21] After giving several examples of similar exercises in the Stoic and Epicurean schools, Pierre Hadot summarizes the ancient exercises of the imagination thus: "Dans toutes les écoles qui le pratiquent, cet exercice de la pensée et de l'imagination consiste finalement, pour le philosophe, à prendre conscience de son être dans le Tout, comme point minuscule et de faible durée, mais capable de se dilater dans le champs immense de l'espace infini, et de saisir en une seule intuition la totalité de la réalité. Le moi éprouvera ainsi un double sentiment, celui de sa petitesse, en voyant son individualité corporelle perdue dans l'infini de l'espace et du temps, celui de sa grandeur en éprouvant son pouvoir d'embrasser la totalité des choses." (Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique ?*, 313)

reader imagine himself in a vaster reality – the infinity of space or the majesty of nature – the reader is made to feel his smallness in relation to the whole. In Pascal, the exercise results in bewilderment and angst, whereas in Montaigne, it results in a greater precision of judgment. Montaigne presents his exercise thus: "Mais qui se presente comme dans un tableau, cette grande image de nostre mere nature, en son entiere magesté : qui lit en son visage, une si generale et constante varieté : qui se remarque là dedans, et non soy, mais tout un royaume, comme un traict d'une pointe très-delicate, celuy-là seul estime les choses selon leur juste grandeur. Ce grand monde, que les uns multiplient encore comme especes soubs un genre, c'est le mirouer, où il nous faut regarder, pour nous cognoistre de bon biais." (I:25, "De l'institution des enfans," pp. 163-4) Montaigne has us imagine ourselves – and our world for that matter – as a tiny dot, barely perceptible, in the midst of a vast tableau depicting Mother Nature. The perspective that the exercise affords, one of our own minuteness relative to nature's majesty, is necessary to see things in their correct proportion ("celuy-là seul estime les choses selon leur juste grandeur"). It is worth noting that the exercise comes in the middle of the *Essais*' chapter on education, and Montaigne treats it as *the* central teaching for his hypothetical pupil: "Somme, je veux que ce soit le livre de mon escholier." His intention for the exercise is to correct for an error we are all subject to, an "erreur de grande suite et prejudice," which he mentions in the opening to the exercise. The idea is to retrain the pupil's faculty of judgment, so that he sees himself as nature might see him ("de bon biais") and regards nature in all her rightful power ("en son entiere majesté"). Proper understanding is a virtue unto itself, but its deeper value lies hidden in the change that it effects in a person's heart. As we shall see in Pascal's interpretation of the

exercise, proper understanding of our place in the universe is a precursor to humility and a potential opening to religious faith.

If Montaigne intended merely to correct his pupil's misperception, Pascal offers an entire overhaul to human perception itself. Instead of having us gaze upon the contours of "nostre mere nature," we are made to confront nature in its galactic proportions, more impersonal and immeasurable than ever: "Que l'homme contemple donc la nature entière dans sa haute et pleine majesté, qu'il éloigne sa vue des objets bas qui l'environnent. Qu'il regarde cette éclatante lumière mise comme une lampe éternelle pour éclairer l'univers, que la terre lui paraisse comme un point au pris du vaste tour que cet astre décrit, et qu'il s'étonne de ce que ce vaste tour lui-même n'est qu'une pointe très délicate à l'égard de celui que ces astres qui roulent dans le firmament embrassent. Mais si notre vue s'arrête là, que l'imagination passe outre, elle se lassera plutôt de concevoir que la nature de fournir." (LG 185) We still have nature in its entire "majesté," but this time we are cast from the earth itself, made to float in empty space, looking back at the globe from afar. Not only are *we* smaller, but the whole of humanity – the earth itself – is made to look paltry compared to vaster reaches of the universe and God. Pascal takes our confoundedness at the end of such an exercise to be a sure sign of God's omnipotence: "Enfin c'est le plus grand caractère sensible de la toute-puissance de Dieu que notre imagination se perde dans cette pensée." The fact of having lost ourselves ("se perdre"), in a rational way, shows us that we are liable to the same sort of error as in Montaigne, and, furthermore, that we are on the losing end of a power relation with God and the universe. For Pascal, we *need* to lose our bearings because the object of our contemplation – God, infinity – is ultimately beyond all feasible proportion. While

Montaigne does not go so far as to have us lose all sense of perspective (in fact, regaining a proper sense of perspective is all-important for him), he uses the exercise, like Pascal, as proof of the limits of our humanity. It is both a question of physical proportion (we are but tiny specks in the grander scheme of nature) and of intellectual understanding (the mind will never be able to grasp the wider reaches of nature or the universe). Our initial error in judgment, which both authors cite, and the additional bewilderment we feel when confronted with such an exercise, which Pascal accentuates, should then lead the reader to a simple conclusion: we are only a small part of the whole, and yet we esteem ourselves as something greater. Pascal's lesson, rather than just helping us to acquire the correct perspective, is, much more radically, meant to change the disposition of the heart. If Montaigne's exercise results in a lesson of just-ness, Pascal's turns to one of humility.

Whether it is nature or the infinite universe we are made to contemplate, these imagination exercises have a lot to teach us about the main cause of human suffering in either author. On the one hand, they expose a major error in human understanding: we have mistaken our rightful place in the whole, and like any hermeneutical problem, part and whole need to be reconciled in order for interpretation to take place. On the other hand, they point to the suffering that this misunderstanding has caused: by misinterpreting our relation to the whole we have missed the very opportunity for our healing. In other words, by failing to see our smallness, we have also failed to see our belonging to something larger. Montaigne proposed that we place ourselves in a hypothetical tableau to correct for the very misunderstanding that causes disharmony in the way that we relate to ourselves and to the world. The exercise exposes his basically skeptical view of human understanding, and the solution he presents – the observation of

nature – is precisely the same solution he uses for dealing with his own physical illnesses. Returning the individual to his proper place in the whole is as relevant for spiritual tranquility as it is for physical health. This, in my view, is *the* main trope that Pascal will pick up on nearly a century later. Montaigne's skeptical view of human understanding was useful to Pascal because it flaunted the very fallibility of human reason that would bolster the apologist's argument for faith and custom. Indeed, for both authors, custom fills in where intellectual understanding falls short. This is why we need to ac*custom* ourselves to the appropriate view of things—through, notably, the imagination exercises above, which aid us in becoming familiar, in a bodily way, with what is otherwise bewildering or inconceivable. These contemplations were not intended simply to stretch us intellectually, but to lessen the sense of disproportion, or dis-belonging, that is characteristic of human existence. By considering these authors side by side, particularly in examples such as these, I thus show that the hermeneutical problem of part and whole is a therapeutic problem in disguise.

In a more general way, pairing these authors helps to show the continuity of bodily practice across two very different humanistic enterprises, one loosely philosophical and another decidedly religious. If Montaigne's life project provided only a partial solution, according to Pascal, to the enigma of human suffering, it is because he gave a convincing portrait of the problem in all its various manifestations, but failed to deliver an explanation of its causes and a definitive remedy. As one scholar puts it, "Montaigne's greatest usefulness [to Pascal] lies in his descriptive anthropology," an anthropology that served as evidence for Pascal's own exposition of the ways we humans

are lead astray.[22] In reflecting on Pascal's appropriation of Montaigne and Descartes, the same scholar notes, "the first [Montaigne] offers the right evidence but not the right answers, while the second [Descartes] fails even to come up with the right evidence."[23] And so, it is no surprise that Pascal lauds and even appropriates Montaigne's moderate skepticism of human capacities, but then denounces him for failing to provide a "Christian" solution. For Pascal, a basic understanding of our anxiety can serve only if it is given the proper framework. Having acquired enough profane knowledge from Montaigne and his readings of the Ancients (Phillips), Pascal was able to speak to the worldly skeptic in his own language, giving voice to the contradictions and paradoxes that seemed to forever plague humanity. Nevertheless, the apologist ultimately frames his discussion of dis-ease in terms of the Fall, and proffers a remedy based uniquely on God. It is a far cry from the vision of philosophical autonomy that dominates the *Essais*, and yet, Pascal's way of delivering the remedy to his readers could be called "philosophical" in the sense that the exercises and contemplations he offered were intended to become *a way of life* even before religious faith had kicked in.

What is perhaps most surprising is that, despite these differences, both authors resolved to use the body in remarkably similar ways. Montaigne wanted to be at peace with himself and the best way he knew to do that, arguably, was to return wholeheartedly to the wisdom of his body. Pascal, too, wanted to be at peace with himself, but no amount of self-study was going to help him make the leap to God. He needed, per Catholic doctrine, divine grace to support him, and – curiously enough – an arsenal of bodily

[22] Henry Phillips, "Pascal's reading and the inheritance of Montaigne and Descartes," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pascal*, ed. Nicholas Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 28.

[23] Ibid, 37-8.

rituals to ensure that his faith became a way of life. Reconciliation with God, it turns out, relied on the body just as much as Montaigne's quest to understand himself. In their mutual concern that certain principles become a way of life – and not just remain ideals – they both emphasized the importance of bodily habits to ensure the complete appropriation of the good. Both authors speak of the appropriation process in terms of "imbuing" and "dyeing," whereby the good eventually becomes like a "second nature," requiring no conscious effort to maintain. The gradual process of enacting the good again and again, so that it becomes a habit and then a *habitus*, is a process common to both authors and yet one that is capable of producing radically different results. Custom, Pascal reminds us, can just as easily create a Christian, a pagan, or a Turk, depending on what qualities and beliefs we have imbibed over time. In the four chapters that follow, I dwell more on the practical similarities of bodily appropriation in Montaigne and Pascal than on their dogmatic or doctrinal differences. I take their differences in belief to be a given: Pascal was a mystical Christian convert, and Montaigne an eclectic philosophical skeptic. What is less a given, in my mind, is that, while envisioning vastly different goods for humankind, these authors managed to rely on similar tools for attaining that good.

Chapter outlines.

Before directly linking health and wisdom, I show in Chapter 1 how the disciplines of which they are considered a fruit, philosophy and medicine, were themselves intimately bound to one another since Antiquity. It was long understood that in practice physicians attended to the entire patient, not just to the physical body. In doing so, they necessarily touched on "philosophical" concerns, such as tranquility, well-being,

fear of death, lifestyle choices, and the passions of the soul. The two prevailing medical practices that came down to early modern Europe, Hippocratism and Galenism, were a bridge, in many ways, to some of the major philosophical preoccupations of the time. Hippocratism, with its emphasis on dialogue, the imagination, and subjective description, presupposed a trusting, and even amicable, relationship between the physician and patient that not only mirrored, but incarnated, the sort of relationship that ideally existed between a philosopher and his disciple. Galenism, for its part, considered illness to be the product of an eclectic variety of causes and conditions, some directly related to the mind or soul. The six famous "non-naturals," as they were known, included air, food and drink, repletion and excretion, sleep and waking, exercise and rest, as well as the passions of the soul. In both schools of thought, the physician made a diagnosis on the basis of the whole person, trying to identify internal and external imbalances, often by consulting with the patient to better understand the causes that might be concealed from view. Taking stock of the whole person, it turns out, is what made the physician a close ally of the philosopher; and if we consider the primary aim of both medicine and philosophy to be the promotion of wholeness, then the task put to both the physician and the philosopher is to figure out what parts have become disjoined from the whole—a question that is as physical as it is spiritual.

At the outset of Chapter 1, I rely mainly on the work of medical and cultural historians (particularly in the excellent Cambridge collections, *The medical renaissance of the sixteenth century*[24] and *The medical revolution of the seventeenth century*[25]) to

[24] Andrew Wear et al., ed., *The medical renaissance of the sixteenth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

retrace the most widespread medical practices of the eras in which Montaigne and Pascal were writing—not with the intention of offering an institutional or doctrinal history of medicine as such, but with the aim of highlighting those practices that many physicians found useful at bedside. I later turn to the work of Jackie Pigeaud,[26] a prominent historian of ancient medicine and the imagination, to suggest that medicine and philosophy, as practices, attended to a common set of questions. His contention for Antiquity, like mine for the early modern period, is that physicians and philosophers came together on precisely the issue of trying to diagnose an entire person, rather than a body or a mind. Whereas Pigeaud's approach featured physicians who viewed their patients philosophically, mine begins with philosophers who view their subjects somatically, using the language of sensation, sickness, and health to describe one's spiritual trajectory. I argue that medical paradigms, such as the four humors and the non-naturals, as well as an understanding of the body more generally, remained central to Montaigne and Pascal's respective philosophical projects because each author offered a remarkably hybrid, or syncretistic, vision of individual experience. The individual was neither body nor mind, but "l'homme," as Montaigne boldly put it, and to understand health of any sort, one had to understand the totality of man, as well as his belonging to an even greater totality, such as nature or God. I use this opening chapter to expose the basic hermeneutic problem of part and whole that is common to both disciplines, to then suggest that the problem of harmonizing part and whole is in fact a therapeutic problem at heart.

[25] Roger French et al., ed., *The medical revolution of the seventeenth century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[26] Particularly *La maladie de l'âme* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2006) and *Poétiques du corps: aux origines de la médecine* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2008).

In Chapter 2, I turn to specific instances where each author refers to philosophical practice in medical or somatic terms. The cross-contamination of medical vocabulary and philosophical exercises can be found starting with the Hellenistic schools of philosophy, particularly in the works of Sextus Empiricus, himself a physician. I first cite traditional examples of spiritual illness, such as the passions, in each author; but, instead of rehearsing the medical analogy in these authors' works, I question whether their analogical uses of sickness and health are always only analogical. If "spiritual" illness does exist as a category independent of physical disease, the distinguishing factor is the secondary, or extraneous, suffering that it causes. In both authors, spiritual disturbance results from the imagination's sway over judgment and reason. By projecting unreal occurrences on the basis of actual or anticipated physical disturbance, the author suffers in response to those projections, tossed about by fear, anxiety, or despair. I label this form of suffering "secondary" or "extraneous" because it depends entirely on the author's way of relating to the primary instance of pain (invariably physical). Montaigne is no better illustration of the imagination's power to make one "ill," even without any material basis, and his repeated preference for listening to the body, rather than his imagination or mind, is proof indeed of one's ability to change one's relationship to the primary disturbance. Fear is a particularly poignant example of secondary suffering, and both authors deploy similar imagination exercises (as we saw earlier) to expose the frailty of human judgment when overtaken by the imagination, encouraging us to relate to our imaginations properly. By coming into a clearer understanding of our place in the whole, we have a better chance of feeling both our meekness and our belonging. This is where the hermeneutical art of familiarization and accommodation reveals its therapeutic use:

proper understanding can lead to spiritual well-being, if it leads to the realization that one belongs to the whole. For Montaigne, this manifests as a belonging to nature, and for Pascal, as a belonging to God and the community of Christian believers. At the same time, I suggest that arriving at proper understanding, like achieving peace of mind, is not a purely mental or psychological process. Both authors use the bodily experiences of emotion and the imagination to hone their understanding of their place in the whole.

In Chapter 3, I look more closely at the bodily experience of philosophical exercises and suggest that both Montaigne and Pascal use the body in three key ways for the cultivation of the good life: (1) reading the body, (2) disciplining the body, and (3) forgetting the body each, as ongoing practices, guide the philosopher back to his entire self, for paying heed to the body, it turns out, is paying heed to the entire self. I use these three categories to show that practices we might consider "medical" actually teach us something philosophical, and that exercises deemed "spiritual" or "philosophical" usually comprise a physical component. In the section on reading the body, I show how Classical medical genres, such as the *historia* (case history), *consilium* (medical advice), and *curationes* (prescriptions for a cure), reveal certain truths about the self that can help one to confront the great philosophical questions of life and death. Paying close attention to the body in a personal, subjective way, while maintaining an awareness of the whole (nature's tableau in the case of Montaigne, or Pascal's infinite universe ruled by an omnipresent God), unlocks a sort of healing that is neither strictly medical nor purely philosophical, but concerned with the entire person. Recording the body acts as a potent antidote to getting lost in the myriad fantasies of the mind and imagination – one of our main weaknesses as human beings – and thereby provides a radical alternative to

exercises meant to train only the mind. In the section on disciplining the body, I make it clear that traditional forms of philosophical discipline, such as those advocated by the ancient ascetics, do not resurface in the same way in the works of Montaigne and Pascal. Montaigne's discipline could be summed up by his unswerving loyalty to bodily sensation, using it as an anchor when things go awry (e.g. when suffering from kidney stones or falling from his horse). Pascal's, on the other hand, consists of deliberate postures and gestures meant to effect some internal change, "[c]ar on s'accoutume ainsi aux vertus intérieures par ces habitudes extérieures" (LG 709). *Habitus*, as elaborated by Pierre Bourdieu, helps to illustrate how habituation to virtue occurs through bodily conduct. I take from Bourdieu the understanding that learning and developing the proper habits is a nonlinear process, whose outcomes cannot be controlled by individual willpower. *Habitus* imparts a vision of the individual as inseparable from the world – and therefore susceptible to the world – who is able to act appropriately *because of that inseparability*. By envisioning the individual as *habitus*, as a matrix of habits embedded in a particular social reality, we come to the realization that the author is always, already in harmony with the whole, endowed with a certain form of health from the beginning. *Re*covering wholeness is thus a discipline of *dis*covering the wholeness that was already there, albeit undisclosed, either in the form of a hidden God (*le Dieu caché*) or nature's eternal cycles of life and death. This is where forgetting the body (section three) takes on its full meaning: after a lifetime of habituation to virtue, the author can release all notions of deliberate practice, both because he has thoroughly appropriated the good and because he has realized that the whole is already present in all of its parts—or as Pascal put it, that God lives in the heart of each man. This final stage, akin to the Epicurean attitude of

relaxing one's efforts (in contrast to the Stoic demand for sustained concentration), represents the mature ideal of philosophy as a way of life. Ultimately, my contention is not just that the body matters to philosophy, but that the very medium through which philosophical healing occurs is the *soma*, or *habitus*—no longer to be confused with Plato's *sema*, or entombment in the flesh.

In the fourth and final chapter, I bring the dissertation to a close by further reinforcing my claim that the philosophical life, or a life of virtue, is an ongoing process of embodiment that precludes exclusive identification with either the "mind" or the "body." I break down the process of embodiment into two major categories of practice: "somatic apprenticeship" and "somatic habituation." No man can be called virtuous if he has not been steeped in virtue over time, which is why we need to examine the whole of a man's life in order to ascertain his philosophical integrity. Arriving at virtuousness initially requires imitation and habituation, the deliberate means of embodying virtue; however, the fruition of these practices into a virtuous way of life remains as mysterious as the development of *habitus* across time. Although we must begin by deliberate means, eventually those very means fade into a way of life, becoming a "second nature," such that no effort is required to continue living in such a way. Socrates and Cato are cited as two examples of virtue in its consummate expression; so too are Christ and his followers, in the case of Pascal. My major concern in this chapter is to show how Montaigne and Pascal, despite using different examples of virtue and virtuous conduct, both describe proper habit formation as a process of "imbuing" and "dyeing." Relying on exactly the same lexical field to describe this process, both authors intimate that spiritual practice – whether it results in wisdom, virtue, tranquility, or faith – is literally a material process,

because the dyeing process that they each evoke refers to the repetition of bodily habits across time. This material dimension of spiritual practice, I believe, deserves more attention, because it clarifies what many philosophers mean when they speak of making philosophy *a way of life*. How exactly does this occur? Scholars often point to familiarization, appropriation, and accommodation, borrowed from the fields of rhetoric and hermeneutics, as the means of making something foreign one's own; but underneath all of these terms is the reality of *embodiment*, the fact that understanding, if it is to endure, must pass through the body.

I take an opportunity in the Conclusion to further elaborate on the possible interconnections between philosophy, medicine, and rhetoric as hermeneutical and therapeutic practices. My overall contention is that the hermeneutical dimension of philosophy and medicine is therapeutic in its own right, because it lays bare the disharmony or foreignness between the part and the whole, whereas *habitus* exposes the natural belonging of part to whole. We need both perspectives, I believe, to fully capture these authors' representations of illness, health, and healing. Once we approach health in hermeneutic terms (i.e. as a problem of part and whole, individual and authority, etc.), we cannot escape the realization that physical illness and spiritual dis-ease pose essentially the same problem. And once we shift our focus to the *practices* of each author, as opposed to his beliefs or doctrine, we get a fuller and, hopefully, clearer picture of the mechanisms underlying spiritual healing. If Montaigne and Pascal have anything crucial to say in this regard, it is that the known fallibility of human reason and judgment should refer us back to the solidity of bodily experience, if we wish to appropriate the truths promised by philosophy and religion.

Chapter 1

For a Medico-philosophical Understanding of Experience

Introduction.

The strong affinity between medicine and philosophy, as bodies of literature and recognized practices, was widely acknowledged before the fairly recent phenomenon of disciplinary specialization. The Hellenistic philosophical tradition, particularly Pyrrhonian skepticism, was perhaps the first to expose this affinity in a systematic way, even though the cooperation between the two disciplines was to resurface in a variety of traditions and time periods. The medical analogy, which alluded to the practice of philosophy as a form of medicine, shows up for example in the long tradition of "philosophy as a way of life" and "philosophy as therapeutics." Philosophy as a way of life was hardly the property of the Ancients; it is a tradition, as Pierre Hadot himself insists,[27] that applies equally well to philosophers writing in the early modern and modern periods in Europe and abroad. Because philosophy as a way of life has largely been studied on its own terms – not always with enough attention paid to the practices that resemble medical therapeutics – I reassert in this chapter the cooperative relationship between medicine and philosophy, emphasizing the somatic dimension of each. While the relationship between philosophy and medicine can be understood analogically (i.e. philosophy treats the soul *just as* medicine heals the body), I show that the practices themselves overlap in such a way as to obfuscate any functional distinction between the two. Philosophy and medicine were not to become autonomous disciplines until much

[27] See especially Hadot's collection of interviews in Pierre Hadot, *La philosophie comme manière de vivre* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2001).

later, in the eighteenth and especially the nineteenth centuries, when clinical advances made it possible to consider medicine an empirical science concerned chiefly with the physical body. In fact, philosophy and medicine in the early modern period were often discussed in terms of their sameness, in part because their respective aims converged on the attainment of well-being. They attended to a common set of questions that no humanist of the time, whether physician or philosopher, could reasonably circumvent: questions such as how to interpret a symptom to arrive at its cause or how to reconcile individual symptoms with a learned tradition at large. For many Early Moderns, the question of the individual and tradition posed the greatest number of difficulties. Historians of science often locate this question at the nexus of scientific debates of the time. Peter Dear reframes the question thusly: "how can a *universal* knowledge-claim about the natural world be justified on the bases of *singular* items of individual experience?"[28] It was a question that plagued physicists and mathematicians, the focal point of Dear's work, just as much as the philosophers, physicians, and men of letters hoping to forge a path to happiness and well-being.

Hans-Georg Gadamer, in his magnum opus *Truth and Method*, has a helpful way of framing the debate between the particular and the universal from within an ethical context. We can take from him the observation that tensions between individual experience and universal law do not pertain to the empirical sciences alone. Beginning with Aristotle, the moral good was a particular point of tension in the debate. Should the good be conceived as something immovable and abstract (such as the forms in Plato) or

[28] Peter Dear, *Discipline and Experience: The Mathematical Way in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 13 (original emphasis). See also Owsei Temkin, "The scientific approach to disease: specific entity and individual sickness," in *The Double Face of Janus and Other Essays in the History of Medicine* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1977), 441-55.

should it apply directly to a person's singular experience? Gadamer argues that Aristotle was more concerned with "what is humanly good" in particular cases than with what might serve in theory.[29] This illustrates the peculiar status of human experience, whether it relates to moral doctrine, medical expertise, or empirical observation. Across the board, the challenge is the same: how do we apply a general claim to a particular case? Or, as Dear frames it above, how do we justify that claim from the ground of particular experience? Because both medicine and philosophy, in their attempts to treat individual cases, rely in good measure on authority (either in the form of tradition or institutional pedigree), the merits of individual experience may be looked upon with suspicion and must therefore be carefully weighed. As with any hermeneutical undertaking, a sound diagnosis – whether physical or spiritual – requires that one move between a general account of the whole and specific encounters with each individual part. When the object of diagnosis is the human body, one usually moves between the individual case history and all the cases that have come before, as presented in physicians' manuals (or *practica*, as they were known in the early modern period). For a physician, these manuals might seem the obvious starting point for diagnosing a disease, but the perennial challenge is precisely those items of individual experience that fail to comply with the collective data. Montaigne is a flagrant example of such non-compliance, and he never ceases to repeat throughout the *Essais* that he has scant need for medical advice, because he considers the life of his body as the only reliable guide to understanding his own condition. For him, individual experience cannot be classified according to any general account of the whole, and, what is more, it should serve as our primary reference point for establishing truth. In

[29] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer et al. (New York: Continuum, 2004), 310.

the present chapter, I use individual experience – the less obvious reference point for the medical profession – as a way of framing the therapeutic intentions common to medicine and philosophy. Individual experience, it turns out, was a major testing ground for philosophers of a way of life as well as those physicians who were interested in the totality of a person's experience, such as in the Galenic and Hippocratic traditions. My point of departure will be two philosophical writers, Montaigne and Pascal, whose works had a significant medical and/or somatic component but who were not themselves trained physicians. I will not be concerned with the institutional or doctrinal history of medicine as such, but with the status of medicine in the imaginations of these two remarkably eclectic thinkers, and with the place of health and healing in philosophical practice. I will focus in particular on how each author's understanding of philosophical well-being was eminently linked to some of the major medical questions of the time.

The medico-philosophical climate in the times of Montaigne and Pascal.

Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) and Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) are perhaps the early modern era's leading examples of philosophical authors who spoke openly about their physical condition as part and parcel of the philosophical way of life. Conceptually, they both deployed a number of common categories from medicine – such as disease and health, symptom and diagnosis – to frame central philosophical issues. At the time Montaigne was writing his *Essais* (the first three-book edition was published in 1588), the age of medical humanism (roughly 1530-1630) was well underway. Learned men such as Montaigne were becoming increasingly aware of the ancient sects and methods of medicine at the very same time that they were eclectically integrating into their writings

certain beliefs and practices from the major schools of Hellenistic philosophy (primarily Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Skepticism). It was no accident that the renewed interest in the methods of Hippocrates and Galen was concomitant with a revival of practices Pierre Hadot has termed "spiritual exercises,"[30] which were drawn from the philosophical traditions of ancient Greece and Rome. The Renaissance's dual allegiance to the medical practices and philosophical exercises of the ancient world was part of a more general nod to the wisdom of the Ancients as more and more Classical texts were being read, circulated, and translated into the vernacular. In studying the ancient sources, authors such as Erasmus, Francis Bacon, and Montaigne came to appreciate the immense value that the Ancients placed on individual experience in their quest to understand the nature of disease and its potential cures.

Nearly a century later, Europe was still beholden to the better-known schools of ancient medicine,[31] even as the field itself was evolving theoretically. Historians of science might have us believe that the Scientific Revolution's improved ability to objectively measure the world eclipsed the old need for subjective and qualitative description.[32] Andrew Wear has suggested, on the contrary, that the so-called objective or

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[30] See especially Pierre Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique ?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995); Idem, *La philosophie comme manière de vivre* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002); and Idem, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002).

[31] Thomas Sydenham (1624-1689), known as the "English Hippocrates," is often cited as exemplary of this trend, because he worked to revive Hippocratic methods of observation and experience. See Andrew Cunningham, "Thomas Sydenham: epidemics, experiment and the 'Good Old Cause,'" in *The medical revolution of the seventeenth century*, ed. Roger French et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 164-5.

[32] See Andrew Wear, "Medical practice in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England: continuity and union," in *The medical revolution of the seventeenth century*, ed. Roger French et al., 294-320 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), esp. 295 and 319. Wear argues that medicine was overall an exception to this commonly rehearsed history: "The move from the qualitative, subjective system of ancient and renaissance natural philosophy to the quantitative and objective world of the seventeenth century has been often and variously retold by historians of science. Yet in the case of medicine there is

technical advances made in medicine, and in its substrate natural philosophy, did not reform medical practice as much as it did medical theory. In an article detailing the commonplace medical practices in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century England, Wear concludes quite simply that "[a]lthough theory changed it was still expressed in such a way that it spoke to patients and so attracted their trade."[33] This meant that, in practice, physicians continued to privilege face-to-face dialogue and observation, bedside trial-and-error experimentation, and "the same type of qualitative narrative that had helped to make sense of the inner happenings of the body"[34] (as in Hippocratic case-taking methods). Although new theories, which brought with them a new rhetoric, began to replace the ancient ones, medical treatment still heeded the apparently universal need for highly personal and individualized forms of communication between the physician and patient. In this, it continued to enact many of the standard categories and jargon of ancient medicine. In the passage below, Wear describes in greater detail the very ways in which the preservation of health continued to be viewed and discussed:

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some doubt that we have the same story." (295) See also Johanna Geyer-Kordesch, "Passions and the ghost in the machine: or what not to ask about science in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Germany," in *The medical revolution of the seventeenth century*, ed. Roger French et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 146. Geyer-Kordesch explains that the shift in the sciences towards the objectification, or disenchantment, of the world in the seventeenth century has largely to do with the preeminence of Cartesian dualism, the development of logic and mathematics, and the emergence of mechanistic philosophy. Although Geyer-Kordesch emphasizes just such a shift at the beginning of her article, she concludes that the seventeenth and eighteenth century's claim to "have found a way to objectify nature" breaks down in the case of medical therapeutics, such as in the "natural" or "Stahlian" method that she analyzes. For a more general appraisal of this shift in the sciences at large, see H. Floris Cohen, *The Scientific Revolution: A Historiographical Inquiry* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 178. Compare Alexandre Koyré, *From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1957), 4. Koyré takes the opposing view that science in the seventeenth century became more subjective than its ancient and medieval counterparts, because man could no longer measure his world from the stable center of a finite, immovable cosmos.

[33] Wear, "Medical practice in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England," 319. Early modern medicine, Wear argues, belongs to a sort of "*longue durée*" in its practical continuity across the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries.

[34] Ibid, 304.

> If one takes the long view and contrasts the later part of the seventeenth century with the centuries immediately before, it becomes apparent that in certain respects there was no such thing as a new medicine. The picture of the physical world may have been transformed. The same did not happen for medicine despite appearances. The preservation of health was discussed in terms of the six non-naturals both in the renaissance and the eighteenth century. It made sense for both humoralist and mechanist, given the conditions of life, to see health in terms of one's food, drink, exercise and passions. […] In disease, the language used to describe the secret happenings in the body was the same for both the late seventeenth century and the period before. Despite the impression of objectivity, the use of analogy and metaphor to create the images of fight, defence, penetration, expressing the movement from symptom to cause – were the same for the two periods.[35]

The patient's individual experience, in other words, continued to be met with Hippocratic and Galenic methods of diagnosis and treatment. We will need to keep this continuity in mind as we consider the religious and scientific writings of Pascal, for although he does not explicitly comment on the medical trends of his time, his philosophical methods have much in common with medicine's reaffirmation of subjective experience and analogical reasoning.

Movement of mind and body: the limitations of doctrinal coherence.

If we are to examine the relationship between medicine and philosophy in Montaigne and Pascal, we need first to acknowledge that these authors are not technically aligned with any medical tradition, nor are they thought to be "medical" writers. If anything, they are philosophical writers, whose subject matter simply did not exclude questions of physical health and sickness and whose practice of philosophy appropriated medicine's therapeutic promise. Although certain passages of the *Essais* and the *Pensées* have been traced to specific philosophical traditions – namely, Stoic, Epicurean,

[35] Ibid, 300.

Skeptical, and, in the case of Pascal, Augustinian – the same has not been done with equal success for the medical traditions alluded to in both texts.[36] Even if we were to classify the medical references and allusions in each author's corpus, it would not yield a stable portrait of the author's medical allegiances; for, like the studies that focus on the various philosophical influences present in each author, such an investigation would only reveal the supple reappropriation of certain practices *without* proving loyalty to any particular system. Indeed, while several scholars have underscored both authors' indebtedness to the Classical-Christian philosophical tradition,[37] the resounding conclusion has been that neither Montaigne nor Pascal espouses one school of philosophy. Their relationship to philosophy is *insaisissable*, precisely because they are philosophers of a way of life, who at times impugn the very schools of thought they are indebted to.[38] Above all, they are philosophers of *movement* who actively engage and

[36] The exceptions to this are two works that programmatically address the sources of medical references in Montaigne, much like Pierre Villey's seminal *Sources et évolution* does for Montaigne and philosophy. See François Batisse, *Montaigne et la Médicine* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1962) and James Spottiswoode Taylor, *Montaigne and Medicine* (New York: Paul B. Hoeber, 1921).

[37] See for example: Vincent Carraud, *Pascal et la philosophie* (Paris: PUF, 1992); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), esp. ch. 1 and 4; Marcel Conche, *Montaigne et la philosophie* (Paris: PUF, 1996); John Cottingham, *Philosophy and the Good Life: Reason and the Passions in Greek, Cartesian and Psychoanalytic Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Gérard Defaux, "Montaigne, la vie, les livres: naissance d'un philosophe sceptique et 'imprémedité,'" *MLN* 117 (2002): 780-807; Pierre Force, "Innovation as Spiritual Exercise: Montaigne and Pascal," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 66 (2005): 17-35; Idem, "Montaigne and the Coherence of Eclecticism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70 (2009): 523-544; Matthew L. Jones, *The Good Life in the Scientific Revolution: Descartes, Pascal, Leibniz and the Cultivation of Virtue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006); John D. Lyons, *Before Imagination: Embodied Thought from Montaigne to Rousseau* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005); James Miller, *Examined Lives: From Socrates to Nietzsche* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011); Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living. Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); and Richard Shusterman, *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

[38] Although I group Montaigne and Pascal under a single category of "philosophers of a way of life," I am not suggesting that their philosophical ideas and beliefs are the same by any measure. The relationship between their philosophical personas is considerably more complex, colored by Pascal's reappropriation and, often, reinterpretation of significant portions of the *Essais*. For a systematic overview of this relationship the following titles are useful: Bernard Croquette, *Pascal et Montaigne. Etude des*

record the ceaseless flow of their thoughts, emotions, gestures, actions, and encounters. Much of the recent scholarship on Montaigne has taken its cue from the now foundational critique of Jean Starobinski in his 1982 magnum opus *Montaigne en mouvement*, in which he foregrounds motion, instability, flux, and changeability as the reader's main ingress to grappling with the *Essais*. In one emblematic phrase, Starobinski explains that "self-knowledge, for Montaigne, is the 'exquisite' proprioceptive sensation of the movement whereby he sets out in search of self-knowledge. It is the internal pleasure of the attempt."[39] His main point is that we will never come away with a firm understanding of the author and his opinions, but as readers it is our hermeneutical duty to move in sync with the author, who did not for a moment retreat into the fibers of a fixed canvas. Unlike Pierre Villey's now all-but-discredited tripartite vision of a Montaigne who progressed neatly from Stoic to Skeptic to resigned Epicurean, Starobinksi's view is of a Montaigne impossible to pin down. Since Starobinski, most scholars have given an ever-widening berth to the variability of the philosophical opinions expressed in the *Essais*—but almost always with an eye for cognitive processes. For such scholars, Montaigne remains elusive in his thoughts, opinions, and fantasies, his philosophy having been reduced to a form of mental gymnastics. This, however, tells only part of the story: these authors had bodies too, and they speak a great deal about the philosophical and religious "problems" associated with being embodied. Thus, any scholarship that purports to capture the full range of philosophical insights in either author must not limit itself to cognitive processes

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réminiscences de Montaigne dans l'oeuvre de Pascal (Geneva: Droz, 1974) and Henry Phillips, "Pascal's reading and the inheritance of Montaigne and Descartes," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pascal*, ed. Nicholas Hammond, 20-39 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[39] Jean Starobinski, *Montaigne in Motion*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 227.

alone; it must also account for the many movements of the body, as well as its multitude of mutations through sickness and health.

In this section, I give a brief account of the scholarship inspired by Starobinski's *Montaigne en mouvement* that has informed the prevailing view of Montaigne's philosophical ethos. All of the scholars I cite consider the earmark of Montaigne's philosophy to be the flux of mental phenomena. Almost nowhere, *except* in Starobinski,[40] do we find the body as a prominent player in the elusiveness of Montaigne's philosophical persona. In his recent and widely successful *Examined Lives*, James Miller characterizes the author of the *Essais* in these terms: Montaigne, he says, "hopes to offer a portrait of his thinking as it actually unfolds."[41] Terence Cave and Richard Scholar deploy a cognitive model to describe such a portrait. In the words of Cave, "philosophies have a value for Montaigne in so far as they provide a testing ground in which he can develop his own *cognitive* faculties, but they have no special status: they are absorbed into the endlessly various flow of *thoughts* he set himself to observe and capture."[42] [my emphasis] Montaigne's writing, he says, is "a documentary account of the mind's activities."[43] The book of the *Essais*, writes Scholar, "directs the focus away from [Montaigne's] adoption of philosophical positions and towards the sheer mercurial intelligence of the *thinking* he captures on the page: towards, that is, his use of the

[40] Starobinski, in his chapter "The body's moment," most closely approximates my view that the body is the author's primary vehicle for philosophical realization and that it must be given its due as a subject, rather than a mere object. Starobinski will figure prominently in my discussion of each author later in this chapter and in the two chapters that follow. For the moment, though, I focus on the criticism that, while inspired by Starobinski, holds up the author's *mind* as the principal source of philosophical interest.

[41] James Miller, *Examined Lives: From Socrates to Nietzsche*, 194.

[42] Terence Cave, *How to Read Montaigne* (London: Granta, 2007), 45.

[43] Ibid, 3.

linguistic and literary resources at his disposal to record *thought* as it happens, as it encounters its limits, and as it peers beyond those limits into country beyond."[44] [my emphasis] Already, we have the impression that the flux and flow of the *Essais* are due in large part to the way the author thinks, rather than to the way he moves, gestures, eats, breathes, lives, and dies. The "limits" of the author's cognitive processes (evoked above) are precisely where I aim to pick up, by crossing over into the even wilder terrain of bodily sensation and by thus proposing a more inclusive and somatically oriented reading of the *Essais*.

Even where the scholarship purports to highlight movement per se, the language used to encode such mobility is often abstract and suggests a vague sort of disembodiment. Ian Maclean emphasizes Montaigne's mobility by claiming that "le moi participe forcement au mobilisme général du monde."[45] It is an apt argument to make, but the specific movements of "le moi" in relation to "le monde" are left largely inexplicit. Alexander Nehamas, writing about the art of living, admits that "Montaigne produced a self, a work of the art of living, but neither he nor we can articulate how he accomplished his task."[46] It is a common statement to make of Montaigne, given that he easefully coasted from one philosophical predilection to another, but it remains a statement fundamentally evocative of an abstract self, rather than of a living, breathing *soma* in a constant state of becoming. In examining Montaigne's skepticism, Ann Hartle cites "changeability" and "unpredictability" as the keys to understanding the author's

[44] Richard Scholar, *Montaigne and the Art of Free-Thinking* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 18.

[45] Ian Maclean, *Montaigne philosophe* (Paris: PUF, 1996), 70.

[46] Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living. Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault*, 127.

philosophical process. Whereas most ancient schools were keen to emphasize the attainment of divine stasis (Hartle), Montaigne celebrated the very opposite. "The seizing of the chance moment," writes Hartle, "is the object of his accidental philosophy."[47] Once again, we are not given a compass for precisely how this is accomplished, other than through words, ideas, and shifting philosophical allegiances. Similarly, Emmanuel Naya relies on cognitive and rhetorical criteria to characterize the elusiveness of Montaigne's Skeptical persona. He acknowledges Montaigne's *ethos* as having sociological (i.e. concrete and historical) bases, but then quickly identifies the author's "general mode of thinking" and "'appoximative' rhetoric" as the source of his *skepsis*.[48] His account is persuasive in an ideological and linguistic sense, but it remains unclear how Montaigne facilitated the emergence of a "phenomenal" *ethos*, as Naya puts it. Concretely, what did the author's ceaseless redirection of the mind (his *skepsis*) actually look like in day-to-day life? Finally, François Rigolot's characterization of the metamorphic quality of Montaigne's writing appropriates a rhetorical analysis of the author's many additions to the *Essais*. He attributes Montaigne's movement to various "« effets de texte », procédant de la force active – de l'*energeia* et de l'*enargeia* –, d'une poétique séminale."[49] By creating an equivalency between the author's *energeia* (the Aristotelian term for actuality, as opposed to potential for change) and his *enargeia* (the emotional vividness of language), the author's "force active" inheres within the realm of language primarily.

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[47] Ann Hartle, "Montaigne and Skepticism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Montaigne* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 196.

[48] Emmanuel Naya, "'I Am No Philosopher': Montaigne's Suspension of Philosophical *Ethos*," in *"Revelations of Character":* Ethos*, Rhetoric and Moral Philosophy in Montaigne*, ed. Corinne Noirot-Maguire et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007), 151-2.

[49] François Rigolot, *Les métamorphoses de Montaigne* (Paris: PUF, 1988), 13.

It would seem, from the above accounts, that the rhetoric and ideas used to convey movement in the *Essais* all refer back to the activity of the author's mind. Rarely are the author's somatic and emotional states considered the deciding factors of his Skeptical persona. In Pascal, too, scholars have overwhelmingly emphasized the spiritual or intellectual component of the author's philosophical practices, which has led to similar conclusions concerning the elusiveness of his philosophical persona. Many critics seem concerned either with Pascal's religious motives, from within an Augustinian framework, or with his philosophical and scientific theories of knowledge, all with a more or less immaterial referent. A glance through the contents of the *Cambridge Companion to Pascal* imparts just such an impression. The religious Pascal, as it is argued, sought to explain the contradictions of human behavior through a postlapsarian lens, attributing man's restlessness and anxiety to a spiritual severance from God. Henry Phillips, in the *Cambridge Companion*, sums this up particularly well: "Whereas Montaigne offers the wisdom of a man at ease with himself, seeking a point of rest in an unstable world, Pascal is, in the words of Jacques Morel, a 'master of anxiety'. For Pascal, there is no rest for the wicked, or for the good."[50] Scholars who focus more on Pascal's philosophical and scientific outlook tend to fall back on Skepticism as a means of explaining the author's methods of investigating both himself and the natural world. Jean Khalfa, also in the *Cambridge Companion*, is one of the few scholars to point out Pascalian methods that resemble medical therapeutics of the time, hinting at the importance of physical experience; nevertheless, he concludes, along with many others, that in the *Pensées* "the

[50] Henry Phillips, "Pascal's reading and the inheritance of Montaigne and Descartes," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pascal*, ed. Nicholas Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 30. See also Jacques Morel, *Littérature française: de Montaigne à Corneille* (Paris: Arthaud, 1986), 382.

analysis of the self is based on *thought* experiments."[51] [my emphasis] Though accurate, the statement fails to extend beyond the realm of the cognitive and account for all the affective (and thus somatic) consequences of these experiments. For Richard Popkin, in his seminal study of the history of Skepticism,[52] Pascal's philosophical method proceeds from the *mental* processes of doubt, from the recognition that we cannot be certain of any principles – either in philosophy or science – except by faith and revelation. Again, the doubting process is reduced to a sort of mental gymnastics, whereas the deeply transformative value of Skeptical arguments, I argue, is to be found in the subject's felt sense of his limitations in the world.

Much like we saw in the scholarship on Montaigne, the limitation of the above scholarship lies in its monolithic emphasis on Pascal's mental and spiritual life, and on the status of the body as a mere handmaiden to the mind. Montaigne and Pascal are not only reporting on the flux of mental phenomena; the mobility and elusiveness alluded to above are intricately related to the ever-changing state of the author's body and to the author's recognition that sensory phenomena are of an ephemeral nature. These two authors cannot be pinned down, in part, because they are paying attention to their bodies—and particularly to their aging bodies as they each confront illness and death. The sheer density of description that relates to bodily sensations and perceptions in both authors (especially in Montaigne) should give us pause. Not only was this sort of corporal "confession" unusual in prose of the time,[53] Montaigne and Pascal give the body an

[51] Jean Khalfa, "Pascal's Theory of Knowledge," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pascal*, ed. Nicholas Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 137.

[52] Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Skepticism from Savonarola to Bayle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[53] Starobinski, *Montaigne in Motion*, 124.

almost spiritual importance by using their bodies as a vehicle for philosophical and religious realization. If we were to limit our investigation to the scholarship that focuses chiefly on the philosophical or religious aspects of each author, we might be left with the impression that the *Essais* and the *Pensées* were strictly cognitive exercises, withdrawn from the direct experience of the authors' bodily faculties. My contention is that to properly highlight the philosophical importance of bodily experience in these two authors, the authors' philosophies need to be considered alongside a discipline whose emphasis was decidedly somatic—not in order to arbitrarily link two otherwise disparate spheres of practice, but to reinstate the longstanding relationship between spiritual disciplines and bodily therapeutics that has existed since Antiquity. By examining the points of articulation between the practices of philosophy and medicine, it should become clear that there is no need to fall on the side of either a mentalist or a medical interpretation of these authors' works. We can read their works in a syncretistic fashion, whereby the philosophical *is* medical, because the *soma* provides the main inroad to philosophical change. Spiritual progress, as we shall see, plays out in the body and presupposes a basic respect for the body's influence on the entire subject.

Part I: Montaigne.

The turn towards the self in medical practice.

Intended or not, and perhaps even despite the author, the medical tradition gives Montaigne a vocabulary to talk about the changing states of his mind and body, a sort of scaffolding for what might otherwise pass as peripatetic self-portraiture. On the one hand, the "medical arts," as they are referred to throughout the *Essais*, provide Montaigne with

yet another doctrinal wall to inveigh against, just like any other learned institution featured in the *Essais*. Lawyers, doctors, and academics routinely receive the brunt of Montaigne's acerbic criticism, for despite the prestige society accords them, they are often in practice ill-informed, self-conceited, and hypocritical. Moreover, Montaigne is wary of any science that purports to induce universal conclusions from particular indices and, inversely, to deduce individualized prescriptions from general observations. Medicine, as an art and a science, does both. Some scholars, such as Stephen Pender,[54] have systematically explored this aspect of Montaigne's censure of the medical tradition. As Pender points out, there was nothing novel about this brand of critique in Medieval and Renaissance writings, and in this respect, Montaigne could include himself among other learned humanists of the time, such as Erasmus and Agrippa.[55] As Jean Starobinski similarly points out, Montaigne often just rehearses many of the "classical objections to technology" found throughout the history of medicine and science.[56] One obvious example of this comes in his chapter "De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres" in Book II of the *Essais*: "Il n'est nation qui n'ait esté plusieurs siecles sans la medecine : et les premiers siecles, c'est à dire les meilleurs et les plus heureux : et du monde la dixiesme partie ne s'en sert pas encores à ceste heure : Infinies nations ne la cognoissent pas, où

[54] See Stephen Pender, "Examples and Experience: On the Uncertainty of Medicine," in *BJHS* 39:1 (2006): 1-28. Pender favors the following sources for humanist and medieval critiques of medicine: Katharine Park, *Doctors and Medicine in Early Renaissance Florence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985); Nancy G. Siraisi, *The Clock and the Mirror: Girolamo Cardano and Renaissance Medicine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); and Roger French, *Medicine Before Science: The Rational and Learned Doctor from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[55] Pender specifically refers to the following works: Erasmus, *Declamatio in laudem artis medicae*, trans. B. MacGregor, in *Literary and Educational Writings*, Volume 7, ed. Elaine Fantham et al., Volume 29 of *The Collected Works of Erasmus*, ed. Alexander Dalzell et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989); and Agrippa, *Of the Vanitie and Uncertaintie of Artes and Sciences*, ed. Catherine M. Dunne (Northridge, CA: California State University Foundation, 1974).

[56] Starobinski, *Montaigne in Motion*, 161.

l'on vit et plus sainement, et plus longuement, qu'on ne fait icy : et parmy nous, le commun peuple s'en passent heureusement." (pp. 804-05) Much like his critique of European customs in the wake of encountering barbarian ways, here Montaigne contends that some nations past were better off for a lack of medical expertise; in fact, the peasant population of France provides Montaigne with a living example of this truth. At the very least, medicine is deemed superfluous (as in the passage above), but Montaigne is wary, too, of the potential for error inherent to most traditional (i.e. Galenic) methods of diagnosis—methods that include so vast an array of internal and external indices that an accurate diagnosis is nearly impossible to come by:

> Or si le mescompte du medecin est dangereux, il nous va bien mal : car il est bien mal-aisé qu'il n'y retombe souvent : il a besoin de trop de pieces, considerations, et circonstances, pour affuster justement son dessein : Il faut qu'il cognoisse la complexion du malade, sa temperature, des humeurs, ses inclinations, ses actions, ses pensements mesmes, et ses imaginations. Il faut qu'il se responde des circonstances externes, de la nature du lieu, condition de l'air et du temps, assiette des planetes, et leurs influances : Qu'il sçache en la maladie les causes, les signes, les affections, les jours critiques : en la drogue, le poix, la force, le pays, la figure, l'aage, la dispensation : et faut que toutes ces pieces, il les sçache proportionner et rapporter l'une à l'autre, pour en engendrer une parfaicte symmetrie. (II:37, "De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres," p. 812)

Montaigne touches here on all the variety of physical symptoms, thoughts, actions, and imaginations that appear in the patient, as well as on external factors such as the weather and the position of the planets. The physician is charged with synthesizing a seemingly infinite array of details concerning the causes and conditions of disease, so much so that the effect of accumulation verges on the absurd. Given the hermeneutical morass that is implied in a typical sixteenth-century medical diagnosis, it is little wonder that Montaigne was skeptical of such a complex science claiming to "engendrer une parfaicte symmetrie."

Even if Montaigne occasionally expresses admiration for the promise of medicine ("en la medecine, j'honore bien ce glorieux nom, sa proposition, sa promesse si utile au genre humain"), *in practice* his opinion of it is invariably mistrustful (the following clause reads: "mais ce qu'il designe entre nous, je ne l'honore, ny l'estime"). This is based, for one, on the inefficacy of medical practice he has observed in his home population: "En premier lieu d'experience me le fait craindre : car de ce que j'ay de cognoissance, je ne voy nulle race de gens si tost malade, et si tard guerie, que celle qui est soubs la jurisdiction de la medecine." But more importantly, it is based on his personal experiences of illness: "J'ay esté assez souvent malade : j'ay trouvé sans leurs secours, mes maladies aussi douces à supporter (et en ay essayé quasi de toutes les sortes) et aussi courtes, qu'à nul autre : et si n'y ay point meslé l'amertume de leurs ordonnances." (II:37, "De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres," p. 804) We should note that his main argument against medical intervention is not actually based on personally having tried the remedies available at the time; it is based instead on the mere fact that without having recourse to doctors' prescriptions, he has fared remarkably well. On the most personal level, Montaigne's skeptical critique of medicine circles back to his own sense of self-sufficiency and his trust in his own bodily experience. While some might contend that the author has no right to criticize a practice he has seldom experienced, it is perfectly in line with Montaigne's particular brand of skeptical reasoning to base his arguments on the lone experience he has of himself, without referring to authority or tradition. This turning away from a tradition and a profession, which by and large reenacted the practices of Galenism and Hippocratism, was tantamount to a turning inward on the part of the author.[57] In his distrust of the medical tradition as it came down

[57] Both Jerrold Seigel's and Jan Goldstein's work on the conception of the early modern self through just

to him from Antiquity, he was prepared to present the reader with a radical alternative: he himself would become his own best physician.

The radical turn towards the self in the *Essais* has captured the attention of scholars since the inception of Montaignian criticism. As I pointed out in the chapter's Introduction, most of this attention has been lavished on the cognitive self, often at the expense of the somatic or embodied self. What I wish to suggest, however, is that Montaigne's refusal of medical intervention always precipitates a return to embodied experience, which constitutes in itself a consequential philosophical move. Medicine provides a helpful model for Montaigne's philosophy insofar as it respects the primacy of individual experience. But when it sacrifices the individual to doctrinal authority, it becomes a prime candidate for the author's attack. Hippocratism and Galenism were accessible to Montaigne precisely because, of all the early modern reappropriations of ancient medicine, they were the most accommodating of individual experience. As we shall see in the next section, medicine in early modern Europe remained loyal to both of these traditions; and although Montaigne does not admit allegiance to either tradition, his philosophy bears the marks of both, because their methods were largely consonant with the author's project of asserting an inimitable, irreducible self.

Hippocratism, Galenism, and the medico-philosophical practices of Montaigne.

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such a process of "turning inward" is helpful for understanding the eclectic processes by which Montaigne (and Pascal, for that matter) conceived of an individuated self in response to authority, tradition, and social ties. Though they cover slightly later periods, the following titles are useful: Jan Goldstein, *The Post-Revolutionary Self: Politics and Psyche in France, 1750–1850* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005) and Jerrold Seigel, *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe since the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

Though certain ancient medical philosophies, such as Galenism and Hippocratism, may have waned in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in actual practice, the methods for diagnosis and treatment were still inspired by the therapeutic templates laid out by ancient physicians. By and large, Renaissance physicians continued diagnosing illness from within the speculative framework of Hippocrates' four humors and Galen's six non-naturals.[58] While the Hippocratic physician based his practices on dialogue and description, the task of the traditional Galenic physician, as one scholar puts it, "was not to find remedies in natural history but to interpret lives in terms of 'physiology'—the medical aspect of natural philosophy."[59] The notion that medicine was intended to "interpret lives" in their somatic context, rather than simply prescribe drugs, was cause to consider Galenism as a *philosophy*, and not just a medical theory. If any one aspect likens Montaigne's project to that of the physician, it is this notion that one's well-being depends on the proper interpretation of an individual's entire life; no ailment, in other words, should be considered in isolation from the whole. In this regard, the hermeneutical task set before the physician and the philosopher is essentially the same. Montaigne, as we shall see in several passages, is no exception in the way that he records and interprets his body and his life.

[58] The humors were classified according to yellow bile, black bile, phlegm, and blood, each corresponding to a particular temperament or character trait. The six non-naturals were thought to consist of air, food and drink, excretion and repletion, sleep and waking, exercise and rest, as well as the passions of the soul. In both cases, disease was said to stem from an imbalance in the combination of these factors.

[59] John V. Pickstone, "Working Knowledges Before and After circa 1800: Practices and Disciplines in the History of Science, Technology, and Medicine," *Isis* 98:3 (Sep. 2007): 504.

Historically, Galenism remained an important current in early modern medical therapeutics. The work of Owsei Temkin in the 1970s on the rise and fall of Galenism,[60] particularly on the "crisis" of Galenism in the sixteenth century, has led some scholars to believe that Galenism was all but extinct by the time of Montaigne, and most certainly by the time of Pascal. While this may have been true for the doctrine, Temkin himself[61] and other more recent scholars[62] point out that Galenic *practices* persisted in early modern medicine, as they provided convenient medical categories, such as the temperaments and the six non-naturals, for understanding health and disease in individual patients. Stephen Pender has argued that the desuetude of Galenism in the sixteenth century proved to be "a crisis of epistemology rather than of practice, of nosology rather than of therapeutics."[63] Galenic practices, which tended to take a holistic view on individual suffering, remained largely intact, even as empirical science was proving its doctrinal inadequacy.

Combine the influence of Galenic practice with the sixteenth century's renewed interest in the Hippocratic methods of dialogue and description[64] and we have reason to believe that the bedside practices of an early modern physician erred little from those of his ancient counterpart. Following the work of Starobinski, Stephen Pender points this out amply in the case of Montaigne: "Against the universalist claims of physicians, in his own experience of illness Montaigne is Hippocratic; in effect he writes his own medical

[60] Owsei Temkin, *Galenism: Rise and Decline of a Medical Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), 134-92.

[61] Ibid, 165.

[62] See Pender, "Examples and Experience," 1-28.

[63] Ibid, 7.

[64] For further context, see Wear et al., *The medical renaissance of the sixteenth century*, xiii.

case history (*historia*)."[65] Further, Pender observes that "Montaigne uses the non-naturals (…) as a template for self-knowledge, and composes his own *historia*, arguing that participatory, useful and therapeutic knowledge of the self issues from the body."[66] The implied equivalency set up between somatic knowledge and self-knowledge is a key component to Montaigne's philosophical program, and, indeed, many of the rambling auto-descriptions we might take to be sheerly philosophical are in fact medical case histories in disguise. Starobinski, himself a physician, identifies entire pages in the *Essais* in which Montaigne's seemingly pleonastic description follows closely the categories laid out in the Galenic diagnostic manuals of his day. The most exemplary of these descriptions comes at the crux of Montaigne's chapter "De la ressemblance des enfans aux Peres," where he alludes to the excess of variables needed to make a medical diagnosis.[67] As Starobinski lays bare, all the main threads of Galenic diagnostics – physiology, hygiene, pathology, therapeutics, and semiology – are woven into Montaigne's description of his experience of medical diagnosis. It is precisely the

[65] Ibid, 17. For a more thorough discussion of the uses of *historia* in early modern medicine, see Gianna Pomata et al., ed., *Historia: Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 105-46.

[66] Wear et al., *The medical renaissance of the sixteenth century*, 18.

[67] "Or si le mescompte du medecin est dangereux, il nous va bien mal : car il est bien mal-aisé qu'il n'y retombe souvent : il a besoin de trop de pieces, considerations, et circonstances, pour affuster justement son dessein : Il faut qu'il cognoisse la complexion du malade, sa temperature, des humeurs, ses inclinations, ses actions, ses pensements mesmes, et ses imaginations. Il faut qu'il se responde des circonstances externes, de la nature du lieu, condition de l'air et du temps, assiette des planetes, et leurs influances : Qu'il sçache en la maladie les causes, les signes, les affections, les jours critiques : en la drogue, le poix, la force, le pays, la figure, l'aage, la dispensation : et faut que toutes ces pieces, il les sçache proportionner et rapporter l'une à l'autre, pour en engendrer une parfaicte symmetrie. À quoi s'il faut tant soit peu, si de tant de ressorts, il y en a un tout seul, qui tire à gauche, en voylà assez pour nous perdre. Dieu sçait, de quelle difficulté est la cognoissance de la pluspart de ces parties : car pour exemple, comment trouvera-il le signe propre de la maladie ; chacune estant capable d'un infiny nombre de signes ? Combien ont ils de debats entr' eux et de doubtes, sur l'interpretation des urines ? Autrement d'où viendroit cette altercation continuelle que nous voyons entr' eux sur la cognoissance du mal ? Comment excuserions nous cette faute, où ils tombent si souvent, de prendre martre pour renard ? Aux maux, que j'ay eu, pour peu qu'il y eust de difficulté, je n'en ay jamais trouvé trois d'accord." (II:37, pp. 812-13) For the close reading that Starobinski gives of this passage, see Starobinski, *Montaigne in Motion*, 147-9.

apparent complexity of Galenic diagnostics that causes Montaigne to shirk the very idea of consulting doctors. “Dieu sçait,” he declares, “de quelle difficulté est la cognoissance de la pluspart de ces parties : car pour exemple, comment trouvera-il le signe propre de la maladie ; chacune estant capable d’un infiny nombre de signes ?” (II:37, pp. 812-13) Better to circumvent the pitfalls of inductive diagnostics altogether and opt for a more personalized method of diagnosis: this the author does, but not without first acknowledging the prevailing medical strategies of his day. The fact is, alluding to these strategies was part and parcel of Montaigne’s own strategy to assert and expose himself on the written page. Although he ultimately resists the strategies mentioned in the passage above, they provide, at least temporarily, a sort of reflecting pool for the author’s own experience, as well as a way of differentiating himself from tradition.

Montaigne was certainly not the first to criticize the very tradition that he was indebted to. In the same chapter (“De la ressemblance des enfans aux Peres”), he cites Pliny and Celsus, both medical writers, to suggest that his own brand of criticism had ample precedent in Antiquity. In an apostrophe to Madame de Duras, whose opinions about medicine were more favorable than Montaigne’s, Montaigne excuses himself thus: “Au demeurant, Madame, je n'eusse pas osé remuer si hardiment les mysteres de la medecine, attendu le credit que vous et tant d'autres luy donnez, si je n'y eusse esté acheminé par ses autheurs mesmes. Je croy qu'ils n'en ont que deux anciens Latins, Pline et Celsus. Si vous les voyez quelque jour, vous trouverez qu'ils parlent bien plus rudement à leur art, que je ne fay: je ne fay que la pincer, ils l'esgorgent.” (II:37, p. 825) The final corporal metaphor is quite apt for an art that seeks to understand and treat the human body. In this case, criticism is conceived as an aggression (either minor, “pincer,”

or major, "esgorger") to the "body" of medical tradition—criticism that comes, nevertheless, from within that tradition. In citing Celsus, it is likely that Montaigne had in mind the opening lines of *De Medicina*: "A man in health, who is both vigorous and his own master, should be under no obligatory rules, and have no need, either for a medical attendant, or for a rubber and anointer."[68] Such was a piece of wisdom that Montaigne kept close by, for his fundamental conviction regarding medical treatment was that we are already our own best physicians. Renouncing the need for physicians, while writing expressly about the physician's profession, was in a sense nothing new. One could say that, as is true of the rhetorical tradition, critical accounts of a particular tradition are part and parcel of the tradition itself, at least as it is laid down in writing. In this vein, Montaigne's resistance to the medical tradition constitutes his participation in it. Ultimately, he prefers to rely on his own experience, but his assertion of that preference (and thus of his individuality) depends in no small way on his acknowledgement of tradition and authority.

Montaigne effects the same double move in philosophical practice, at once acknowledging and resisting the categories of ancient tradition. This time Socrates provides the template for moving back and forth between tradition as a whole and the particulars of individual experience. In his chapter "De l'Experience," Montaigne cites Socrates as a model for self-study in a medical context. The crucial link between medicine and philosophy comes from the fact that "knowing thyself" for Socrates meant knowing the body as well, and knowing what is harmful or beneficial to one's overall health: "Tybere disoit, que quiconque avoit vescu vingt ans, se devoit respondre des

[68] A. Cornelius Celsus, *De Medicina*, vol. 1, trans. W.G. Spencer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (Loeb Classical Library), 1938), 1.1. DOI: 10.4159/DLCL.celsus-medicine.1935.

choses qui luy estoient nuisibles ou salutaires, et se sçavoir conduire sans medecine. Et le pouvoit avoir apprins de Socrates : lequel conseillant à ses disciples soigneusement, et comme un très principal estude, l'estude de leur santé, adjoustoit, qu'il estoit malaisé, qu'un homme d'entendement, prenant garde à ses exercices à son boire et à son manger, ne discernast mieux que tout medecin, ce qui luy estoit bon ou mauvais." (III:13, p. 1126) One of the most important exercises, according to Montaigne's Socrates, for a man of knowledge ("un homme d'entendement") is the careful study of his physical health ("l'estude de [sa] santé"). In Montaigne's time, the term "entendement" belonged to the lexical field of mental processes: most of the examples given in Jean Nicot's *Thresor de la langue francoyse* (1606) are translations of the Latin *mens*, or mind.[69] The implication for the above passage is that the task of the philosopher, typically conceived of in terms of mind ("entendement"), should include the study of things "un-philosophical"—activities as down-to-earth as eating, drinking, sleeping, and waking. This sort of somatic self-knowledge is a crucial component of the philosopher's way of life, not only because it enhances longevity and frees one of physical distraction, but because it enables the philosopher to become more autonomous with regard to doctrinal authority. Montaigne suggests – like Socrates, like Celsus and Pliny – that diagnosis and treatment need not be inscribed into the established categories of learned medicine; rather, the maintenance of good health should be the province of the individual committed to a life of rigorous self-scrutiny. The discernment process evoked above – that of knowing firsthand what is salubrious or harmful – is itself a hermeneutical undertaking common to the physician

[69] ARTFL, accessed September 29, 2014, http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=entendement. To cite a couple of examples: "Avoir entendement, *Mentem habere*"; "S'ils eussent eu ce peu d'entendement, *Si hoc mentis habuissent*."

and the philosopher. It is what Aristotle called *phronesis* (as we may recall from the dissertation's Introduction), the applied wisdom that was equally important to the work of the physician and the just man. Gadamer, writing of more recent times in *The Enigma of Health,*[70] points out some of the dangers of abdicating this discernment process to outside authority or, worse, to technology. The risk of adhering to medical expertise on blind faith is that it precludes another form of knowledge, equally valuable, acquired through observation and introspection. It trades *phronesis* for *technê*, supplanting self-scrutiny with technical know-how, and thus denying the patient his right to discern what may be useful in his particular case. "Treatment," Gadamer proclaims, "always involves a certain granting of freedom. It does not just consist of laying down regulations or writing out prescriptions."[71] Montaigne's resistance to medical authority has a great deal to do with its failure to recognize the autonomy of individual experience, along with its tendency to depersonalize the diagnostic process. Although Montaigne evokes time and again certain Hippocratic or Galenic models for understanding bodily health, Starobinski was accurate in describing Montaigne's medico-philosophical outlook as pre-Galenic and even pre-Hippocratic. Characterizing his outlook as ultimately Socratic, Starobinski writes: "each individual is competent to govern all aspects of his own life, the diet of the body as well as the diet of the soul."[72]

Paradoxically perhaps, Montaigne arrives at this Socratic form of self-knowledge through classically Hippocratic methods. As at least a few scholars have pointed out,

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[70] See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Enigma of Health: The Art of Healing in a Scientific Age*, trans. Jason Gaiger et al. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), esp. 92-102.

[71] Ibid, 109.

[72] Starobinski, *Montaigne in Motion*, 162.

Montaigne's quest for self-knowledge actually includes certain practices traceable to the Hippocratic diagnostic tradition. Learned men across the disciplines were aware of the basic tenets of Hippocratic medicine: carefully observing the signs and symptoms of disease (technically known as *indications*), crafting detailed descriptions of these *indications*, and diagnosing and treating the illness based on experience and *exempla*. In its purest form, Hippocratism privileged the patient's description of illness over the authoritative nosologies found in physicians' handbooks, known as *practica*.[73] The description typically took the form of a *historia*, an individual case history, which was accompanied by a *consilium*, the physician's advice concerning the diagnosis and treatment of the disease. The process of arriving at a diagnosis was, by default, dialogical, causing Jackie Pigeaud to observe that, at least in Hippocratic diagnostics, "[l]a médecine devient ainsi herméneutique du discours du malade."[74]

It is therefore not a stretch of the imagination to retrace Montaigne's practice of auto-description to the Hippocratic methods of *historia* and *consilium* that were in use in medical circles at the time.[75] Whether it is a question of body or soul, Montaigne scatters himself across the page in richly kaleidoscopic description, "comme des feuilles Sibyllines," for the dual purpose of apprehending his present nature and drawing comfort from his own past experiences:

> À faute de memoire naturelle, j'en forge de papier. Et comme quelque nouveau symptome survient à mon mal, je l'escris : d'où il advient, qu'à

[73] See Andrew Wear, "Explorations in renaissance writings on the practice of medicine," in *The medical renaissance of the sixteenth century*, ed. Andrew Wear et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 118-45. These *practica* would have likely been used in conjunction with the particular signs and symptoms contained in a patient's *historia* (which I will cover shortly).

[74] Jackie Pigeaud, *Poésie du corps* (Paris: Payot & Rivages, 1999), 125.

[75] An especially useful and more detailed account of Montaigne's use of *historia* and *consilium* is found in Stephen Pender, "Examples and experience: on the uncertainty of medicine," *BJHS* 39:1 (2006): 1-28.

> cette heure, estant quasi passé par toute sorte d'exemples : si quelque estonnement me menace : feuilletant ces petits brevets descousus, comme des feuilles Sibyllines, je ne faux plus de trouver où me consoler, de quelque prognostique favorable, en mon experience passée. Me sert aussi l'accoustumance, à mieux esperer pour l'advenir. Car la conduicte de ce vuidange, ayant continué si long temps ; il est à croire, que nature ne changera point ce train, et n'en adviendra autre pire accident, que celui que je sens. (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1141)

Exposing his symptoms on the page, to review at a later time, qualifies as both a hermeneutic and a therapeutic act. Hermeneutic, not in the sense of tracing the causes of his current condition, but of observing with the pristine "mental sight" of a Hippocratic physician the natural course of his disease, often leading to "quelque prognostique favorable." Therapeutic, as well, because Montaigne reassures himself that his body, when left to its own wisdom, is capable of healing and that "nature ne changera point ce train." The consolation comes from past examples of a body that has restored itself to health without the intervention of medical technology and, perhaps most importantly, from a trust in the unfolding process of nature. Nature, as we shall see, is Montaigne's chief ally for both recovering and maintaining his health and preparing for a total loss of health: "Si vous ne sçavez pas mourir, ne vous chaille, nature vous en informera sur le champ, plainement et suffisamment ; elle fera exactement ceste besongne pour vous, n'en empeschez vostre soing." (III:12, "De la Physionomie," p. 1097) The irony, of course, in a passage such as this is that it is already too late to do anything at the time of death but accept nature's aid.

Montaigne's reliance on his own bodily experience in the twofold process of self-diagnosis and self-treatment allows him to navigate the double movement of resistance and acceptance I evoked above with regard to tradition. The double movement comes as he employs a writing technique from a tradition he largely disavows. Even as he sets his

symptoms to paper in a loosely Hippocratic fashion, or recounts the common travails of Galenic diagnostics, he is concerned neither with the final classification of this information nor with its potential utility for the medical profession. His observations remain altogether in the realm of the personal, the inimitable, and the idiosyncratic. If he is concerned at all with passing on any sort of knowledge, it is to his close circle of readers, "à qui [s]es humeurs soient bonnes, de qui les humeurs [lui] soyent bonnes," to whom he would rather present a visceral sort of knowledge, "en chair et en os." (III:5, "Sur des vers de Virgile," p. 885)

This brings us to a crucial point: any extent of medical authority established in the *Essais* pertains only to the author himself. The experience that Montaigne claims to know a great deal about is neither clinical nor diagnostic; his authority stretches only throughout the realm of the personal. Moreover, Montaigne uses references to the medical tradition as a means of articulating his overall philosophy of life, based on his particular faith in personal bodily experience. In other words, medicine is a sort of case in point for how to conduct oneself properly with regard to experience. The fact that all the usual attempts to justify medicine's claims based on "experience"[76] are met with a surprising amount of irony and dismay only further highlights Montaigne's highly idiosyncratic understanding of what constitutes "useful" experience. His brand of experience is so particular that the usual attempts at drawing a correspondence between the individual case and the tradition as a whole are largely unsuccessful. Tradition seems to serve mainly as a foil to Montaigne's assertion of his own uniqueness.

[76] Starobinski identifies three main varieties of experience, based on inspiration, custom, and chance, all of which Montaigne categorically dismisses. See Starobinski, *Montaigne in Motion*, 151.

Even custom, often praised for its own sake, needs to pass under the wing of personal appropriation for it to be of use to Montaigne. The experience based on custom is often the author's own "estat accoustumé," not social custom in its authoritative guise. Though, in a general way, Montaigne encourages us to follow the customs of our country, wherever it is a question of health, he advocates falling back on the use of things one is *personally* accustomed to. He explains his logic more fully in this passage: "Ma santé, c'est maintenir sans destourbier mon estat accoustumé. Je voy que la maladie m'en desloge d'un costé : si je crois les medecins, ils m'en destourneront de l'autre : et par fortune, et par art, me voylà hors de ma route. Je ne crois rien plus certainement que cecy : que je ne sçauroy estre offencé par l'usage des choses que j'ay si long temps accoustumées. C'est à la coustume de donner forme à nostre vie, telle qu'il luy plaist, elle peult tout en cela." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1127) Unlike the blind adherence to superstition or institutional dogma, both of which may pass for custom, custom here is of a personal, experiential nature, verifiable through the living form of the author's body. It includes both the physical habits to which he has long been accustomed ("l'usage des choses que j'ay si long temps accoustumées") and the accumulation of experiences that have proven beneficial over a lifetime, which gives shape and texture to a life well lived ("C'est à la coustume de donner forme à nostre vie").

It is worth reemphasizing that general experience is considered quite useless if it has not first been thoroughly appropriated. The examples and experience ("exemples et experience") that the profession of medicine relies upon illustrate the vanity of applying another's experience to new individual cases. Montaigne pokes fun at medicine's complete faith in examples and experience by suggesting that his opinion, too, is founded

on examples and experience: "La medecine se forme par exemples et experience : aussi fait mon opinion. Voylà pas une bien expresse experience, et bien advantageuse ?" (II:37, "De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres," p. 802) Who is to say, in other words, that the examples compiled from the medical profession are any more valid and efficacious than the examples furnished by the author's personal history? Montaigne uses his overall good health and longevity as proof that his own experience has served him well, without having recourse to physicians:

> Je ne sçay si [les médecins] m'en trouveront trois en leurs registres, nais, nourris, et trespassez, en mesme fouier, mesme toict, ayans autant vescu par leur conduite. Il faut qu'ils m'advouent en cela, que si ce n'est la raison, aumoins que la fortune est de mon party : or chez les medecins, fortune vaut bien mieux que la raison : Qu'ils ne me prennent point à ceste heure à leur advantage, qu'ils ne me menassent point, atterré comme je suis : ce seroit supercherie. Aussi à dire la verité, j'ay assez gaigné sur eux par mes *exemples domestiques*, encore qu'ils s'arrestent là. (II:37, "De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres," p. 802; my emphasis)

Montaigne posits his "exemples domestiques"[77] as a direct counterpoint to the physician's catalogue of general experience. It matters little whether it is good luck or reason that stands on the author's side; the essential point is that external (i.e. clinical) examples have proven unnecessary. Using his family history and personal experience as his reference points for understanding his own health, he effectively displaces the value of tradition and the "whole" to an external and largely irrelevant reality. He places so much emphasis on the success of his individual case history that his entire relationship to the profession of medicine becomes one of ignoring and forgetting, rather than engaging and adapting.

[77] Earlier in the same passage, Montaigne explains that his father lived seventy-four years, his grandfather sixty-nine, and his great-grandfather nearly eighty—all without taking recourse to physicians. These three figures are the family examples Montaigne is referring to when he mentions his "exemples domestiques."

The corresponding attitude in philosophy is one that idealizes individual experience, or in more contemporary language, the expression of an individual's uniqueness. The intensely private nature of Montaigne's examples and experience in his approach to physical health is the same sort of experience he appeals to in his quest for peace of mind. In both cases, the therapeutic method consists in limiting his claims about health or illness to the specificity of his present condition.[78] To claim that such and such a cure proves valid for an entire population – a claim that Alexander Nehamas has called the "universalist ideal" in philosophy as a way of life[79] – is anathema to the philosophical outlook of an aestheticist[80] like Montaigne. In the latter's view, we cannot hope to replicate our life in another any more than we can hope to find a panacea for all the world's ills. Not even experimental science, whose reliance on the *expérience* as it will be systematized nearly a century later, can approximate the methods of treatment appropriate to each individual.

As much attention as Stephen Pender gives to the primacy of examples and experience in Montaigne's therapeutic program,[81] he reserves his remarks largely for the domain of medicine. He does not explicitly make the connection between Montaigne's Hippocratic practice of medicine and his highly experiential and deeply personal methods

[78] For a more elaborate study of the potency of rhetoric and truth claims in the therapeutic tradition, see Pedro Laín Entralgo, *The Therapy of the Word in Classical Antiquity*, trans. L. J. Rather et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).

[79] Alexander Nehamas, *The Art of Living. Socratic Reflections from Plato to Foucault*, esp. *Introduction*.

[80] As Nehamas puts it, "the aestheticist genre of the art of living forbids the direct imitation of models," except that Montaigne, Nietzsche, and Foucault (all aestheticists according to Nehamas) all take as their model Socrates. See Ibid, 10.

[81] See Pender's excellent analysis of Montaigne and Bacon in "Examples and Experience: On the Uncertainty of Medicine," in *BJHS* 39:1 (2006): 1-28. I cite Pender in particular because he is one of the few scholars to systematically address non-medical authors' relationships to the field of medicine in early modern Europe.

of philosophical practice. Montaigne's process of doubting an institution only then to privilege his own experience mirrors exactly the process by which he acknowledges, and perhaps even appropriates, but then ignores, the philosophical traditions behind his own spiritual quest. Though no doubt familiar with the Classical practices of medicine and philosophy that were being revived during his lifetime, Montaigne chose to foreground the specificity of his embodied self, and in so doing, he danced a fine line of both incorporating and transcending the methods and vocabulary of the ancient schools.

Part II: Pascal.

Medicine, religion, and philosophical method in the age of medical revolution.

Much of the historiography of the Scientific Revolution has emphasized the cleavage between philosophy and the natural sciences, or, as the historian of science H. Floris Cohen frames it, the "relative emancipation of science from philosophy,"[82] that occurred in the seventeenth century with the rise of experimental science. Although medicine was becoming more and more a science, in that new chemical and corpuscular discoveries were being made about the human body, it still responded to subjective experience and the challenges associated with the interpretation of individual lives. It could still be called "philosophical," because, unlike those sciences that aimed primarily at capturing objective measurements of inanimate phenomena, its object invariably contained its own subjectivity. We should therefore be careful to distinguish between

[82] Cohen, *The Scientific Revolution*, 168. The argument goes as follows: as the more localized scientific experiment gained prestige, the impulse to present a comprehensive picture of truth based on scientific investigation began to wane. Instead, scientists grew more interested in "the untiring construction of partial theories and concepts and experimental tests, with 'pragmatic adequacy' as the primary guideline." (168) The ambitious "system-building" of ancient and Renaissance science would henceforth be left to the philosophers.

medicine as it was absorbed into the larger scientific trends of the time and medicine as it was intended to treat the individual sufferer. As we saw in Montaigne, medicine and philosophy were tied together most intimately through the hermeneutical problem of application. The challenge of uniting universals and particulars continued to inform the work of the physician and the philosopher in a major way. Pascal, for his part, chose to address the problem from a different angle: rather than drawing on individual experience as his primordial reference point (as Montaigne did), Pascal refers us first to the value of tradition – in the guise of Christianity – and then considers how to best treat himself and his interlocutor according to that tradition. But even as he heeds the wisdom of tradition, he never applies its tenets in a blind or mechanical way. Experiential wisdom still trumps dogmatic belief, which is why embodied custom and common sense remain the common denominators to his religio-philosophical approach to healing.

The legitimacy of most forms of traditional authority, particularly in the sciences, began to wane in the seventeenth century, when empirical advances and an expanding vision of the cosmos made it increasingly impossible to cling to certain commonly held beliefs. Peter Dear describes well the atmosphere of the time:

> Europeans at the beginning of the seventeenth century lived in a world of precarious intelligibility. To understand meant to grasp regularities, to know what to expect and how things went; yet most regularities contained no guarantee of their own reliability. The authority of ancient texts had become increasingly ineffective in the face of an expanded world. Religion still held out the promise of infallible certainty, but the importance invested in that promise fueled the battles, spiritual and military, of the great age of conflict between Catholic and Protestant. […] If awareness of the tenuousness of knowledge had not been so acute, the premium placed on certainty would not have been so high.[83]

[83] Dear, *Discipline and Experience*, 11.

Certainty, in this era of increasing instability, could be called the holy grail of humanistic endeavor. But religion, unlike science, could not be reduced to empirical evidence and therefore posed a unique challenge to the ideal of certainty. Faith, belief, and custom would need to supplant the ordinary criteria for empirical certainty, just like in philosophy subjective experience became the new standard for establishing truth, as Descartes had demonstrated through his series of philosophical meditations. Henceforth, authority, in any of its guises, would occupy a rather precarious position in many writers' quests to understand human nature. Much has been written about Pascal's use of religious authority – particularly his appropriation of Thomism and Augustinianism – but that is not my primary interest here.[84] Rather, I focus on the aspects of medicine that show up in the author's religious and philosophical writings, by asking questions such as, *what is medicine for Pascal?* and *how is it related to spiritual seeking?*. I focus in particular on Pascal's *Prière*[85] and on similar passages from the *Pensées* to capture some of his commentary on medical therapeutics from a religious perspective.

Although Pascal seldom refers to medicine proper, he is quite explicit about the healing properties of religious practice and the need to find remedies appropriate to each individual sufferer. In his quest for the ultimate medicine, he ends up asking of God what Montaigne asked primarily of himself. Pascal's series of prayers written when he was most ill, published as the *Prière pour demander à Dieu le bon usage des maladies*, hands over complete authority to an invisible God, *un Dieu caché*, but not in a blind or

[84] For a thoroughgoing account of Pascalian hermeneutics, see Pierre Force, *Le Problème herméneutique chez Pascal* (Paris: Vrin, 1989), esp. 34-41.

[85] Blaise Pascal, *Œuvres completes*, t. II, ed. Michel Le Guern (Paris: Gallimard, 2000). All future citations from the *Prière* will refer the reader to section and page number.

programmatic way. Pascal recognizes the signal importance of familiarization and appropriation as he prepares to receive the divine grace that will heal his deepest ills; for he is aware that the universal principle of divine grace will have little impact on the particulars of his experience if he does not properly prepare himself to receive it. The hermeneutical problem still applies to the apologist who, despite his disavowal of the individual as the source of truth, must learn to apply the universal remedies of Christianity to his particular situation as a frail, sickly scientist-cum-mystic living in seventeenth-century France. Pascalian therapeutics cannot function, in other words, without hermeneutics.

Throughout the *Prière*, Pascal addresses God or Jesus Christ directly, much as a patient would his physician. The authority accorded God is absolute, and the fate of the patient lies entirely in divine hands. The rhetoric Pascal employs in asking for help, as well as the posture he adopts, are no doubt distinctly religious, but we should pause to consider the highly pragmatic character of his prayer. He seeks physical healing from God in order to be of better *use* to God's will. Nowhere in these writings does Pascal linger over the consultations he may have had with physicians or, for that matter, the merits of medical practice more generally. He focuses his efforts on preparing himself, in mind and body, to receive medicine in the form of divine grace. Calling on God as his primary physician, Pascal gives us some clue about his practical understanding of health and healing that may be lacking elsewhere in his writings.

In each of the fifteen sections of the *Prière*, the author effects a double – and contradictory – move to both guard his illness as an aid to spiritual growth and restore his health in order to better serve God. He frequently refers to his illness through the use of

oxymoron, as in "châtiments salutaires" (*Prière*, II, p. 183) or "maux salutaires" (*Prière*, IV, p. 185), acknowledging the positive or productive qualities of bodily suffering. He is the first to admit that God has granted him illness for his benefit: "Vous m'envoyez maintenant la maladie pour me corriger." (*Prière*, II, p. 183) The need for self-correction was a familiar trope to readers of Pascal and Augustine, as illness was understood to originate in the corruption of humanity following the Fall. To correct for such corruption, which took the form of concupiscence, the body needed to suffer, following the example of Christ on the cross. Pascal appeals to this logic throughout the *Prière*, deeming himself most fortunate for having a body riddled with ills: "ô Seigneur, qui aimez tant les corps qui souffrent, que vous avez choisi pour vous le corps le plus accablé de souffrances qui soit au monde, ayez agréable mon corps, non pas pour lui-même…mais pour les maux qu'il endure, qui seulent peuvent être dignes de votre amour." (*Prière*, X, p. 189-90) Illness here is not something to be swept aside and immediately overcome; with it comes the singular opportunity to take stock of one's spiritual integrity. It is a symptom of individual past transgression and a sign of the human condition writ large, and it must therefore receive the moral and philosophical attention it deserves. Medicine, then, plays a very particular role in Pascal's religious writings. Rather than providing a ready antidote to bodily pain, it consists in preserving pain in order to learn how to use that pain well.

Certain elements other than physical pain nevertheless need to be present in order for medicine to function properly. The sufferer needs to experience a profound internal "douleur" and be open to the consolation of God if he wishes to embark on the path of healing. The entire therapeutic enterprise hinges for Pascal on the recognition – through

affect, not intellect – of the causes of our illness. "Touchez mon coeur du repentir de mes offenses," he demands of God, "puisque sans cette douleur intérieure les maux extérieurs dont vous touchez mon corps me seraient une occasion nouvelle de péché." (*Prière*, VII, p. 187) Physical pain, in other words, must translate into the appropriate sentiment of the heart. The second essential component to healing comes in the form of God's consolation. On this Pascal is emphatic: "Mais je demande, Seigneur, de ressentir tout ensemble et les douleurs de la nature pour mes péchés et les consolations de votre Esprit par votre grâce, car c'est le veritable état du christianisme, *que je ne sente pas des douleurs sans consolation*, mais que je sente mes douleurs et vos consolations ensemble, pour arriver enfin à ne sentir plus que vos consolations sans aucunes douleurs." (*Prière*, XI, p. 190; my emphasis) As we saw in Montaigne, healing cannot be reduced to the medical profession's reliance on technical intervention. At its basis, it is affective and relational and assumes a basic bond of trust between the healer and the healed. To give and receive consolation is akin to giving and receiving advice between friends, requiring the insight and fellow-feeling that Gadamer claims to be the centerpiece of Aristotelian moral knowledge.[86] For Pascal, this relationship is founded on a tradition of authority[87] but requires at the same time a personal engagement on the part of the seeker. When he declares, "Vous seul savez ce qui m'est expédient" (*Prière*, XIII, p. 192), he is pointing at once to the absolute authority of God and to the personalized application of that authority. He uses the opportunity of illness to call upon the presence of God as an aid to

[86] Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 320.

[87] See Force*, Le Problème herméneutique chez Pascal*, 35-6. Force reminds us that religion, law, and morality were all hermeneutic disciplines in the seventeenth century that accorded tradition the highest authority until or unless proven otherwise. Pascal proceeds, precisely, on the premise that the Christian religion is trustworthy based on how long it has persisted without being proven wrong.

his *personal* transformation, in order to then be of service to the *collective* divine will: "Que je ne souhaite désormais de santé et de vie que pour l'employer et la finir pour vous, avec vous et en vous. Je ne demande ni santé ni maladie, ni vie ni mort, mais que vous ne disposiez de ma santé et de ma maladie, de ma vie et de ma mort, pour votre gloire, pour mon salut et pour l'utilité de votre Église et de vos saints dont je fais une portion." (*Prière*, XIII, p. 192) Medicine here is inextricably linked to the presence of God. It is at once the divine intervention coming from the outside and the very posture that Pascal assumes in seeking a more noble use of his health. The fact that he puts his body into a position of humility constitutes, in one sense, the cure itself. We need only recall that emblematic retort of the apologist who, failing to convince his interlocutor through reason at the end of the Wager, shows him the way to faith through bodily comportment: "Vous voulez vous guérir de l'infidélité et vous en demandez les remèdes, apprenez de ceux, etc., qui ont été liés comme vous et qui parient maintenant tout leur bien. Ce sont gens qui savent ce chemin que vous voudriez suivre et guéris d'un mal dont vous voulez guérir ; *suivez la manière par où ils ont commencé. C'est en faisant tout comme s'ils croyaient, en prenant de l'eau bénite, en faisant dire des messes, etc.* Naturellement même cela vous fera croire et vous abêtira." (LG 397; my emphasis) It is here that religious interventions, as they pertain to the health of the human soul, become philosophical practices: salvation requires, at least for the skeptical non-believer, practices borrowed from Pascal's behavior-based philosophy featured throughout the *Pensées*.

To separate out Pascal's philosophy from his religious convictions would be akin to studying Montaigne without taking into account his intimate familiarity with the ancient sources. On the one hand, to speak of his philosophy might seem erroneous given the apologist's own disavowal of philosophical systems, encapsulated most memorably in his maxim "Se moquer de la philosophie, c'est vraiment philosopher" (LG 60). A number of scholars have tried, on the other hand, to distinguish various philosophical persona in the *Provinciales* and the *Pensées*. Vincent Carraud, in his extensive study of Pascal and the history of philosophy,[88] identifies two basic tendencies in Pascalian criticism: while some scholars locate enough traces of Cartesianism in Pascal's works – if only *via negativa*, by emphasizing Pascal's anti-Cartesianism – to label Pascal a reformed Cartesian, others hone in on Pascal's Skepticism and, more specifically, his Pyrrhonism, placing the author in the company of his predecessor Montaigne. Still others (notably, Carraud himself) have interpreted Pascal's anti-Cartesianism as a more general stance against all systematic philosophy, corroborating the opinion that Pascal is at heart a skeptic.

Still, with regard to Pascal's skepticism, we should proceed with caution, if only because the apologist himself points out the untenability of that belief system. Jean Khalfa, in his article "Pascal's Theory of Knowledge," cautions against using this category for that reason: "Still, if Pascal attacks the ideas of a universal method and of a coincidence of mind and nature, he is far from being a sceptic. Whenever he insists that no proof is ever certain, he invariably adds that skepticism is untenable because we have reasons to believe which are more robust than any rational proof. Scepticism presupposes

[88] Vincent Carraud, *Pascal et la philosophie* (Paris: PUF, 1992), esp. 9-50.

a rationalist conception of truth which he precisely questions."[89] Indeed, Khalfa immediately goes on to cite the *sententia*-like fragment in which the apologist explicitly debunks Pyrrhonism and dogmatism as models for relating to truth: "Nous avons une impuissance de prouver invincible à tout le dogmatisme. / Nous avons une idée de la vérité invincible à tout le pyrrhonisme." (LG 385) Difficult as he might be to pin down (because of this contradictory mode of reasoning), Pascal *is* influenced by skeptical modes of thought, particularly where certainty of knowledge is concerned. In *De l'esprit géométrique*, he is unequivocal on this point: "La méthode de ne point errer est recherché de tout le monde. Les logiciens font profession d'y conduire, les géomètres seuls y arrivent, et, hors de leur science et de ce qui l'imite, il n'y a point de véritables démonstrations."[90] As is already well known, Pascal owes a great deal to the skepticism of Montaigne and Charron, and even further back, to the Greek tradition of Pyrrhonism. In the *Pensées*, his skepticism vis-à-vis logical modes of understanding almost always leads to an argument for the necessity of faith and custom for arriving at non-geometrical truths. But prior to faith, and even prior to custom, Pascal needs to assure his interlocutor that the path of seeking has its own share of practical advantages, regardless of the outcome. The living proof of these advantages, found in the particulars of individual experience, is one way that Pascal's empirical exigency in the sciences supports his philosophical outlook on conversion: in both cases, concrete evidence in the form of bodily experience is prerequisite to advancing on the path of understanding.

[89] Jean Khalfa, "Pascal's Theory of Knowledge," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pascal*, ed. Nicholas Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 129.

[90] Pascal, *Œuvres completes*, 180.

If we take up the view that Pascal is practicing some form of skepticism – and not only in his philosophy, but in his scientific experiments as well – it becomes clear that his irreverence for most forms of secular dogma precipitates a return to *experience*, the same conceptual tool that was useful in Montaigne for understanding the common ground between philosophy and medicine. Pascal's is a skepticism of ideas and beliefs, of constructs and systems—not of actual, lived experience. Desmond M. Clarke's article in the *Cambridge Companion to Pascal* offers a cogent reappraisal of the importance of experimental evidence in Pascal's philosophy of science—evidence that, when resituated in the context of philosophical inquiry, is akin to the philosopher's personal experience. He writes: "In the case of Pascal … the intensity of his personal faith and his public commitment to the rigorous piety of Jansenism made it impossible for him not to reflect on the status of scientific results that were confirmed by what appeared to be incontrovertible experimental evidence. It is easy to understand, in retrospect, how the focus of Pascal's philosophy of science was the role of *experimental evidence* in the confirmation and disconfirmation of scientific theories."[91] [my emphasis] Clarke intimates a powerful link between the nature of Pascal's religious commitments and his attitude towards scientific evidence. The rigor with which the apologist laid out his religious and philosophical arguments in the *Pensées* is a close match for the rigor and discipline Pascal required when testing scientific theories. To extend the analogy, the high value placed on experimental evidence in both the author's religious philosophy and his scientific practices provides one possible bridge between the spiritual and the physical. Medicine, as a growing science at the time, overwhelmingly emphasized

[91] Desmond M. Clarke, "Pascal's philosophy of science," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pascal*, ed. Nicholas Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 102.

experimental evidence as more and more physical discoveries were being made about the human body. Even when considered metaphorically, medicine still required some form of experimental evidence; for instance, the medicine that the apologist equated with God required bodily proof, in the form of *sentiment*, that a particular belief or practice was working. The apologist did not stop at theoretical hypotheses or historical arguments based on authority to convince his interlocutor of the validity of the Christian doctrine (even though he appeals to both throughout the *Pensées*). He demanded evidence based on concrete experience precisely because his skeptical interlocutor demanded just as much.

This brings us to a crucial point about Pascal's relationship to the skepticism we usually associate with his predecessor Montaigne. Whenever Pascal praises Montaigne it is for the latter's ability to upset our belief in solid scientific truths. In the *Entretien avec M. de Sacy*, Pascal is reported as saying that "Montaigne est incomparable … pour désabuser ceux qui s'attachent à leurs opinions, et qui croient trouver dans les sciences des vérités inébranlables."[92] Montaigne's only fault, as we find out later, is that he stops short of providing a religious solution to the human quandary of confusion and uncertainty. In the ensuing paragraph, Pascal is quick to add that "Montaigne est absolument pernicieux à ceux qui ont quelque pente à l'impiété et aux vices,"[93] and so, the *Essais* should be read only with great discretion and care. To the apologist, believing that truth lies outside of us or that science can provide all the answers are two equally erroneous suppositions. Pascal deploys the example of Montaigne's moderate skepticism

[92] Pascal, *Œuvres complètes*, t. II, 97.

[93] Ibid, 98.

to build his own position of skepticism with regard to "worldly" truths. The two would agree that the truths we achieve through worldly means are inherently unstable and that most of us are slaves to our own hubris in believing we have achieved certainty. The lesson, then, is one of humility – a familiar one to readers of the *Pensées* – and it serves as a reminder that we cannot place our faith in either opinions or appearances to arrive at absolute truth. Hence, in his own scientific experiments, Pascal insisted on science as *demonstration*, rather than theory or dogma, just as he insisted that his interlocutor have a bodily experience of truth in the thought experiments he proposed in the *Pensées*.

The chief difference between the *evidence* Pascal demanded of his scientific experiments and the *experience* that would give his philosophical and religious convictions weight was that the former was accessible and verifiable through observation whereas the latter was frequently hidden from view. This is why faith, imagination, and custom figure so prominently in Pascal's interpretation of philosophical evidence. Faith alone is not enough to convince the interlocutor to believe in what otherwise goes against reason—unless he is already endowed with divine grace. The imagination must aid him in "experiencing" the validity of a proposition foreign to him, as evidenced by the apologist's refrain, "Qu'on s'imagine…" (as in: "Qu'on s'imagine un corps plein de membres pensants" (LG 351)), or the contemplation exercise below:

> Que l'homme contemple donc la nature entière dans sa haute et pleine majesté, qu'il éloigne sa vue des objets bas qui l'environnent. Qu'il regarde cette éclatante lumière mise comme une lampe éternelle pour éclairer l'univers, que la terre lui paraisse comme un point au pris du vaste tour que cet astre décrit, et qu'il s'étonne de ce que ce vaste tour lui-même n'est qu'une pointe très délicate à l'égard de celui que ces astres qui roulent dans le firmament embrassent. Mais si notre vue s'arrête là, *que l'imagination passe outre*, elle se lassera plutôt de concevoir que la nature de fournir. (LG 185) [my emphasis]

The exercise of the imagination, which is itself an embodied activity, is necessary to persuade the interlocutor. Just as in a scientific treatise like the *Traité du vide*, in the *Pensées* Pascal relies on a series of experiments – only this time performed by the imagination – to show the absurdity of one commonly accepted belief after another. In the *Traité*, it was the belief that nature abhors the vacuum. In the *Pensées*, it is our belief that some worldly good, such as esteem or diversion, will provide absolute fulfillment.

These sorts of "imagined" experiments played a cardinal role in medical practices of the time whenever the signs and symptoms of illness were concealed from view. Hippocratic medicine emphasized the importance of developing keen "mental sight" – something akin to Pascal's visual imagination – in order to probe the workings of a disease beneath the patient's skin and even his words. In the *Science of Medicine*, Hippocrates encourages the following: "What escapes our vision we must grasp by mental sight, and the physician, being unable to see the nature of the disease nor to be told of it, must have recourse to reasoning from the symptoms with which he is presented."[94] Stephen Pender aptly points out that "[t]hrough 'mental sight' the absent is made present, the invisible disease made visible. Physicians 'weigh' the "the significance of various signs" and thus "deduce" the type of illness, its history, and its prognosis. Raw (subjective) symptoms are translated into meaningful (objective) signs; probable sign inference becomes the main constituent of diagnosis, prognosis, and retrospection."[95] This process of deduction, Pender explains, relies heavily on analogy and exemplarity, since individual cases may not display a complete array of signs linked to a particular

[94] Hippocrates, *Hippocratic Writings*, trans. John C. Chadwick (New York: Penguin Classics, 1984), "The Science of Medicine," §11.

[95] Stephen Pender, "Between Medicine and Rhetoric," *Early Science and Medicine* 10:1 (2005): 47.

disease, and especially since, more often than not, some symptoms may not be visible on the surface of the patient's body. Hippocrates goes on to conclude in the same section that "[m]edicine aims to cure that which is perceived, treatment being based on judgment rather than ill-considered opinion, on energy rather than indifference. The nature of the body is such that a sickness which is clearly seen can be cured." This last sentence is quite telling: medicine is a science based on sensory data, and in particular, on sight. When raw sight does not have direct access to the causes of a disease, the physician must deploy his imagination based on information he has collected from similar cases.

Because all of its signs and symptoms may not be directly observable to the physician, the human body presents an intractable hermeneutical challenge. The only way to close the gap between what is seen and unseen, and to thus render all the relevant variables subject to interpretation, is to use the imagination, or mental sight, in such a way as to make present to the mind what is absent. Rather than relying on theoretical or scientific paradigms to determine the causes of disease, hermeneutics of the body requires that one develop a subjective, intuitive relationship with the body's imperfect means of supplying information. That information might be new, incomplete, or downright incoherent, but the Hippocratic physician is charged precisely with listening to the body's language in addition to the patient's actual words. His task is rather like the challenge set forth by Starobinski when we sit down to read about the body of Montaigne: "The body-subject, such as it feels itself to be, demands a legitimacy superior to that of science's discourse on the body. Better yet, the enterprise of speaking the body (*dire le corps*) ends up in granting the body permission not only to express itself (*se dire*) (through the living voice, gestures, movements) but also to provide the necessary

metaphorical repertoire by means of which all the acts of thought will be represented in the writing of the book."[96] The body, according to Starobinski's account, must be taken seriously, for, physiologically as well as intellectually, it is expressing everything that the physician or the reader needs to know. It contains both observable, concrete data *and* "the necessary metaphorical repertoire" that allows the observer "see" beneath its surface. If Pascal had remained Cartesian through and through, he probably would have stopped at the pale of mechanistic, observable experience. Similarly, if physicians had restricted their diagnoses to what they saw, heard, or felt from the body's external indices, they would have missed the vast storehouse of information contained within the inner workings of an individual. This is why medicine, like philosophy, needed to be dialogical. As was true of Hippocratic case-taking, the physician needed to interpret the signs and symptoms, both visible and invisible, both through the body itself *and* through the words and images furnished by the patient.

Medicine in the Scientific Revolution was not, however, a simple extension of the Hippocratic practices common to Renaissance physicians. Nor were Renaissance physicians all faithful followers of the Hippocratic (or dialogical) method. Medicine was to undergo profound changes in the course of the seventeenth century, and chief among them were significant advances in the physician's capacity for direct observation of the inner workings of the human body, through anatomy studies and dissections.[97] But, as I

[96] Jean Starobinski, "The Body's Moment," trans. John A. Gallucci, *Yale French Studies* 64 (1983): 278.

[97] Seventeenth-century medicine benefited most markedly from Andreas Vesalius' (1514-1564) more nuanced anatomy of the human body, William Harvey's (1578-1657) more accurate understanding of the circulation of blood, and Ambroise Paré's (1510-1590) innovations in surgery.

alluded to in the chapter's Introduction, medical therapeutics rarely underwent dramatic adjustments to accommodate the scientific discoveries in the field or laboratory. Practically speaking, the physician still elicited from the patient a subjective description of his condition and used trial and error at bedside to administer particular treatments based on their observable efficacy. Thomas Sydenham, an English contemporary to Pascal, is often cited as the century's avatar of Hippocratic medicine and a major influence on the practices of his time. His *experimenta* capitalized on trial-and-error methods and recycled many of the traditional Hippocratic practices, such as *historia*.[98]

Medicine's particular imbrication of external, observable data (like in Sydenham's *experimenta*) and internal, sometimes ineffable experience shows up in a similar form in Pascal's philosophical method. Pascal's understanding of experience certainly benefits from traditional observation and verification, but he also gives considerable weight to the affective and intuitive dimensions of human experience. In fact, he was one of the first experimental scientists to acknowledge outright the limitations of scientific methods that required some external verification of the truth. In his own method outlined in *De l'esprit géométrique*, he concedes that the "first principles," the primary criteria for truth, must be intuited by the heart—a bodily organ. This must hold for mathematic and scientific principles *as well as* philosophical and religious truths. Pascal gives a fuller summary of his method in LG 101 of the *Pensées*:

> Nous connaissons la vérité non seulement par la raison mais encore par le cœur. […] Car la connaissance des premiers principes, comme qu'il y a espace, temps, mouvement, nombres, est aussi ferme qu'aucune de celles que nos raisonnements nous donnent, et c'est sur ces connaissances du cœur et de l'instinct qu'il faut que la raison s'appuie et qu'elle y fonde tout

[98] See Andrew Cunningham, "Thomas Sydenham: epidemics, experiment and the 'Good Old Cause,'" in *The medical revolution of the seventeenth century*, ed. Roger French et al., 164-190 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), esp. 186.

> son discours. Le cœur sent qu'il y a trois dimensions dans l'espace et que les nombres sont infinis et la raison démontre ensuite qu'il n'y a point deux nombres carrés dont l'un soit double de l'autre. Les principes se sentent, les propositions se concluent et le tout avec certitude quoique par différentes voies.

Since the variety of first principles underlying the study of human nature is infinite and therefore ungraspable, we cannot rely on logical demonstration (the mathematical method) to arrive at an accurate depiction of reality.[99] The intuitive method that Pascal proposes, based on the power of *sentiment*[100] ("Tout notre raisonnement se réduit à céder au sentiment." (LG 470)), does not rely on observable reality as the measure of truth, but implies the most personal sort of appropriation that is not subject to measurement at all.

Pascal's religio-philosophical method must therefore include other ingredients that medical hermeneutics and Montaignian description cannot provide. Because he is concerned with *spiritual* illness, he proposes a cure that is equally spiritual in nature—God. But since most of his readers have had no direct experience of God, he employs more familiar means, drawn from philosophy and medicine, to bring them to a state of seeking. If the ultimate cure has been hidden since the time of the Fall, provisional methods, such as faith and custom, are necessary to "prove" the validity of the Christian path. Philosophy is one such provisional method in that it provides a template of familiar exercises – drawn from ancient traditions such as Stoicism and Epicureanism – which the author could enact with his interlocutor to elicit an affective response. The response,

[99] Since Pascal's philosophical method is not my primary focus, I leave a fuller discussion of it to Pierre Force in his article "Pascal and philosophical method," in *The Cambridge Companion to Pascal*, ed. Nicholas Hammond (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 216-34.

[100] The *sentiment* referred to throughout the *Pensées* consists of "a highly personal, yet non-relativistic, perception of the first principles." (Force, "Pascal and philosophical method," 226) See also Matthew L. Jones, *The Good Life in the Scientific Revolution: Descartes, Pascal, Leibniz, and the Cultivation of Virtue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), esp. 131-168 and Idem, "Writing and *Sentiment*: Blaise Pascal, the Vacuum and the *Pensées*," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 32 (2001): 139-81.

whether fear, wonder, or despair, could then serve as a catalyst for spiritual seeking. For example, if the interlocutor is bewildered by his own meekness when contemplating the two infinities, or disappointed by society's diversion as a remedy to anxiety, the assumption is that he will begin to doubt his current reference points for happiness and salvation. This is where Pascal inserts an alternative solution: rather than perpetuating the same cycle of anxiety and disappointment, one can learn to confront the aporia of one's existence. If for Montaigne philosophy (at least in its digested form) is a viable solution to the question of human suffering, for Pascal it remains a temporary measure, analogous to those purgatives that deliver medicine while needing to be expelled.[101]

Scientific experience and the relevance of habitus *and embodied custom.*

By now it should be clearer that early modern medical therapeutics, and more generally the experimental sciences of the time, presented a powerful challenge to the authority-driven belief systems that claimed to know best for the patient. Although Pascal appeals to tradition by offering an array of spiritual exercises to turn the heart of his interlocutor, he demands at the same time that the interlocutor verify *for himself* a deeper, unapparent truth. When Pascal does allude to the authority of medicine it is to poke fun at our persistent belief in false, outdated theories handed down through tradition. The most pointed example of this is Pascal's mention of new theories concerning blood circulation: "Lorsqu'on est accoutumé à se servir de mauvaises raisons pour prouver les effets de la nature, on ne veut plus recevoir les bonnes lorsqu'elles sont découvertes. L'exemple qu'on en donna fut sur la circulation du sang, pour rendre raison pourquoi la veine enfle

[101] The famous metaphor belongs to Sextus Empiricus. See Martha Nussbaum, "Sceptic Purgatives: Disturbance and the Life Without Belief," in *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, 280–315 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

au-dessous de la ligature." (LG 627) Like elsewhere in the *Pensées*, Pascal presents a complex phenomenon that might cozen its observers, and instead of colluding with the common interpretations of his day, he implies that we must look beneath the surface for its true causes. The discovery of true causes, however, is no guarantee that the majority of us will reform our *sentiment* of the first principles. Often, we resist new knowledge because it upsets our customary ways of seeing the world. Should our present worldview collapse into contradiction or void, we would then need to revise our methods for arriving at truth. Medicine is a prime example of the need to peer beyond the carapace of obvious signs and undertake a dynamic, uncharted investigation of primary causes. Too often in early modern medicine outward signs were attributed inaccurate causes, even after the true causes had been found—and this was particularly true in Pascal's time when methods of empirical observation were just in their infancy. Beyond the practical dangers of failing to adapt one's understanding to new, more accurate information, the greatest danger for Pascal was decidedly spiritual; for if we are *that* resistant to accommodating the true causes in the meager field of anatomy, how much more resistant might we be to the true causes of our salvation, if we have no compelling reason to believe in God. This latter scenario, for Pascal, represents the greatest illness of all.

That we should look to the science of medicine to provide us with a model for understanding spiritual seeking might seem far-fetched; and yet the apologist himself relies on certain aspects of religious tradition that have a clear parallel in medical therapeutics. The hermeneutical process involved in the diagnosis of disease offers a particularly compelling example for the religious seeker. Just as the physician must rely

in some measure on the theoretical and practical knowledge tried and tested in past medical circuits, the religious seeker needs traditions and texts handed down from the Church as the context in which to begin cultivating faith. The apologist declares this to have been true for himself, and uses it as an argument for embodying traditional religious forms: "— Si ce discours vous plaît et vous semble fort, sachez qu'il est fait par un homme qui s'est mis à genoux auparavant et après, pour prier cet être infini et sans parties, auquel il soumet tout le sien, de se soumettre aussi le vôtre pour votre propre bien et pour sa gloire, et qu'ainsi la force s'accorde avec cette bassesse." (LG 397) Addressing his skeptical interlocutor, the apologist admits having gotten down on his knees to pray, well before he had any personal experience of the god he was praying to, thereby implying that devotion and ritual can in fact precede the experience of faith. Faith, for Pascal, is not a given; it comes only after having appropriated certain religious rituals in a bodily way.

On quite another level, just as the physician must develop a pristine-enough "mental sight" to infer the true causes of disease, the seeker must properly discern the "raisons des effets," in order to distinguish between true power and its mere appearance. As Pascal iterates in his theory of the "raisons des effets," many of us entirely misconstrue the causes of something being true: "Il est donc vrai de dire que tout le monde est dans l'illusion car encore que les opinions du people soient saines, elles ne le sont pas dans sa tête, car il pense que la vérité est où elle n'est pas. La vérité est bien dans leurs opinions, mais non pas au point où ils se figurent. Il est vrai qu'il faut honorer les gentilshommes, mais non pas parce que la naissance est un avantage effectif, etc." (LG 85) As Pascal makes clear in this passage, the act of honoring a *gentilhomme* poses no

problem in and of itself; in fact, it is better to comply with this custom. The problem lies in most people's mistaken view that a quality inherent to the *gentilhomme* should cause us to honor him, whereas really we ought to honor him because the custom is thus. True power resides in the act of honoring, in the custom itself, rather than in its object. Therefore, if we do not discover for ourselves the real reasons behind the effects of our body and behavior, we risk becoming the pawns of social and religious custom, which could have otherwise worked powerfully on our behalf. Custom, in other words, has to be embodied *intelligently* if it is to be of any help at all.

The parallel does not stop there: just as the physician must take into account a larger collection of cases to gain understanding of a disease's behavior and its potential cure, so too the religious seeker must consider the larger organism of which he is a part in order to carry out his proper function. As Pascal conceives of it, the larger body takes the form of one's culture and country, human civilization at large, and the community of Christian believers bound together in the Holy Trinity. In religious terms, he refers to our dependence on "l'âme entière," evoking the metaphorical body of Christ who loved each member so much as to provide a direct conduit to God. Of all the members he writes: "leur béatitude aussi bien que leur devoir consist[ent] à consentir à la conduite de l'âme entière à qui ils appartiennent, qui les aime mieux qu'ils ne s'aiment eux-mêmes." (LG 341) In less religious terms, Pascal writes of the necessity for each individual to be mindful of the whole social and civil community of which he is a part: "Il faut tendre au général, et la pente vers soi est le commencement de tout désordre, en guerre, en police, en économie, dans le corps particulier de l'homme. / La volonté est donc dépravée. Si les membres des communautés naturelles et civiles tendent au bien du corps, les

communautés elles-mêmes doivent tendre à un autre corps plus général dont elles sont membres. L'on doit donc tendre au général." (LG 397) In both of the above examples, what is at stake is the harmony of part and whole, the logic being that no one person will find lasting peace if the whole structure is not well attended to. At the same time, the whole will not be satisfied until each individual has found its proper function, harkening back to a typically Platonic worldview. The hermeneutical move toward religious equanimity is thus double, requiring that we attend to both part and whole, particular and universal, on the path to salvation.

This double move mirrors precisely the visualization exercise of the double infinity featured in the "Disproportion de l'homme." The apologist asks us to imagine ourselves suspended between the infinitely small and the infinitely vast, each unknowable by nature: "Car enfin qu'est-ce qu'un homme dans la nature ? Un néant à l'égard de l'infini, un tout à l'égard du néant, un milieu entre rien et tout, infiniment éloigné de comprendre les extrêmes." (LG 185) One must at once account for the most minor fragments of one's own experience, coming as close as possible to nothingness, *and* acknowledge the complexity and vastness of the entire universe. In other words: we need to investigate what is most personal – our bodies and our histories – while paying heed to the governing forces of our collective experience. To think that one is separate from the whole is, for Pascal, the greatest misprision of all, not to mention the root of all human illness. Here the image of "le corps plein de membres pensants" takes on its full value. As Pierre Magnard notes with regard to the *Pensées*, the totality must always take precedent over each individual part in order for the body to remain in good health. Custom might have us believe that the body is nothing more than a machine that, when propelled by the

egocentric force of *amour-propre*, separates itself from the wisdom of the greater good; but this Cartesian model of the body as pure machine requires further nuance in the case of Pascal. Magnard elaborates: "Le corps n'est pas en lui-même une machine ; la machine est un mode du corps, la spontanéité en est un autre. Sous ce rapport, le corps est une structure centrée, dont tous les membres n'ont de vie que par l'ensemble. Cette primauté du tout sur les parties donne son statut à la notion de « membre ». Les membres ne vivent que pour le corps ; à prétendre vivre chacun pour soi, ils dépérissent et le corps finit par mourir."[102] The view of the whole, as Magnard suggests, is of primary importance. But this view need not be understood in disjunction with any of the constituent parts. Each organism, Pascal reminds us, has an organizing principle, whether it is the physical body or the Holy Trinity, which, for him, is the heart. Magnard sums this up neatly, making reference to the new theories of blood circulation that were, as we have shown, on the apologist's mind:

> Qui dit corps dit totalité organisée, système de vicariance et de réciprocité, présence de toutes les parties les unes aux autres. Cet organisme n'offre-t-il pas un organe central qui en assure l'unité ? Comment ne pas penser au « cœur », dont l'approche anatomique avec le *De motu cordis* de Harvey en 1628, ne fait que conforter la symbolique, qui remonte à l'Ancien Testament ? Superposant modèle astronomique du système héliocentrique et modèle politique de la monarchie au modèle physiologique de la circulation du sang, le cœur, principe d'animation du vivant, soleil et roi, symbolise le Dieu unique dont tout dépend.[103]

Although Magnard's interpretation takes a turn for the political, the most important element for our purpose is his mention of medical and astronomical models in conjunction with Pascal's conception of the heart. Medicine, and science more generally,

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[102] Pierre Magnard, "Un corps plein de membres pensants," in *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 190:2 (April-June 2000): 197.

[103] Ibid, 198.

could not be more intimately bound up with philosophy and religion as it is here. *Le cœur* provides the key to the hermeneutical enigma of part and whole, sickness and health, suffering and salvation. The dual realities of health and sickness, of the path and its attainment, are thus in a sense no longer dual.[104]

But in order to arrive at such reconciliation, we need to pass through a certain skepticism of customary beliefs. Custom, though pernicious in its blindly accepted form, has tremendous therapeutic potential in both Montaigne and Pascal. We need only recall those moments in the *Pensées* where the failure of logical persuasion precipitates a return to embodied ritual, such as at the end of the Wager. Nowhere is this more explicit than in this pithy explanation in LG 707 of the *Pensées*: "Car on s'accoutume ainsi aux vertus intérieures par ces habitudes extérieures." Pierre Bourdieu, in his *Méditations pascaliennes*, paints a rather sobering picture of the role of custom, in the guise of *habitus*, a term that has come to encapsulate the vast web of interdependent conditions that continuously give rise to one's being-in-the-world. If we admit, with Bourdieu, that we learn through the body ("Nous apprenons par corps"), we must acknowledge our extreme vulnerability in the world, given that "le corps est (…) exposé, mis en jeu, en danger dans le monde, affronté au risque de l'émotion, de la blessure, de la souffrance, parfois de la mort, donc obligé de prendre au sérieux le monde."[105] Bourdieu is articulating a profoundly Pascalian worldview, particularly where our status as "automate" is concerned: "Les preuves ne convainquent que l'esprit, la coutume fait nos preuves les plus fortes et les plus crues. Elle incline l'automate, qui entraîne l'esprit sans

[104] For a more detailed analysis of the "coming together" of opposites in the hermeneutical enterprise of the *Pensées*, see Force, *L'herméneutique chez Pascal*, esp. 56-62.

[105] Pierre Bourdieu, *Méditations pascaliennes* (Paris: Seuil, 1997), 168.

qu'il y pense. Qui a démontré qu'il sera demain jour et que nous mourrons, et qu'y a-t-il de plus cru ? C'est donc la coutume qui nous en persuade. C'est elle qui fait tant de chrétiens, c'est elle qui fait les Turcs, les païens, les métiers, les soldats, etc." (LG 671) Custom works directly on the body ("Elle incline l'automate"), which not only influences but trains ("entraîne") our mind without our mind's willing it. Thus, not only does it determine our most basic human beliefs about the cycles of day and night, and of life and death, but it inserts itself into the social fabric of each person's time. It has the radical potential to differentiate between races and religions (the "chrétiens" and the "Turcs" are the salient examples here), partitioning the human population off into different belief systems about suffering and salvation. Pascal builds his argument for the power of custom essentially to underline his initial point: that intellectual proofs are relatively weak for convincing a person of anything, because they penetrate the intellect alone, whereas custom, by working on the body, has the power to "incline" an entire life in one direction or another.

The perfidious quality of custom comes from the fact that without our knowing it, and thus without our consent, society brands us each as a particular type of individual, with a particular set of meaningful characteristics that shape our experience of self and world. Bourdieu is explicit on this point when discussing Pascal's *Pensées*: "L'ordre social s'inscrit dans les corps à travers cette confrontation permanente, plus ou moins dramatique, mais qui fait toujours une grande place à l'affectivité et, plus précisément, aux transactions affectives avec l'environnement social."[106] Bourdieu goes on to cite Foucault's work on the normalizing effect of discipline proliferated by institutions, in addition to Sartre's nimble phrase, the "violence inerte," exercised by social and

[106] Ibid, 168-9.

economic structures, in order to alert his reader to the possible insidiousness of *habitus*. Pascal no doubt recognized the quiet power of custom and *habitus* and cautioned his reader against giving too much power to the foundations of custom. In this, he parts ways with Montaigne's respect for custom as inherently meaningful: "Montaigne a tort. La coutume ne doit être suivie que parce qu'elle est coutume, et non parce qu'elle soit raisonnable ou juste." (LG 469) In a typically circular argument, Pascal asserts that the value of custom lies only in its status as custom—that is, as something practiced repeatedly across time with the power of history to back it up.

Despite the obvious risks associated with the belief that custom contains some inherent truth behind its appearances, Pascal acknowledges with considerable optimism the positive potential of *habitus* to incline an individual towards faith. If custom is responsible for our *dis*belief, it is equally responsible for our belief, as Pascal is keen to show in the exercises meant to convince his skeptical interlocutor. Custom is useful in part because the targeted reader of the *Pensées* is the *libertin*, the man of the world, and perhaps the most dogged of all skeptics, reluctant even to acknowledge what stakes await him in the final question of death. In all his fantasy and fustian, it would be difficult to convince such a skeptic of the urgency of that question, and ever more difficult to bring him to a state of seeking, if it were not for some of the practical gestures and postures that the apologist enjoins him to adopt. Pascal uses images and actions already familiar to his interlocutor to modify the interlocutor's relationship to them, in the hopes of awakening religious sentiment. As we shall see in the chapters that follow, many of the exercises meant to cultivate faith are prescriptions for embodiment itself—embodiment of certain customs. "Custom is our nature," declared Pascal, borrowing the phrase from Montaigne;

but his statement is only valid if the heart has absorbed custom on a sub-rational, pre-verbal level. Pierre Force is right to remind us that "when Pascal identifies the heart as the organ that perceives the first principles, there is something inherently bodily and physical about this perception."[107] The exercises that involve custom all have a strongly physical component to them, and, in a certain respect, they are medical as much as they are philosophical or religious.

Understanding habitus *as the "whole" and the necessity of the imagination.*

Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of the individual *in situ*, sewn together by circumstance and custom, offers a helpful perspective for considering the diagnostic strategies common to the philosopher and the physician. Just as we noted the hermeneutical necessity of considering the whole before its constituent parts, in the *Pensées* the apologist-cum-physician diagnoses and treats the interlocutor through an apprehension of the totality of the person and his "milieu." A similar way of understanding this milieu as the common ground between philosophy and medicine is Jackie Pigeaud's exploration of the frontier between the two disciplines, particularly in his work on the poetics of the body in ancient medicine. In the two passages I cite below, Pigeaud describes what happens when the physician considers the patient in his totality and thus leans into the practice of philosophy: "[Les médecins parlent] en essayant de comprendre l'homme comme une totalité vivante, une ou duelle, à l'intérieur d'un milieu. C'est en cela qu'ils s'avancent vers la philosophie. […] Ils créent un objet nouveau, par le seul fait qu'ils parlent en praticiens. Ce ne sont pas des médecins qui « font de la philosophie ». Ce sont des gens qui partent de leur science pour traiter des problèmes philosophiques essentiels ; mais le

[107] Force, "Pascal and philosophical method," 224.

résultat est tout autre que de la philosophie."[108] The ancient physician's vision of the patient as a "totalité vivante" leads him to prioritize the very same questions that were considered central to Classical philosophy. However, the physician does not become a philosopher in the Classical sense; nor is the result of his investigation philosophy proper ("le résultat est tout autre que de la philosophie"). By leaning into philosophical considerations – linked eminently to the individual as part of a whole – the physician creates a tertiary force, which Pigeaud refers to as "myth," that straddles the traditional disciplines of medicine and philosophy. Pigeaud explains this further:

> Je pense que cela relève du mythe ; et je crois que ce qui fait le mythe, en l'espèce, c'est justement l'alliance de la médecine et de la philosophie ; le passage de l'une à l'autre, qui crée un être mixte, dont on perd l'authenticité si on n'y voit que de la médecine bâtarde ou de la sous-philosophie. Bien évidemment, cette médicine dont je parle est une pseudo-science. En elle-même, dans son discours *rigoureusement médical*, elle est souvent fabulatrice. Mais ce n'est pas en ce sens que je veux parler de mythe ; le mythe est cette pensée spécifique que produit un médecin quand il veut faire le point entre le corps qui est son domaine, et l'âme qu'il soit dualiste ou moniste.[109]

The myth for Pigeaud is that thought produced by the physician whenever he ventures to clarify ("faire le point") the relationship between the body, his domain of expertise, and the soul. The "passage" and "alliance" between medicine and philosophy renders this moment of perception possible. Yet the myth here does not have anything to do with inventing stories or fables (as this "pseudoscience" of medicine is nevertheless wont to do); the myth that Pigeaud is encapsulating has very much to do with the imagination, the capacity of the physician to stretch his expert understanding of the body into a domain relatively foreign to him, the soul. It is, I believe, this leap of the imagination that

[108] Pigeaud, *Poétiques du corps*, 511.

[109] Ibid, 511.

Pigeaud is referring to when he mentions "cette pensée spécifique que produit un médecin."

Pigeaud's myth finds a close parallel in Pascal's conception of the imagination, the faculty best equipped to perform the philosophical exercises that surpass the reaches of our direct sensory experience. This time, rather than beginning from the perspective of medicine, our sensory experience of the world is the starting point for leaping into the unknown reaches of the universe.[110] In the very act of trying to understand the totality of a person, like the infinity of the universe, we are required to move between the constituent parts, navigating the dialectical tension between extremes. Hermeneutics of the human body requires myth and imagination in order to make the leap to the fact of possessing a soul, and then back again to the fact of having a body. Imagination is what helps us to creatively extend our experience, making us less and less machines in the Cartesian sense. In the words of John D. Lyons in his work *Before Imagination*: "Instead of a rigid, "geometrical" (or Cartesian) dualism between the physical and the spiritual parts of the human being, Pascal emphasized the overlapping, much less tidy, powers that reside in imagination, the way of thinking that fills itself with the representations of physical experience while still being within the mind."[111] Lyons makes a case for the Pascalian imagination that closely mirrors Pigeaud's conception of myth, wherein some thought process (like the "representations" Lyons refers to) makes it possible to penetrate otherwise inaccessible experience—be it the infinity of the physical universe or the immateriality of the human soul.

[110] Pigeaud adopts the perspective of the physician and does not concern himself in the passage I cited with the inverse scenario: those philosophers who take on typically medical questions.

[111] Lyons, *Before Imagination: Embodied Thought from Montaigne to Rousseau*, 116.

Pascal's famous exercise of contemplating the two infinities enacts a myth of sorts, in the sense that our physical body gains access to the imperceptible reaches of the universe, just as our soul does to God—two experiences outside the realm of direct sensory experience. In the same passage where the apologist has us contemplate the universe's grandeur,[112] he interrupts a dramatic accumulation of third-person imperative clauses ("Que l'homme contemple"; "qu'il éloigne sa vue"; "Qu'il regarde"; "qu'il s'étonne") to insert the imagination as the very tool we need to extend our understanding beyond immediate sensory input: "Mais si notre vue s'arrête là, que l'imagination passe outre, elle se lassera plutôt de concevoir que la nature de fournir." (LG 185) This passage would appear to establish a dialectical opposition between the senses ("notre vue") and the imagination, implying that the imagination is separate from the body. This is then exacerbated by the language of "passing beyond" ("passe outre") in the above passage and, analogously, the "passing between" ("le passage de l'une à l'autre") the material and the immaterial that Pigeaud describes in the creation of myth. However, the imagination fills in wherever the senses fall short, and thus acts as a sort of bridge between what we might call bodily experience and spiritual truths.

Whether we speak of the leap between body and soul in terms of thought (Pigeaud) or imagination (Pascal), opposing either of these terms with the body and its

[112] The entire passage reads: "Que l'homme contemple donc la nature entière dans sa haute et pleine majesté, qu'il éloigne sa vue des objets bas qui l'environnent. Qu'il regarde cette éclatante lumière mise comme une lampe éternelle pour éclairer l'univers, que la terre lui paraisse comme un point au pris du vaste tour que cet astre décrit, et qu'il s'étonne de ce que ce vaste tour lui-même n'est qu'une pointe très délicate à l'égard de celui que ces astres qui roulent dans le firmament embrassent. Mais si notre vue s'arrête là, que l'imagination passe outre, elle se lassera plutôt de concevoir que la nature de fournir. Tout le monde visible n'est qu'un trait imperceptible dans l'ample sein de la nature. Nulle idée n'en approche ; nous avons beau enfler nos conception au-delà des espaces imaginables, nous n'enfantons que des atomes, au prix de la réalité des choses. C'est une sphère infinie dont le centre est partout, la circonférence nulle part. Enfin c'est le plus grand caractère sensible de la toute-puissance de Dieu que notre imagination se perde dans cette pensée." (LG 185)

sense perceptions is erroneous. Most writers in the early modern period did not view the sundry experiences of thought, emotion, sensation, and perception as tied exclusively to the body or the mind. It was not an either-or supposition; rather, the mind and its attendant qualities were considered participants in the subject's embodied experience. As Lyons and others have pointed out, the activity of the imagination could not be limited to the intellect alone. In fact, it was considered closer to the body and physicality in general than it is perhaps today. The imagination served as the primordial "bridge" between the mind and body[113] and helped to show that there did not yet exist any practical distinction between the domains of medicine and philosophy. Lyons takes the example of practicing for death in the *Essais* and carefully distinguishes between a common understanding of the imagination as thoughts, ideas, conceptions, and opinions and the imagination that is responsible for transforming abstract potentialities into personal, felt experiences. He describes Montaigne's philosophical death exercise as one of attempting to "convert the abstraction of death into something that is concrete and present."[114] Imagination has a particularizing quality that renders distant events or ideas personal and immediate. Immediately after describing this particularizing quality, Lyons goes on to suggest that the imagination, while reconciling mind and body, actually implies the superiority of mind over body, since it is a capacity that allows us to "absent" ourselves from our bodies.[115] This I consider to be an overstatement. Certainly, there is the risk that our bodies will never catch up with the imagination and that we will confuse the representation of something for its felt and perceived reality. Pascal makes this case when

[113] Lyons, *Before Imagination*, 35.

[114] Ibid, 35.

[115] Ibid, 36.

he laments, "les hommes prennent souvent leur imagination pour leur cœur : et ils croient être convertis dès qu'il pensent à se convertir." (LG 756) Here, Pascal designates the imagination as a faculty that "thinks." But this is the same author who credits the imagination with producing paleness and sweat on the body when he has us imagine a great philosopher standing on the edge of a precipice. In the latter example, the imagination wins out over logical reasoning ("quoique sa raison le convainque de sa sûreté, son imagination prévaudra") and produces a passion – fear – which displays itself on the body's surface for everyone to see: "Plusieurs n'en sauraient soutenir la pensée sans pâlir et suer." (LG 41) This is a crucial point, and one that is closely aligned with Montaigne's observation that the imagination is responsible for many of our bodily states. In fact the image of the philosopher on a plank is borrowed from a similar passage in the *Essais*, in which Montaigne distinguishes between knowing through reason and knowing through the imagination, concluding that the latter has a greater influence on our disposition and behavior. Montaigne proposes the following exercise: "Qu'on loge un philosophe dans une cage de menus filets de fer clair-semez, qui soit suspendue au hault des tours nostre Dame de Paris ; il verra par raison evidente, qu'il est impossible qu'il en tombe ; et si ne se sçauroit garder (…) que la veue de cette haulteur extreme, ne l'espouvante et ne le transisse. (…) Qu'on jette une poultre entre ces deux tours d'une grosseur telle qu'il nous la faut à nous promener dessus, il n'y a sagesse philosophique de si grande fermeté, qui puisse nous donner courage d'y marcher comme nous ferions si elle estoit à terre." (II:12, "Apologie de Raimond de Sebonde," p. 631) Montaigne then reports having tried the experiment on himself in the mountains near his home and having confronted the very same sort of bodily fear: "…je ne pouvoy souffrir la veue de cette

profondeur infinie, sans horreur et tremblement de jarrets et de cuisses." (p. 632) In both Pascal's version and Montaigne's, the philosopher's wisdom is poised in opposition to the embodied force of the imagination. Something about the body's knowledge holds sway in either case. Pascal simply lifts the scene from the familiar environs of Paris and places his philosopher on a precipice overlooking the vast unknown. The effect, while perhaps more disorienting, is largely the same: fear in its bodily form takes over logical reasoning—a prime argument for why we cannot leave the development of virtue or faith to reason alone.

Montaigne's chapter "De la force de l'imagination" offers similar testimony of the power of the imagination, drawing upon a colorful variety of examples, including esoteric cures, male arousal, and a woman who fell hysterically ill thinking she had swallowed a pin. Montaigne's most vivid realization of the imagination's power comes at the chapter's opening, where he describes his tendency to catch any disease that he sets out to study. For him, it is hardly surprising that the imagination could produce bodily ills of its own. "Je ne trouve pas estrange," he says, "qu'elle [l'imagination] donne et les fievres, et la mort, à ceux qui la laissent faire, et qui luy applaudissent." (I:20, "De la force de l'imagination," p. 99) The verb "donner" in this passage is significant, because it locates in the imagination the same capacity to directly cause illness as exists in the body. There is no suspension or ambiguity between cause and effect, between the stimulus and the body's response. Only a mysterious alchemy, transcending opposition altogether, can be said to create the conditions for illness. The leap, then, between felt experience and mental representations should be understood less as a passage per se (which would imply separation) and more as Pigeaud's "être mixte." Imagination, like custom and the related

concept *habitus*, draws our attention back to the hybrid, syncretistic quality of human experience, granting us greater access to the intersection of body and mind, or, in the words of Montaigne, to "l'estroite cousture de l'esprit et du corps s'entre-communiquants leurs fortunes." (I:20, "De la force de l'imagination," p. 107)

Conclusion.

As Pigeaud suggests, the fluid boundary between medicine and philosophy depends not on some tacit agreement between the two disciplines to combine conceptual tools or adapt certain practices across the fields, but on the intention of the practitioner to account for the totality of a person's experience and milieu. To properly account for this totality, one needs to rely in some measure on the imagination to bridge the seemingly disparate spheres of experience, such as body and soul, or the particular and the universal. Imagination therefore has a hermeneutic function and works both to particularize general truths and to draw analogies between different cases and examples. In the most common medical practices of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century France, the physician was charged with documenting and interpreting the signs and symptoms of a patient's illness. Already, we see that the relationship between the patient and physician could be considered "philosophical" in the sense that the physician's task of restoring his patient to good health required a dialogue in order to expose the data that was not readable on the body's surface. Furthermore, the dialogical process revealed the container or "milieu" (Pigeaud) of a person's wider experience, and it was no longer a question of treating a particular body part or localized ailment, but attending to the entire person and his history.

The dialogue concerning symptoms in Montaigne occurs largely within a closed loop of the author's own experience. Rather than implicating a third party in the process of self-diagnosis, he prefers to use the writing itself as a possible interlocutor and develops a relationship to his body that reflects a Hippocratic, and even more so, Socratic, relationship between a physician and his patient. The reader is acknowledged only secondarily, for although party to Montaigne's process of auto-description, he does not take part in the interpretation of the author's body. Readers of the *Essais* can only receive the author's interpretation at his word, for ultimately Montaigne is the only party who knows, in a visceral way, what method or cure is working. And because he is not interested in generalizing his experience for the benefit of all, the traditional relationship between the part and the whole needs to be framed anew—as one, perhaps, that exists between the author's present self and the cumulative narrative of all his past selves recorded in the *Essais*.

In Pascal, however, the notion of a spiritual cure comes already equipped with the backdrop of authority and tradition. Interpretation of *dis*-ease occurs within the framework of a prayer to God or a dialogue between the apologist and the skeptical interlocutor. Pascal is, at least initially, more concerned than Montaigne about the individual's belonging to the whole and the harmonious functioning between part and whole. Knowing God, like knowing the soul or knowing infinity, is the ultimate hermeneutical enigma; for how can one possibly leap into something so disproportionate to one's present experience? The key, for Pascal, is recognizing that the cure is already living inside of us, but it takes some mechanical work of the part of the individual to enliven the cure within him.

In both authors, the centrality of description, dialogue, and interpretation springs from an understanding that not all of the conditions for disease live on the body's surface. The hermeneutical task of the physician is precisely one of reading and decoding the body's signs, much as a philologist or philosopher takes up the art of reading and deciphering the meaning of a discourse, idea, or text. However, the physicians that occupy the space of myth in Pigeaud's analysis (primarily Hippocrates, Galen, and much later, the eighteenth-century Pierre-Jean-Georges Cabanis) are concerned with more than just bodily signs in the classical sense. They interrogate the soul as much as they do the body and thus intermingle medicine and morality in such a way as to attenuate the inherent rigor of either and obfuscate the boundaries between them. In marginal cases like these, Pigeaud argues for a new genre of literature altogether, which he calls "une littérature mixte, une literature médico-philosophique."[116] This, I would argue, is an accurate description of the respective projects of Montaigne and Pascal.

Not only did certain medical writers meander into questions of the soul, philosophy too had a history of investigating the body as a prerequisite to attaining wisdom. Philosophy in the Scholastic era, however, substituted the body as an object worthy of study with the object of thought, as though the mind were separate from and superior to the workings of the body. My contention throughout this chapter has been that certain early modern philosophers, such as Montaigne and Pascal, retain their interest in the body because they are attempting to offer a hybrid vision of individual experience. Moreover, their philosophies were *therapeutic* in intent and so took up the promise of certain medical methodologies in order to restore balance to the whole person. In the

[116] Pigeaud, *Poétiques du corps*, 510.

following chapters I will explore in greater depth the ways in which Montaigne and Pascal relate to the body in service of philosophical practice.

If there is a philosophical precedent to the therapeutic practices common to both authors, ancient Skepticism is probably the best approximation. Montaigne and Pascal both advocated putting one's trust in individual experience rather than in the authority of tradition or theory, which meant radically breaking away from certain accepted norms of medical and philosophical belief systems. Although these authors were in no way immune to the dehiscence of certain ancient traditions of medicine and philosophy in the early modern period, they each partook in a radically individual hermeneutical enterprise. While it is true that Montaigne borrowed vocabulary and methodology from the major medical philosophies of his day, he reappropriated constructs such as *exemplum* and experience in a way that made sense to his particular bodily and spiritual ills. In making those constructs his own, he transformed an otherwise sclerotic system of diagnosis into a lissome *therapeia* to heal himself.

For Pascal, the hermeneutics of signs, or figures, is a therapeutic practice in its own right. Rather than *proving* the existence of God to his skeptical interlocutor (which would have been impossible in any case), Pascal "renounc[ed] demonstration in favour of hermeneutics,"[117] as one scholar puts it, as he transitioned from mathematics to religion. The signs he interprets, though religious in nature, are not abstract; they are as embodied as the symptoms of the stone detailed in the personal *historia* of Montaigne. For one, they are embodied historically through the mediating presence of Christ: according to Catholic doctrine, it was because of Christ's bodily sacrifice that mortals could access the divine

[117] Jean Khalfa, "Pascal's theory of knowledge," 139.

grace of God. And secondly, they are embodied personally in the apologist himself: Pascal claims that through gestures of piety he, a former non-believer, was able to cultivate genuine faith. The skillful embodiment of certain religious customs was to Pascal what the primacy of *experimenta* was to the medical practitioners of his day.

In considering each author's hermeneutical approach to disease and healing, we cannot help but press up against the skeptical undercurrent of their respective projects. If each author begins by excoriating many of the medical and scientific practices of his day, it is because he has in mind a radically alternative approach to confirming and disconfirming truth. For Montaigne, that approach entails using his own body as the subject of philosophical and medical experimentation; he needs to *taste* his own temperaments and humors, and then discern for himself what techniques or habits are necessary to return to a state of health. In Pascal, the approach is similar, though moored to a more authority-driven framework. While the apologist is vehemently skeptical of most worldly cares, he *is* concerned with the proper interpretation of a tradition that has come down to him from written authority. Despite his putative disregard for all things bodily or material, Pascal is writing for the body; he writes to bring himself and his readers to a plane of genuine spiritual experience, *in and through the body*. His skepticism of appearances, for example, leads him to more wholeheartedly investigate the actual effects of something like religious ritual on one's bodily experience. Direct experience is always favored to beliefs we might hold about the world. And by this fact alone, the body is inextricably linked to the seeker's discovery of truth.

Chapter 2

Dis-ease and the Somatic Metaphor

Introduction.

As Jackie Pigeaud attempted to characterize those liminal physicians whose inquiry into the patient's total milieu engaged them in a philosophical enterprise, in this chapter I will engage the same comparative structure, but from the opposing angle: the role of philosophers who meander into medical territory by asking themselves questions usually reserved for physicians, such as "what is health and well-being?" or "why are we ill?" The terms health and illness usually denote a physical state of affairs, but they also have a long history of appearing in metaphorical guises, particularly in the Hellenistic philosophical literature.[118] Montaigne and Pascal, along with many others in the early modern period, have their own ways of using the terms in a philosophical context and frequently speak of illnesses beyond sheer physical dysfunction. There are some obvious examples, such as Montaigne's well-known assertion that our most vicious "illness" is our contempt for our very being: "Et de nos maladies la plus sauvage, c'est mespriser

[118] See especially: Brooke Holmes, "Body, Soul, and the Medical Analogy In Plato," in *When Worlds Elide: Classics, Politics, Culture*, ed. J. Peter Euben et al., 345-85 (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2010); Idem, *The Symptom and the Subject: The Emergence of the Physical Body in Ancient Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Jonardon Ganeri et al., ed., *Philosophy as Therapeia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Martha Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Julia Annas, "Philosophical Therapy, Ancient and Modern," in *Bioethics: Ancient Themes in Contemporary Issues*, ed. Mark G. Kuczewski et al., 109-27 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000); Thomas McEvilley, *The Shape of Ancient Thought: Comparative Studies in Greek and Indian Philosophies* (New York: Allsworth Press, 2002); Pedro Laín Entralgo, *The Therapy of the Word in Classical Antiquity*, trans. L. J. Rather et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970); Joel Warren Lidz, "Medicine as Metaphor in Plato," *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 20 (1995): 527-41; Ludwig Edelstein, "The Relation of Ancient Philosophy to Medicine," in *Ancient Medicine: Selected Papers of Ludwig Edelstein*, ed. Owsei Temkin et al., 349-66 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1967); James Longrigg, *Greek Rational Medicine: Philosophy and Medicine from Alcmaeon to the Alexandrians* (London: Routledge, 1993); and André-Jean Voelke, *La philosophie comme thérapie de l'âme* (Paris: Cerf, 1993).

nostre estre." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1160). Or Pascal's summary statement that "orgueil" and "concupiscence" constitute our "principal illnesses": "Vos maladies principales sont l'orgueil qui vous soustrait de Dieu, la concupiscence qui vous attache à la terre." (LG 139) But there are in fact many more examples of "spiritual" illness in Montaigne and Pascal that deserve further nuance; many of them are neither a blanket reappropriation of the ancient medical analogy (i.e. spiritual health is not simply conceived of as an absence of destructive passions, such as fear, grief, and anger, as it was for many Ancients) nor do they always make explicit reference to medical categories per se. Often, the author's presentation of spiritual illness bypasses traditional medical categories altogether and describes in a more diffuse manner an emotional or psychological *dis*-ease to which philosophy and religion are poised to respond. Nevertheless, the body remains ever-present; through the use of somatic metaphors both authors allude to illness that is neither properly medical nor purely spiritual. And as we shall see, spiritual illness, in contrast to physical dysfunction, is rarely considered separate from its cure. Becoming spiritually well, for these two authors, is never a question of eradication; it is a question of *transformation*, based on familiarization and appropriation.

It will be helpful to begin by simply asking what Montaigne and Pascal meant when using the language of illness and health to describe various psycho-emotional states. When mental suffering is at stake, are the terms health and illness strictly metaphorical or is there some way in which the author's description of "mental" experience actually implicates the body? Before we set out to answer this question, let us review a few critical approaches to Montaigne and Pascal that, while targeting slightly

different uses of metaphor in early modern philosophy, will open the discussion to *analogical ways of thinking* about philosophy and the mind that will help to frame the relationship between body and mind later on in this chapter.

Critical approaches to analogy in Montaigne and Pascal.

In contrast to the amount of attention the medical analogy has received in studies of Hellenistic philosophy, relatively few scholars have pursued the implications of the analogy in early modern authors, even in such authors as Montaigne and Pascal who give medicine and the body a priority role in their philosophical practices. Jean Starobinski and, more recently, Stephen Pender are two scholars who have explored the analogy in some depth in the works of Montaigne. Starobinski, himself a physician and once an intern at a psychiatric hospital, accords the body and medical discourse an almost primordial importance throughout his analysis of Montaigne's philosophy in *Montaigne en mouvement*. Those passages of the *Essais* in which Montaigne reflects on his own relationship to his body and on the relationship between his body and mind are given careful philological treatment by Starobinski, who considers Montaigne's alliance of body and mind, and of medicine and philosophy, to "establish an equivalence between the flow of life and the flow of text."[119] In his analysis, the analogy consists chiefly in realizing a unity of body (or life) and text, made possible through Montaigne's radical willingness to let his body speak for itself:

> The body-subject, such as it feels itself to be, demands a legitimacy superior to that of science's discourse on the body. Better yet, the enterprise of speaking the body (*dire le corps*) ends up in granting the body permission not only to express itself (*se dire*) (through the living

[119] Jean Starobinski, *Montaigne in Motion*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 180.

> voice, gestures, movements) but also to provide the necessary *metaphorical repertoire* [my emphasis] by means of which all the acts of thought will be represented in the writing of the book. To speak the body is, in a way, to return to the source, when so many objects – and, possibly, everything which can be spoken – are capable of being spoken by the body...[120]

The body, according to Starobinski, is the privileged vehicle for communication. The act of freely recording the voice, gestures, and movements of the body both encourages the body to further express itself in real life and constitutes the very means by which the author's thoughts become known. If "speaking the body" represents metaphorically "all the acts of thought," then the body becomes in some sense the best hermeneutical ally for the reader seeking to apprehend the internal life of the philosopher. In the same vein, the body's external signs are a vital ally for the physician who relies on dialogue and description to diagnose the patient's disease, often concealed from view by the body's own enclosure.[121] Through the "metaphorical repertoire" that bridges the immaterial realm and its material manifestation, the body is able to supply the same information as a patient's thoughts, words, or emotions. This cooperation between body and mind that Starobinski is so careful to set up also provides an inroad for understanding Montaigne's own opinions about the value of direct, personal experience, as opposed to knowledge passed down through tradition. Starobinski writes: "In the two realms that constitute man—body and soul—Montaigne is determined to heed the lesson of intimate and direct experience in preference to what the specialized *arts* have to say (and promise): for the

[120] Jean Starobinski, "The Body's Moment," trans. John A. Gallucci, *Yale French Studies* 64 (1983): 278.

[121] Though animal dissection had been practiced since Antiquity (Galen formulated many of his ideas about human anatomy based on such dissections), dissection of human bodies was a privileged and somewhat controversial practice in the early modern period. In 1543, Andreas Vesalius published his *De Humani Corporis Fabrica Libri Septem*, intended as a gross overhaul of Galenic anatomy, and presented for the first time a comprehensive visual aid for understanding the internal structure and function of the human body.

soul, theology and philosophy; and for the body, medicine."[122] Here Starobinski maintains the classic association of philosophy with the soul and medicine with the body, but in so doing makes a rather novel point: indeed, Montaigne often alludes to the traditional distribution of disciplines according to the mind and body, but this, for the purpose of validating the "lesson of intimate and direct experience" over what any of these disciplines have to say. He needs these categories of the "specialized arts" in order to effectively inveigh against the tyranny of specialized opinion. It is precisely his "intimate and direct experience" that will eventually show him that his body and mind cannot be assigned separate modes of care, as is the case in the last chapter of Book III ("De l'Experience"), to which Starobinski devotes most of his analysis.

Pender, for his part, concentrates more pointedly on the use of analogy in medical reasoning. Ancient medicine's reliance on metaphor is what renders it accessible to other, seemingly autonomous disciplines such as rhetoric and philosophy. He summarizes well the relationship between medicine and philosophy in Antiquity, particularly as it would resurface in early modern authors like Agrippa, Bacon, and Montaigne:

> Philosophy and medicine have a long history of mutual influence; not only do they traffic with one another in metaphor, some of the first 'scientific' treatments of epistemology, ontology, causality, and the philosophy of language were medical, and semiotics, of course, was developed and refined in classical thought. Ancient medicine is a repository of metaphors and methods applicable to history and political theory, literary criticism and ethics. In Plato, a healthy body is the primary analogue for both the 'good' human being and ideal justice; the skilled doctor is a model for the virtuous man; and the 'upright' soul clings to knowledge as "a sick man does to a doctor."[123]

Pender's nimble construction that joins medicine and philosophy as "traffic[king] with

[122] Starobinski, *Montaigne in motion*, 159.

[123] Stephen Pender, "Between Medicine and Rhetoric" *Early Science and Medicine* 10 (2005): 42-3.

one another in metaphor" is one that this chapter will take up with regard to the philosophical practices featured in Montaigne and Pascal. Although Pender's focus overall is on therapeutics and language (in line with the work of André-Jean Voelke[124]), rather than on therapeutics and bodily processes, his claim that "the 'cure of the soul' depends in part on terms and concepts developed and refined in medical thought"[125] will inform my close readings of those passages in Montaigne and Pascal that include medical-sounding guidelines for spiritual health. Pender argues that *analogy* and *exemplarity*, two terms borrowed from the rhetorical tradition, are what allow Montaigne to maintain the integrity of his personal experience (often by using an example from his own experience that contradicts the catalogue of generalizable *exempla* provided by medicine) while inscribing himself within the medical tradition (by subscribing still to those very terms). This we know to have been crucial to Montaigne's philosophy as a whole. The application of the general to the particular – or more accurately, the constant movement between the two – requires analogical reasoning to make sense of an individual's suffering within the greater whole. But as we saw in Chapter 1, the analogical relationship between part and whole breaks down significantly in the case of Montaigne, because the part (the author) is accorded unusual autonomy in relation to the whole.

Metaphor takes on a slightly different role in Pascal, if only because his references to the body are less explicitly linked to the medical tradition. The medical

[124] Voelke defined much of his work according to the following question: "la conception du langage défendue par un philosophe ancien permet-elle de mieux comprendre la manière dont il conçoit la fonction thérapeutique de la philosophie et de le distinguer sous ce rapport des autres philosophes anciens ?" (Voelke, *La philosophie comme thérapie de l'âme*, XV.)

[125] Pender, "Between Medicine and Rhetoric," 42.

analogy, here, must be taken as a bodily analogy, intended to communicate something of the spirit or soul, much as the body is capable of speaking "all the acts of thought" under the plume of Montaigne. Pierre Magnard, in an article entitled "Un corps plein de membres pensants," makes full use of the corporal metaphor in Pascal in order to contextualize the author's understanding of the individual in relation to Christian cosmology, inspired in part by Montaigne's dynamic and disjunctive vision of individuality. The analogy, according to Magnard, operates on these terms:

> Cette métaphore du corps est, dira-t-on, d'usage courant au XVII^{e} siècle. Cependant, à considérer son usage le plus commun, elle joue plus mécaniquement qu'organiquement, que l'on remonte à la constitution du modèle lui-même chez Harvey ou qu'on en éprouve l'illustration la plus célèbre avec Hobbes. Or, [chez Pascal] le corps apparaît comme un facteur de différenciation : ni les parties ne sont semblable entre elles, ni elles ne sont semblables au tout. L'originalité de la conception de Pascal mérite d'être soulignée et ici, comme sur bien des points, c'est à Montaigne qu'il faut se référer pour comprendre.[126]

If we agree with his claim that for Pascal the body is a vehicle for differentiation, both because its parts do not resemble one another and because they do not accord with the whole (here, meaning the body of Christ), then the chief purpose of any philosophical or religious intervention would be to overcome such differentiation—the very differentiation we know to be the primary symptom of spiritual "disease" since the Fall. The healthy body is one whose diverse members work together for the harmony of the whole. Indeed, the image of the church as a body – most notably in Saint Paul's Letters[127]

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[126] Pierre Magnard, "Un corps plein de membres pensants," *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Étranger* 190:2 (2000): 195.

[127] The metaphor of the church as the body of Christ that contains diverse, but interdependent members occurs throughout Saint Paul's Letters (especially in Ephesians and Corinthians). The image reflects the belief that each Christian has been incorporated into Christ and thus belongs to a coherent whole. For a more detailed commentary on the bodily metaphor in Saint Paul see Andrew T. Lincoln, "Ephesians," in *The Cambridge Companion to St. Paul*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 133-40, esp. 137. Paul's use of the bodily metaphor has been traced to the Stoic speculation of the

– is used to encourage the unity of all its constituent parts. When Paul famously asserts in Romans 12.5 that each individual is a limb of all the others, the suggestion is that the individual is not only assimilated into the whole but that he or she is identical with all the other parts. The differentiation that Magnard identifies in Pascal's use of the metaphorical body is a direct challenge to the tightly coherent vision of Christ's body according to Saint Paul. Community, communication, and communion, to use Magnard's terms, are required in the case of Pascal for the body to return to a state of health. I will elaborate particularly on the hermeneutical and theological significance of communion between the part and whole in my analysis of Pascal's vision of spiritual health.

Like Montaigne, Pascal envisions the remedy to be not simply a reduction of difference to similitude, but rather "une convenance réciproque, d'autant plus riche que les diversités sont plus grandes."[128] Magnard's adept formulation "une convenance réciproque" suggests just the sort of adequation alluded to by the mutual identity of Christ's limbs in Saint Paul's Letter to the Romans. The process of reconciling part with part, as well as part with whole, is dynamic and unpredictable, more "organic" than "mechanic," to again use Magnard's words. Although Magnard does not address medicine specifically in his article, it is clear throughout that the polarity he establishes between differentiation and communion, between the singular and the universal, could be reframed as the Pascalian rendition of sickness and health, where sickness is aligned with separateness and health with union, a well-known Pauline and Stoic trope. Whether or

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universe as a living body, as comparable to the individual human body. See Michelle V. Lee, *Paul, the Stoics, and the Body of Christ* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), esp. 46-58. In her Introduction, she summarizes well the debates about whether Paul's references to the church as a body were literal or merely metaphorical; for the Stoics, it was clear that all entities were concrete, living bodies, the universe no less alive than a human being.

[128] Magnard, "Un corps plein de membres pensants," 195.

not he had that framework in mind, Magnard's conclusion that there must be a unifying principle for spiritual flourishing to occur, such as the heart in Pascal, points to a clear parallel in medicine: William Harvey's new theories of blood circulation that placed the heart at the organizational center of the body's functions. Moreover, his conclusion restates the common conceptualization of the body in Christian theology as the unifying force behind potentially diverse human interests and beliefs.

Another useful account of the bodily analogy in Pascal is a recent study by Graeme Hunter that specifically attempts to reconcile the spiritual and physical forms of motion and rest alluded to throughout the *Pensées*. Similar to Magnard's study in that it identifies a physical analogy within the traditionally postlapsarian view of man's spiritual separation from God, Hunter's analysis uses the behavior of the body in space to approximate our natural state as spiritual beings. We can make sense, he says, of the "floating" and "drifting" that Pascal proclaims to be our natural state if we understand the seventeenth century's conception of space as "infinite" and "undifferentiated," wherein the body has no fixed place to rest. Hunter gives a succinct summary of the analogy in these terms: "This, then, is the analogy in Pascal's mind: Space is infinite and undifferentiated and therefore no finite motion can ever end in a 'natural place'. Similarly, the gap between ourselves and God is infinite and therefore can never be closed by any finite effort of our own."[129] Hunter's formulation of the analogy is suitable for our purposes because it gives way once again to a conception of spiritual disease and cure: it implies that our perpetual restlessness is in fact our primary form of illness and that the cure is to be found in complete and indissoluble rest. The formulation has its

[129] Graeme Hunter, "Motion and Rest in the *Pensées*: A Note on Pascal's Modernism," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 47:2 (2000): 96.

limits, though, if we consider that no human being, at least in Pascal's anthropological vision, is ever able to come to complete rest. If he did, it would mean he is dead. Pascal himself affirms that motion is natural and necessary to live: "L'homme…a besoin de mouvement pour vivre." (LG 213) Hunter concedes that only God can be perpetually at rest in a decentered cosmos, for only "God is the spiritual point capable of being present everywhere in such a sphere."[130] So does this mean that to cure ourselves of the spiritual roving that plagues most of human existence, we need to die, thus attaining communion with God, the only point of rest? Not entirely. The answer to our restlessness is a properly directed search—spiritual motion when it is "rightly ordered," according to Hunter. We need not come to rest in some artificial, prescriptive way in order to harness the tranquility of our mind; rather we can employ the motion already available to us in a genuine search for God. Thus the most effective exercises for the sick man – the skeptic or the libertine – will be those that meet him where he is, restless and uncertain, before any attempt is made to demonstrate the validity of the Christian path.

What all of the above studies make clear is that on some level the physical body provides a gate of entry into the spiritual and intellectual life of the author. The key to this gate, of course, is the use of analogy. Body and mind, medicine and philosophy, are not yet one, but they can be effectively linked through the strategic use of language. Since Antiquity, language has been closely allied with the therapeutic enterprise of both philosophers and physicians. In one formulation, language, or the *logos* in Hellenistic thought, is capable of healing all the ills of body and mind. André-Jean Voelke, in *La*

[130] Ibid, 96.

philosophie comme thérapie de l'âme,[131] identifies the *logos* in nearly all the schools of Hellenistic philosophy as the principal remedy to the philosopher's ills. For the Epicureans, who defined human illness as a "vain" and "empty" use of language, the remedy consisted in returning to the proper use of language, so that words corresponded more accurately to their material referents. For the Stoics, since illness was thought to spring from the passions, the cure required that one be shown the divine *logos*, or be elevated to a more detached, universal view of human experience. Finally, for the Skeptics, the cure to man's belief that a thing is good or bad in itself was to realize, through language, a complete suspension of judgment. When the *logos* or any form of discourse was offered as a cure, it was intended to meet the specific needs of the particular disciple in his particular set of circumstances. Each new situation required a new *logos*, and it was up to the philosopher to make sure that "every discourse [is] organized, like a living being, with a body of its own, as it were, so as not to be headless or footless, but to have a middle and members, composed in fitting relation to each other and to the whole."[132] Socrates, responding to Phaedrus here, articulates well the concrete exigencies of philosophical discourse, by comparing it to a living body and adding a new dimension to the classic medical analogy. Not only was philosophical discourse likened to medical treatment, but the discourse itself was a body that needed to be shaped and melded to the interlocutor. Any philosophical discourse, in order to produce health, needed to be healthy itself (i.e. harmonious and well-ordered) and this required the

[131] Voelke, *La philosophie comme thérapie de l'âme*, 107-26.

[132] Plato, *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 9, trans. Harold N. Fowler (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), *Phaedrus* 264c. Accessed October 8, 2014, http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Plat.+Phaedrus+264&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0174.

philosopher to be particularly attentive to the concrete circumstances of his discourse. So even the lofty notion of *logos*, as it is sometimes conceived of in ancient philosophy, is grounded in something specific, concrete, and always changing.

Equally important in ancient medicine, the *logos* (understood as dialogue) was the central medium for diagnosis and treatment. Although it may not have provided a cure, per se, dialogue between a physician and patient, or between a patient and himself, made the act of interpretation possible so that an appropriate treatment could be prescribed. Metaphorical language, in particular, was required to make the leap between what was seen and known and what could only be imagined, such as the body's temperaments and humoral system. And if we consider an understanding of the whole (both what is accessible to the viewer and what is not) to be tantamount to a form of healing, then this sort of language was of tremendous therapeutic value. Montaigne, for one, was fond of using metaphorical language to describe the relationship between his body and mind, and often imitated medicine's use of analogy to arrive at an understanding of his disparate selves across time. The greatest advantage of analogy for him was its potential to further refine his process of self-understanding. Because analogy grants access in familiar terms to what may be strange or obscure – such as the thorny morass of thoughts and emotions that Montaigne could never seem to get a handle on – it eases the burden of interpretation, thus making the therapeutic process that much more practicable. In Pascal the attraction seems to be similar. As both Magnard and Hunter point out, the bodily analogy in Pascal reins in an otherwise unwieldy and inaccessible configuration of the universe and God. In other words, it renders accessible the inaccessible, or proportionate the disproportionate, to use Pascal's own language. But while scholars have focused

primarily on specific moments of analogy in the *Essais* and the *Pensées*, where the author uses a metaphorical construction to make a larger point about the nature of the mind or soul, my interest in this chapter will be to find evidence of the author's more diffuse reliance on analogical thinking when describing spiritual suffering. I begin with the overarching claim that being spiritually or psychologically well means having some communication with the whole – what this whole consists of will vary according to each other – and that estrangement from the whole, usually giving rise to distinct emotional states (such as the passions), is almost always tied to the body, either explicitly or through spatial reasoning. The path to healing, in a broad sense, thus corresponds to a search for structural integrity between the part and its whole – or, more accurately, between the part and its whole*ness* – a problem that is as hermeneutical as it is therapeutic.

Part I: Montaigne.

Diseases of the soul: passion, emotion, and the imagination.

Memorable are those passages in the *Essais* where Montaigne presents to the reader, as if on a doctor's visit, his body's panoply of pains and pleasures. He delights, or so it seems, in crafting list upon list of his signs and symptoms, both for his own therapeutic purposes and for the benefit of those gathered closely around him. Often with Montaigne, "we are at the theater" (Starobinski), where the body is allowed to speak volumes about the internal state of the main actor, Montaigne. But less obvious, perhaps, are those moments in the *Essais* where the vocabulary reserved normally for the body bleeds into the realm of mind, thought, emotion, affect, and imagination. In those liminal

moments, another form of health and sickness emerges from beneath the outer complexion of the human body, one that fits well into a sixteenth-century understanding of the passions of the soul. In the Galenic model of diagnosis and treatment,[133] the sixth category of causes consisted of the passions of the soul, disturbances we now associate with temporary emotions at their best or mental illnesses at their worst. The fact that these causes were linked primarily to the soul, and not to the body, was no reason for a sixteenth-century physician to consider them outside the province of medicine. Montaigne was just as concerned with the regulation of his passions and the suffering that they caused as he was with understanding how to regulate and evacuate the stone lodged in his urinary tract. This is no surprise, since the passions occupied a central position between medicine and philosophy. They were a major preoccupation of both ancient and early modern philosophers, because, as Susan James points out, they put to the test a person's control over himself and others, and were often poised in opposition to the attainment of peace of mind.[134]

James explains that, in most early modern philosophical literature, the passions were understood as the "thoughts or states of the soul which represent things as good or evil for us, and are therefore seen as objects of inclination or aversion."[135] Pascal's twin terms "orgueil" and "concupiscence" capture well the two sorts of relationship we

[133] Galen took a holistic view of human health and attributed disease to an imbalance in one of the six "non-naturals": air, food and drink, sleep and waking, excretion and retention, movement and rest, and the passions of the soul or emotions. Health, in an early modern context, included what we would now group under psychological wellness or emotional well-being. For a more detailed presentation of the Galenic non-naturals, see Andrew Wear, *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine, 1550-1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 156-8.

[134] For a more comprehensive account of their place in ancient and early modern philosophy, see James, *Passion and Action*, esp. 1-26.

[135] Ibid, 4.

develop in response to psychological representations: either we are consumed by greed for an object we think will deliver happiness (inclination) or we consider ourselves above the world as we know it (one possible shade of aversion). Following James' definition, the passions always imply movement – either towards an object or away from it – and thus manifest as some form of agitation, or the inability to rest in the present moment. Leibniz's explanation of primitive impulses, or "appetitions" as he called them, which keep the soul in constant movement, always thirsting after what it perceives to lack, is but one well-known example of the way many early moderns conceived of the passions. The bifurcation of the passions according to reactions of inclination or aversion is particularly outstanding in an author such as Montaigne. It could be said that all his passions, whether fear or agitation or desire, boil down to some degree of intolerance of his present bodily experience, either in reaction to an actual bodily event (such as the stone) or provoked by his ruminations about some future bodily event (old age and death). Certainly, passions of aversion, or "moving away," create the most obvious form of mental suffering, but illness also includes the mind's enslavement to an object of desire. Inclination is no less a form of spiritual disease, because for Montaigne choosing either extreme is indicative of our not knowing what we are and where we belong. As we shall see, the medicine of *familiarization* and *appropriation*, with regard to unpleasant bodily and mental states, has a markedly different quality from *inclination*, which merely implies that we are seeking after something outside of ourselves. Thus the challenge becomes one of properly relating to the passions and their causes, rather than eradicating them altogether, as the Stoics might have advocated. Cartesian therapeutics particularly brings this to light in the seventeenth century, and there are many examples in Descartes' own correspondence

where he explains health and well-being in terms of the strategies we have for relating to both ourselves and our passions.[136] Pascal, to a large degree, follows suit in assuming that the actual *sentiments* that we experience, such as terror or awe, are not cause for the mind's illness per se. They are vehicles, just like physical disease, for either ameliorating or exacerbating the disposition of the heart.

Physical pain provides a case in point for Montaigne's relationship to the passions. Acutely susceptible to the wildness of his imagination, he takes considerable care in the way that he relates to bodily afflictions, because the corresponding suffering he imagines is simply "insupportable": "Mais les souffrances vrayement essentielles et corporelles, je les gouste bien vifvement. Si est-ce pour tant que, les prevoyant autresfois d'une veue foible, delicate et amollie par la jouyssance de cette longue et heureuse santé et repos que Dieu m'a presté la meilleure part de mon aage, *je les avoy conceues par imagination si insupportables qu'à la verité j'en avois plus de peur que je n'y ay trouvé de mal*: par où j'augmente tousjours cette creance que la pluspart des facultez de nostre ame, comme nous les employons, troublent plus le repos de la vie qu'elles n'y servent." (II:37, "De la resemblance des enfans aux peres," p. 797-8; my emphasis) The author distinguishes between two types of suffering, one that is "essentielle" and "corporelle," and therefore unavoidable, and another that is caused by the imagination, in surplus of the immediate suffering tied to sensation. Bodily pain, in this regard, is a solid fact; it is "essential" and therefore primary. The thoughts, emotions, images, and opinions that arise before and after pure sensation are *extraneous*, one indication being that they are

[136] See Matthew L. Jones, *The Good Life in the Scientific Revolution: Descartes, Pascal, Leibniz, and the Cultivation of Virtue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 45.

more a nuisance than a help—they "troublent plus le repos de la vie qu'elles n'y servent." More subtly, they are extraneous because they do not belong to sensation itself; if they did they would cause only as much fear as warranted by the bodily experience of pain. We know this not to be the author's experience. Despite Montaigne's efforts to follow his body on the level of pure sensation – and despite really "tasting" his body's present pains – he cannot help but experience fear that is disproportionate to the gravity of the given ailment ("j'en avois plus de peur que je n'y ay trouvé de mal"). Montaigne reiterates this dilemma, a very human one, throughout the *Essais* whenever he broaches the subject of illness or death, as in this passage: "C'est la crainte de la mort et de la douleur, l'impatience du mal, une furieuse et indiscrete soif de la guérison, qui nous aveugle ainsi : C'est pure lascheté qui nous rend nostre croyance si molle et maniable." (II:37, "De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres," p. 821) The main problem is not the occurrence of the "mal" itself, but the soul's inability to properly manage its passions – its "crainte," "impatience," and "soif" – thereby augmenting the suffering already present in the subject's visceral experience. In fact, Montaigne goes so far as to say that we are "blinded" by our passions, which, at least philosophically, makes perfect sense. Any strong emotion is likely to deter us from attaining the lucidity required to progress along the spiritual path. Caught up in our fury or desire or irrational fears, we are unlikely to have a view of the situation from on high, that is, from the privileged position of the divine *logos* that the Stoics clung to as a source of indifference. Such blindness also impedes our ability to correctly diagnose a situation, since our powers of interpretation, key to the hermeneutic process, are muddied by illusory threats to our being. Montaigne frames the dilemma even more bluntly near the end of the *Essais*, using the brevity of a

sententia to drive home its absurdity: "Qui craint de souffrir, il souffre desjà de ce qu'il craint." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1144)

Although Montaigne's prescription for dealing with this sort of irrational fear varies from chapter to chapter – ranging from a Stoic premeditation on death to an Epicurean acceptance of nature's unfolding – his diagnosis of the disease is basically the same: the mental anguish we might experience in anticipation of bodily pain – or more so, our own death – is *supplementary to* the suffering we experience on a purely physical level. It is embedded in our manner of *relating to* suffering, as implied in the *sententia* above. If we relate to potential suffering with fear, then this very fear becomes a source of mental suffering unto itself, and so goes the vicious cycle of the imagination. This "secondary" suffering, though unfounded, is no less real. It creates the unpleasant mental conditions that necessitate therapeutic practices to begin with, *and* it stimulates bodily reactions similar to those experienced in the presence of bodily pain. Though Montaigne frames this suffering in a way that would suggest its non-necessity, never does he claim that it is unnatural. It is a basic part of human experience, and one that he claims can be transformed.

For Montaigne, one way of initially addressing it is to avoid doctors. It is enough when the imagination anticipates or exaggerates bodily suffering; the patient suffers even more the moment a physician intervenes. Doctors, with their elaborate prognoses, only add fuel to the fire by igniting fears disproportionate to the patient's actual experience. Montaigne seldom consults with physicians for precisely this reason—and it is interesting to note that he calls his aversion to doctors a hereditary (and therefore bodily) trait, springing from "a drop of semen." He recalls his experiences with doctors as if under

their attack, and describes the compromising effects of their prognostics on his judgment: "[Les medecins] vous gourmandent les oreilles de leurs prognostiques; et, me surprenant autre fois affoibly du mal, m'ont injurieusement traicté de leurs dogmes et troigne magistrale, me menassant tantost de grandes douleurs, tantost de mort prochaine. Je n'en estois abbatu ny deslogé de ma place, mais j'en estois heurté et poussé; si mon jugement n'en est ny changé ny troublé, au moins il en estoit empesché; *c'est tousjours agitation et combat*." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1138; my emphasis) We get the impression from such a passage that the poor patient suffers more from his encounters with physicians than from the illness itself. A typical consultation, Montaigne reports, might include having one's ears stuffed ("gourmand[ées]) with prognoses and being "injurieusement traicté" and "menass[é]" by foreboding forecasts of great pain and imminent death. Even Montaigne, whose resolve is strong enough to resist being "abbatu" and "deslogé," explains that he is nonetheless jolted ("heurté et poussé") by the doctors' prognoses. In fact, his judgment – the faculty that ensures a rational perspective on such grave matters – is, if not altered, certainly bothered. The passions that arise in such a situation, "agitation" and "combat," are yet another manifestation of the secondary suffering that the imagination produces; only this time, they appear to be coming from the outside. The experience of them is nevertheless the same as when Montaigne has no external input whatsoever: in both cases, the author is left to attend to his own imagination, the conduit for these secondary ills, and must adjust his attitude to judiciously accommodate the incoming stimuli.

Cures for the soul: reason's counsel and the power of tradition.

The author's conclusion regarding medical prognostics – "c'est tousjours agitation et combat" – speaks not only to his personal sense of unrest, but to the ill condition of Renaissance medicine at large. Excessive reliance on any type of authority, because it alienates the subject from his own experience, creates the very conditions for the imagination to run wild. Only a return to empirical (i.e. sensorial) experience can put the passions in their proper place. This is why Montaigne returns again and again to the messages received from his body and finds skillful ways of moderating his reactions to them, so as not to cause himself further, unnecessary distress. We have seen how medical prognoses, as part of a larger system of scientific discourse, can yield further disarray for the patient. Starobinski was right to conclude that "[i]n Montaigne's thought (…) the corporeal subject, insofar as it has the *sensation* of existing, claims to have a greater right to govern the body than any scientific discourse."[137] The corporeal subject – meaning here the subject as body and the subject as individual – has the right to govern not just the body, as Starobinski suggests, but the entire person, his mind and imagination included. The patient's governing power, in this sense, must come from his own good judgment, based eminently on the "*sensation* of existing" that Starobinski refers to.

Despite Montaigne's putative disregard for physicians and medical prognoses, he still turns to traditional methods recognized in Renaissance medicine to address the very "agitation et combat" that many of these same Renaissance physicians allegedly caused. Moderation, a classically Galenic[138] and Aristotelian[139] antidote to the passions, crops up

[137] Jean Starobinski, *Montaigne in Motion*, 164.

[138] For a Galenic physician of the time, illness was largely a question of imbalance in any of the qualities that participated in the patient's inner and outer constitution (such as wetness and dryness, heat and cold, etc). Each extreme, or imbalance, called for an antidote in order to bring the patient back into balance. The same sort of treatment applied to the passions (the sixth category of causes in Galen's paradigm), and thus psychological health had everything to do with tempering cognitive and emotional extremes, particularly

throughout the *Essais*. In one particular instance, which shows Montaigne reflecting on the hereditary tendencies in his own family, he presents "la moderation," "l'equabilité," and "la constance" as the opposing forces, albeit obscure and unfamiliar, to the negative psychological qualities passed down through the generations: "Nos hommes sont si formez à l'agitation et ostentation, que la bonté, la moderation, l'equabilité, la constance, et telles qualitez quietes et obscures, ne se sentent plus."[140] (III:10, "De mesnager sa volonté," p. 1068) The term "agitation" resurfaces here, and though we have no clear idea of its source, it is, as we saw above, a *learned* quality (as opposed to an inherent trait). The men in question are "*formez à* l'agitation" (my emphasis), whereas all the qualities evocative of moderation seem to be naturally existing. Though Montaigne draws upon a category of treatment belonging to classic medical and philosophical rhetoric, his overall idea of good health actually has less to do with moderation per se, and more to do with the very self-knowledge that allows us to judge what we are and what we need. In the following passage, he describes how we have been made into poor judges of our actual needs and are thus incapable of moderating our desires: "Nous sommes chacun plus riche, que nous ne pensons : mais on nous dresse à l'emprunt, et à la queste : on nous

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when confronted with any form of physical or mental distress. One way to cure the diseases of the soul was to apply the appropriate antidote to each of the passions. Any treatment that involved applying an antidote was thus necessarily a practice of seeking moderation, be it physical or psychological.

[139] We can think of the *aurea mediocritas* of Aristotle, which, despite appearances, was a notion that adapted itself to the individual's relative needs. Starobinski, deeming the notion of moderation too flat, preferred the term "harmonious tension" to describe Montaigne's regulatory approach to the extremes (Starobinski, *Montaigne in Motion*, 236).

[140] Montaigne is careful to set up a neat parallel between two sets of opposing qualities: "agitation" as opposed to "qualitez quietes" and then "ostentation" as opposed to "[qualitez] obscures." In doing so, he seems to suggest that our natural state (that which has not been covered over by conditioning and artifice) is tranquil and subdued. This might pose a problem for the author of the *Essais* since he often describes his own state as restless or "peu rassis," in direct opposition to the tranquility that most philosophers held up as the highest ideal. However, Montaigne finds a happy medium between the two qualities whenever he is walking or riding his horse, activities that provide him with a stable "assiette" without altogether negating his self-avowed restlessness.

duict à nous servir plus de l'autruy, que du nostre. En aucune chose l'homme ne sçait s'arrester au poinct de son besoing. De volupté, de richesse, de puissance, il en embrasse plus qu'il n'en peut estreindre. Son avidité est incapable de moderation." (III:12, "De la Physionomie," p. 1084) The passage might not appear to have anything to do with health per se, but the borrowing and pursuing ("l'emprunt" and "la queste") that continually drive human behavior constitute the very form of illness that Montaigne considers most grave. When Montaigne explains that "on nous duict à nous servir plus de l'autruy, que du nostre," he recalls the situation of relying on physicians rather than on his own felt experience, which invariably gives rise to "agitation et combat." Excessive reliance on the other, particularly on the physician as other, always leads to further emotional turmoil, or to the secondary suffering I evoked above. It is because of our habitual reliance on others' counsel that "l'homme ne sçait s'arrester au poinct de son besoing"—that we lack even a basic sense of what we need to be well. Thence springs one of the seminal passions, "avidité," that obscures our judgment and creates a cycle in which moderation is all but impossible ("son avidité est incapable de moderation").

Being led astray from ourselves, by the anonymous "on" in the passage above, causes us to become misaligned with our actual needs. This means not only that we are ill (by virtue of living in excess of our needs), but that we have been robbed of the very tools we need to become well. Because Montaigne presumes that those tools reside in each one of us, the return to health is tantamount to a return to the self. What has been termed "homecoming" and the "art of accommodation" in studies of rhetoric and hermeneutics[141] provides a useful lens for considering Montaigne's definition of spiritual

[141] See especially Kathy Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition: Chapters in the Ancient Legacy and its Humanist Reception* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

health. If misinterpretation lands the patient or reader in a territory alien to himself – where Montaigne claims most of us live – then our bodily behaviors will likely fall into misalignment with what we actually need. This directly links to the passions, since they are largely responsible for our misinterpretation and poor judgment. At the opposite end of the spectrum, where a foreign object becomes familiar (through the process of accommodation) – be it a body or a collection of *sententiae* – homecoming can occur, which is nothing less than a reconciliation, according to Kathy Eden, between theory and practice. For Montaigne this would mean that we are acting in accord with the actual information issuing from our bodies in the present moment.

Wherever the passions arise, they are usually a flag for a lack of accommodation, or, to use Montaigne's language, a poor "digestion" of external influences. This, however, is no fault of our own; it is simply the training we have received since birth (as we saw earlier: "On nous *dresse* à l'emprunt" and "[n]os hommes sont … *formez* à l'agitation" [my emphasis]). Not realizing that we are perennially subject to "l'emprunt" and "la queste," we mistake our energetic hunt for the ultimate prize, and our extreme desires for the medicine itself—a perfectly human dilemma. If our education and conditioning are the causes of the self-mistrust that manifests as "agitation" and "avidité," then it would logically follow that, given the correct tools, we can recover ourselves by undoing the habit of blindly relying on others to tell us what we need. This is where the body becomes a key component to spiritual healing in Montaigne.

Though it might seem unnatural to identify the tools for healing in the very person who is doing battle with his passions, Montaigne suggests that we do indeed have the capacity to self-regulate. While it is true that philosophy provides a general template for

understanding the illness (the passions) and its remedy (moderation), it is equally true that the enactment of any such remedy is an eminently personal affair. Philosophy may hold up moderation as the panacea to the mind's ills, but the philosopher will still need to interpret his condition for himself, because it is unique in the history of human experience. Subsequently, he will need to find methods or treatments that work favorably with his current disposition and circumstances. This point is crucial, since philosophy will have no therapeutic value if its methods fail to match the concrete needs of the sufferer, a point others and I have alluded to before. Martha Nussbaum, in her monumental work *The Therapy of Desire*, reminds us of this contingency in her discussion of *therapeia* in the Hellenistic schools, which, "in their fine-tuned attention to the interlocutor's concrete needs and motives for philosophizing (…) design their procedures so as to engage those deepest motivations and speak to those needs." She adds: "Literary and rhetorical strategies enter into the methods at a very deep level, not just decorating the arguments, but shaping the whole sense of what a therapeutic argument is, and expressing, in their stylistic concreteness, respect for the pupil's need."[142] Montaigne, since he engages in solitary *therapeia*, appropriates certain methods with primarily himself in mind. Although at one point he condemns philosophy for playing around with mere appearances, as opposed to acknowledging the reality of pain,[143] elsewhere he deploys rhetorical strategies that belong to philosophy itself as an

[142] Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire*, 486.

[143] "Au demourant, j'ay tousjours trouvé ce precepte ceremonieux, qui ordonne si rigoureusement et exactement de tenir bonne contenance et un maintien desdaigneux et posé à la tollerance des maux. Pourquoy la philosophie, qui ne regarde que le vif et les effects, se va elle amusant à ces apparences externes? Qu'elle laisse ce soing aux farceurs et maistres de Rhetorique qui font tant d'estat de nos gestes. Qu'elle condonne hardiment au mal cette lacheté voyelle, si elle n'est ny cordiale, ny stomacale; et preste ces plaintes volontaires au genre des soupirs, sanglots, palpitations, pallissements que Nature a mis hors de nostre puissance. Pourveu que le courage soit sans effroy, les parolles sans desespoir, qu'elle se contente!

antidote to his mental pain. Here again we witness Montaigne debunking the wisdom of traditional authority, all the while validating ancient strategies, such as self-consolation.[144]

Having described the inner turmoil that results from traditional consultations with doctors, Montaigne now turns to self-consoling methods that involve a dialogue between his mind and imagination, wherein his mind offers rational consolation to his imagination on the subject of his *maladie pierreuse*. I cite only a few portions of the lengthy dialogue: "Or je trete mon imagination le plus doucement que je puis et la deschargerois, si je pouvois, de toute peine et contestation. Il la faut secourir et flatter, et piper qui peut. Mon esprit est propre à ce service: il n'a point faute d'apparences par tout; s'il persuadoit comme il presche, il me secourroit heureusement. Vous en plaict-il un exemple? Il dict que c'est pour mon mieux que j'ay la gravele; que les bastimens de mon aage ont naturellement à souffrir quelque goutiere…" (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1138) Here the mind addresses the author in the first person, reassuring him with two favorable interpretations of his physical illness: one, that his condition is par for the course and, two, that it is for his own benefit. The mind's function is neither to obscure the physical suffering of his condition nor eradicate the passions that arise, but to acknowledge and transform the representations in Montaigne's imagination to encourage his mental well-

Qu'importe que nous tordons nos bras pourveu que nous ne tordons nos pensées! Elle nous dresse pour nous, non pour autruy; pour estre, non pour sembler." (II:37, "De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres," pp. 798-9)

[144] The *consolatio*, for example, was a well-known trope and genre of writing in the history of philosophy beginning with Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*, written around 524 AD.

being. The mind's manner of relating to the imagination is key; it must approach the imagination "doucement," flattering and rescuing it.[145]

Soon after, the author disappears, leaving only his imagination in the second person singular, and his mind who does all the talking: "La crainte de ce mal, faict-il, t'effraioit autresfois, quand il t'estoit incogneu: les cris et le desespoir de ceux qui l'aigrissent par leur impatience t'en engendroient l'horreur." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1139) The mind explains that fear was able to set up camp in the author's imagination because it was not known to the imagination ("il t'estoit incogneu"). Fear, in other words, was alien and not yet seen clearly for what it was, causing secondary suffering of a psycho-spiritual order. What is more, the despairing cries of others heightened the amount of suffering caused by his imagination's initial fear. Thus the situation grew quickly out of the author's (mind's) control. One of the mind's main arguments to the imagination, which may be easily missed, is that healing involves accommodating both the physical illness itself and the emotional reactions to it. This is why the mind both affirms the disease itself ("c'est pour [s]on mieux qu'[il] [a] la gravele") *and* responds to the resulting fear by pointing out the disproportionate nature of Montaigne's reaction. Mental suffering is thus multi-dimensional: it arises out of our relationship to physical *and* imaginary stimuli, and it has to do with not knowing *and* not accepting what is our own.

Near the end of Montaigne's internal dialogue, the mind delivers its most incisive argument regarding the usefulness of disease: illness, when understood correctly, is the

[145] Whether the mind's strategy is entirely successful is up for debate. Although Montaigne appears to be practicing self-consolation in a genuine way, he does so with a fair amount of irony. Near the end of the prosopopeia he makes it clear that this sort of rationalist self-consolation is a temporary measure at best.

most fitting preparation for death, since it gradually severs one's affective attachments to life. The mind continues its counsel to the imagination (*tu*) along these lines:

> [E]t quand [la maladie] te presenteroit l'image de la mort voisine, seroit ce pas un bon office à un homme de tel aage de le ramener aux cogitations de sa fin? (…) Considere combien artificielement et doucement elle te desgouste de la vie et desprend du monde: non te forçant d'une subjection tyrannique, comme tant d'autres maux que tu vois aux vieillarts, qui les tiennent continuellement entravez et sans relache de foyblesses et douleurs, mais par advertissemens et instructions reprises à intervalles, entremeslant des longues pauses de repos, comme pour te donner moyen de mediter et repeter sa leçon à ton ayse; pour te donner moyen de juger sainement et prendre party en homme de coeur, elle te presente l'estat de ta condition entiere, et en bien et en mal, et en mesme jour une vie tres-alegre tantost, tantost insupportable. Si tu n'accoles la mort, au moins tu luy touches en paume une fois le moys.[146] (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1140)

It would appear that the mind is alluding to the classic Stoic exercise of *praemeditatio mortis*, which earlier in the *Essais*[147] Montaigne referred to as a method for realizing tranquility of the mind. But unlike the Stoic practice of keeping death before one's eyes at every moment, which can end up feeling forced and unnatural, Montaigne's is a practice of using the present circumstances, either internal or external, to *naturally and easefully* become acquainted with death. Illness, only naturally, becomes his greatest ally. With the obvious encouragement from his kidney stones, the imagination need not work so hard to imagine death; it is close by, close enough that "[l'imagination] luy touches en paume une fois le moys." The corporal metaphor, while a metaphor, should not be missed, since it suggests that the author's (or imagination's) relationship with death has

[146] Compare a passage that appears earlier in the *Essais*, where Montaigne articulates the advantages of his illness: "J'ay aumoins ce profit de la cholique, que ce que je n'avoy encore peu sur moy, pour me concilier du tout, et m'accointer à la mort, elle le parfera : car d'autant plus elle me pressera, et importunera, d'autant moins me sera la mort à craindre. J'avoy desjà gaigné cela, de ne tenir à la vie que par la vie seulement : elle desnouera encore ceste intelligence : Et dieu vueille qu'en fin, si son aspreté vient à surmonter mes forces, elle ne me rejette à l'autre extremité non moins vitieuse, d'aymer et desirer à mourir." (II:37, "De la ressemblance des enfans au peres," p. 798)

[147] See I:20, "Que Philosopher, c'est apprendre à mourir."

ceased to be mere abstraction, moving into the realm of concrete, lived experience, which, throughout the *Essais*, constitutes the author's primary means of knowing himself. Death is both close enough to be touched "une fois le moys" and yet removed enough to be the object of meditation, in that Montaigne's illness gives his imagination a "moyen de mediter et repeter sa leçon *à [son] aise*." Not without a hint of Epicurean resignation (folded into the last three words), the mind seems to be indicating that Montaigne's illness is a philosophical exercise like any other, to be practiced and "répété" until it has been sufficiently accommodated.

One crucial aspect of accommodation, or integration, is the fact that illness presents Montaigne with "l'estat de [s]a condition entiere," with the good and the bad, and all the possible fluctuations in between ("tres-alegre tantost, tantost insupportable"). It provides him, in other words, with a portrait of the whole (his entire self), with which he must become familiar if he aims to become self-reliant and prevent unnecessary suffering. The rhythms of his illness' coming and going mirrors the way one might interpret a foreign text: becoming acquainted with it "à intervalles," as Montaigne does, dipping in and dipping out, affords him the possibility of reflecting on the foreignness of his illness in a clearheaded fashion. He is able, for example, to "juger sainement et prendre party en homme de coeur," which is otherwise unlikely when he is under emotional duress (such as when his imagination takes over). It is important that Montaigne takes his distance from time to time, before plunging into the direct experience of pain; for that movement is precisely what allows sane and prudent interpretation to occur, opening him up to periods of reflection and integration following intense moments of exposure. Knowing that there exists more than the pain of the present

moment restores the author's autonomy: he can choose to disbelieve the debilitating messages of a particular sensation just as he can choose to ignore the foreboding claims of physicians. *The overall point, however, is not to avoid pain*; rather, it is to see the vanity of all the suffering created by pain, by familiarizing oneself with all the fluctuations of the embodied self.

In the traditional Platonic view of the human faculties, the imagination (*eikasia*, which will become *phantasia* in Aristotle) occupies the bottom rung of the metaphor of the line as illustrated in the *Republic*.[148] Thought, or *dianoia*, lives well above imagination since it is much closer to apprehending the pure forms, or philosophical truth. Later, Aristotle configured the human psyche (as outlined in *De Anima* III:3) to include sensation, imagination, judgment, and memory, with a fifth faculty, common sense (*koinon aistheterion*), that processed all the incoming sense data. The three faculties that are considered "internal" – imagination, judgment, and memory – are all at work in the dialogue between Montaigne's mind and imagination.[149] Given the privileged place of mind or judgment in both the Platonic and Aristotelian paradigms, it is no surprise that the mind, whose function is thought, is in a position to counsel Montaigne's imagination, and not the other way around. Much as he proclaims to be going his own way, Montaigne is nonetheless careful to preserve the traditional hierarchy of mind over imagination. The mind advises the imagination, using the familiar *tu* form of address, and tries to convert it to reason, as would have been the case in a traditional Hippocratic

[148] Plato, *Republic*, trans. G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), 183.

[149] I take this point from Starobinski (see *Montaigne in Motion*, 176), who identifies in the same passage the three faculties involved in a traditional understanding of *sensus internus*.

exchange between physician and patient. The imagination, subject to confusion and despair, needs the rational mind to properly diagnose the situation, much as the patient, fearing for his life, seeks out the reassurance of a physician who has a more stable vision of the whole. The two parties reach a solution only through the act of dialogue, even if initially they are standing on unequal ground. Montaigne has effectively borrowed from the Hippocratic tradition one of its most basic practices: that of dialogue as a form of therapy.

In a closing remark to the dialogue, Montaigne compares himself to Cicero in his manner of using rational arguments to salve his mental suffering: "Par tels arguments, et forts et foibles, comme Cicero le mal de sa vieillesse, j'essaye d'endormir et amuser mon imagination, et graisser ses playes. Si elles s'empirent demain, demain nous y pourvoyrons d'autres eschappatoires." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1143) Rational argumentation is seen here as a form of therapy—but not to cure the ailing body. Its purpose is to heal the wounds of another sort of suffering – the secondary suffering I evoked above – whose nature we might call mental or emotional. The passions such as fear and agitation that Montaigne has already identified in relation to sickness and old age are equated here with "playes" in need of ointment. The relationship, then, between the imagination and medicine is metaphorical, and the figurative remedy of applying arguments as oil to his open wounds is presented as no permanent solution. For the passions might very well return in the future and would demand in this case "d'autres eschappatoires." Rational dialogue, while helpful, is not a foolproof solution; there needs to be a shift in the author's overall understanding of illness as a burden to be unloaded.

Considering illness and death as allies to his attainment of well-being is what will actually provide the most reliable cure to spiritual suffering.

In addition to the involuntary reminders of death furnished by the body, Montaigne deliberately approached death in his imagination from a very young age. He familiarized himself with death, not by any token of religious or philosophical discipline, but because his very temperament was inclined to it: "Je suis *de moy-mesme* non melancholique, mais songecreux : il n'est rien dequoy je me soye dès tousjours plus entretenu que des imaginations de la mort ; voire en la saison la plus licentieuse de mon aage." (I:19, "Que Philosopher, c'est apprendre à mourir," p. 89; my emphasis) Seemingly without effort, Montaigne applies the prescribed therapy of the Ancients (the Stoic *praemeditatio mortis*) to his own imagination. Notably, the passions that typically arise as a result of contemplating death (fear, agitation, or despair) are not presented here as a problem. In fact, the author appears to be quite at home with the exercise, as if it were a natural part of his being. Even in his youth ("La saison la plus licentieuse de [s]on aage"), Montaigne did not shy away from death as one would from a foreign body or disease. His overall attitude echoes that of Epicurus in his advice to the philosopher (from the *Letter to Menoeceus*): "[A] person should not delay philosophizing when young or weary of it when old. For no one is too young or old to attend to the well-being of their soul. To say that the time for philosophizing has not yet come or has passed is like saying that it is not yet time or no longer time for happiness. Thus young and old ought to philosophize, so that the person who is ageing may be young again through the benefits of gratitude for what is past, and the person who is young may be grown-up in not being

afraid of the future."[150] Epicurus, like Montaigne, acknowledges the influence of death (implicit in the phrase "not being afraid of the future") on "the well-being of [the] soul" at either end of the spectrum—when young or old, robust or infirm. Broadly speaking, we can understand philosophizing as a process of familiarizing oneself with what is unfamiliar: the benefits of youth when one is old and the wisdom of growing old when one is still young. This, as we noted above, eminently relies on dialogue and exercises of the imagination, such as *praemeditatio mortis*. But despite the exertion that may be required on the part of the imagination, philosophizing is intended to be a natural (i.e. not alien) part of one's existence—a reflex even. We ought to move closer to it as we would to our basic desire for happiness, for the two are exactly the same. Montaigne is fortunate in this regard: because of his natural inclination, he is drawn to the philosophical practices of old age and death, and, in a certain sense, is always, already familiar with them. His practice of philosophy as *therapeia*, at least as it pertains to death, is not something that he willfully brings about, as one would apply heat to a body part that is cold; rather, it is constitutive of his very being.

The imagination's role in spiritual illness and healing is thus two-fold: it is an affective filter of bodily events and a source unto itself of death-*like* experiences. In other words, the passions it engenders result not only from physical stimuli, such as the author's kidney stones, but from the ideas and images of old age, sickness, and death, which the author sometimes chooses to invoke. Even the pain of his kidney stones takes on a metaphorical significance, since he interprets it as more than mere physical disruption; it is, *par excellence*, a signpost for loss and eventual demise, and the

[150] Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, ed. R.D. Hicks (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), ∫ 122. Accessed February 7, 2013, http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0004.tlg001.perseus-eng1:8.1.

extrapolation itself is a product of the imagination. It is uncanny that the illness of the imagination – whether we call it fear, agitation, struggle, or unease – is caused by its own creations: images or "shadows," to use Plato's vocabulary, which have no effective relation to the truth, since the one imagining has not yet died. What cure, then, can there be to such a closed loop of symptoms and causes? No degree of moderation is going to help free Montaigne from this mental anguish. Finding the appropriate antidote to a particular fear, by using his powers of reason, might offer respite in the short term. But the ultimate antidote to Montaigne's mental suffering is not to be found in some quantifiable "good" intended to counteract the "bad," as was often the case in medical therapeutics.[151]

This is where the medical analogy breaks down. Whereas the physician is usually concerned with issuing a favorable prognosis, Montaigne neglects speculation altogether – which, again, is only an image, fathomed by the unruly imagination – in favor of his mind's awareness of the present moment. Whereas a favorable prognosis in medical terms must, by definition, include the reduction or removal of pain and the outright denial of death, a "favorable" prognosis for Montaigne includes all manner of pain and pleasure, illness and health, as the "estroitte alliance de la douleur à la volupté" would suggest: "…[N]ature nous a presté la douleur, pour l'honneur et service de la volupté et indolence. Lors que Socrates après qu'on l'eust deschargé de ses fers, sentit la friandise de cette demangeaison, que leur pesanteur avoit causé en ses jambes : il se resjouit, à considerer l'estroitte alliance de la douleur à la volupté : comme elles sont associées d'une liaison necessaire : si qu'à tous, elles se suyvent, et entr'engendrent." (III:13, "De l'Experience,"

[151] A common conception of the passions in Antiquity was as something to be purged, negated, or expelled, just as we saw in the famous Epicurus quote in the dissertation's Introduction.

p. 1142) Although, at first glance, Montaigne tags pleasure as the antidote and only real point to pain, we should be careful not to take his interpretation of pleasure as linear or teleological. The verbs "se suyvent" and "entr'engendrent" imply that the relationship between pain and pleasure operates in both directions and that both experiences are fruitful. Montaigne's awareness has room enough for the physical illness and its antidote, for the passion and its subsiding, for the inevitability of death and death's absence in the present moment. Healing is not a question of subtraction or transcendence, but of inclusion and acceptance.

The interdependence of pleasure and pain, or vice and virtue, was a common trope in philosophical discourse beginning with the Stoics (as Montaigne mentions in the same passage as above) and was reappropriated by Pascal in several passages of the *Pensées*. Most pointedly, the apologist picks up the theme in LG 646, in which he exposes the mutual necessity of opposites through a variety of examples: eloquence and ineloquence, play and boredom, greatness and baseness, and finally coldness and heat. "Le froid est agréable pour se chauffer," he affirms, before going on to explain how this apparent truism has its basis in nature, the tides and the sun being just two examples. Pascal is reworking here a few key passages from Montaigne's *Essais* that reflect on somewhat similar subjects in roughly the same way.[152] One particular passage in the *Apologie de Raimond Sebonde* (II:12, p. 603) stands out, in which Montaigne reflects on the movements of his erotic passions: "Les fièvres ont leur chaud et leur froid : des effets d'une passion ardente, nous retombons aux effets d'une passion frileuse." While both *sententiae* acknowledge the co-existence of the two extremes, Pascal tries to explain one

[152] Bernard Croquette identifies a few sources for this fragment in the *Essais*, notably in II:12 and III:6. See Croquette, *Pascal et Montaigne* (Paris: Droz, 1974), 4, 134.

in terms of the other, thus implying causality (i.e. the cold is useful insofar as it leads to warmth). Montaigne's sentence structure opens in a more neutral, inclusive fashion: "Les fièvres ont leur chaud et leur froid." Emphasizing less the causality between heat and cold, he acknowledges the movement that naturally occurs between the two, without ever implying that we pass through one in order to attain its opposite. Neither heat nor cold precedes the other; they are both a part of the wheel of human experience, just as in the longer passage cited above, pain and pleasure "sont associées d'une liaison necessaire," and "se suyvent, et entr'engendrent." Such an observation can reveal a great deal about Montaigne's perspective on sickness and health. Rather than health being the absence of its opposite, sickness, Montaigne is more likely to include both terms in a broader definition of well-being. As he notes in his progress regarding his kidney stones, all the possible gradations of pain and pleasure contribute to his overall experience of being alive; his acceptance of them is what allows for a sense of well-being to arise. It is as Gadamer states in his recent reflections on health and well-being in the twentieth century: "Ultimately, both disturbance and the overcoming of disturbance belong together. This fact is constitutive of life itself."[153]

If mental afflictions are in fact necessary to experience philosophical freedom – or, using the medical model, if pain and the return to pleasure participate equally in the state we call health – then why is pain, or the passions it engenders, problematic? Does this not exempt the passions from being illnesses in the first place? The problem for Montaigne is much subtler than the paradigm of pain versus pleasure would imply. More pleasure, physical or otherwise, does not necessarily mean more freedom, and the point is

[153] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Enigma of Health*, trans. Jason Gaiger et al. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 136.

not to quantifiably increase one's pleasure in order to be happy (although the author is not averse to refining his *experience* of pleasure). The problem, rather, is this: every passion, whether it is in response to physical stimuli or to projections of the imagination, represents a departure from the author's present experience. The passions call his attention to some other, more extreme reality beyond the horizon of his immediate existence, resulting in an obscuration of truth, which is the very cure philosophy purports to offer. They cause him to believe that illness and death are much worse than they actually are and that he needs to compensate for some internal lack through external means. The antidote to the passions, then, is not a specific quality to be brought forth, but a shift in our state of being, a unanimous return to the present, so that we can see reality for what it is. Montaigne offers himself as an example, explaining that the faculty of judgment holds the key to clear seeing: "Je fay coustumierement entier ce que je fay, et marche tout d'une piece; je n'ay guere de mouvement qui se cache et desrobe à ma raison, et qui ne se conduise à peu pres par le consentement de toutes mes parties, sans division, sans sedition intestine: mon jugement en a la coulpe ou la louange entiere; et la coulpe qu'il a une fois, il l'a tousjours, car quasi dès sa naissance il est un: mesme inclination, mesme route, mesme force." (III:2, "Du repentir," p. 853) Judgment, as framed here, is what the author needs to make the crucial therapeutic move towards wholeness. Like the reader who is able to make the leap between the contradictions in a text and a larger vision of the author's intention, the astute philosopher becomes one with himself by exercising proper judgment, because only judgment knows a man in his wholeness. The fact that Montaigne's example rests on his movement and his "marche" is significant. Montaigne is not just speaking metaphorically of his mind and intentions; he is evoking

the entire complexity of his being. For one, to be whole has to do with having a body that navigates the world, and we need to make sure all of our body parts are moving in harmony. But more importantly, being whole has to do with properly applying one's judgment to one's actions, so that mind and body are not in conflict (in "division" or "sedition intestine"). "Seeing" the whole is an activity that implicates the entire person: to call it mental or bodily would miss the point.

Judgment, as a faculty, has to do with both body and mind, but cannot be reduced to either. Judgment, as a term, occurs 248 times in the *Essais*, an astonishing proportion of which is located in Montaigne's longest chapter, the "Apologie de Raimond de Sebonde" (II:12). Many of the author's remarks focus on the precarious foundations of the human faculties, including judgment at times, which is not surprising for a chapter that almost unilaterally rehearses Pyrrhonist arguments concerning the uncertainty of human knowledge. In one passage, Montaigne identifies judgment as an activity separate from our intellect and senses, as a third capacity subject to its own obscurations, depending on how we feed it: "Ou nous pouvons juger tout à faict, ou tout à faict nous ne le pouvons pas. Si noz facultez intellectuelles et sensibles sont sans fondement et sans pied, si elles ne font que floter et vanter, pour neant laissons nous emporter nostre jugement à aucune partie de leur operation, quelque apparence qu'elle semble nous presenter; et la plus seure assiete de nostre entendement, et la plus heureuse, ce seroit celle là où il se maintiendroit rassis, droit, inflexible, sans bransle et sans agitation." (II:12, "Apologie de Raimond Sebonde," p. 595) As if judgment were a participant coming from the outside, Montaigne warns against its over-involvement in the intellectual and sensorial faculties, the bases of which are inherently shaky. Solid

understanding comes from something which is itself solid ("rassis, droit, inflexible, sans bransle et sans agitation"). Judgment is capable of such solidity, but is at the same time susceptible to the inconsistency of our body and emotions: "Il est certain que nostre apprehension, nostre jugement et les facultez de nostre ame en general souffrent selon les mouvemens et alterations du corps, lesquelles alterations sont continuelles. N'avons nous pas l'esprit plus esveillé, la memoire plus prompte, le discours plus vif en santé qu'en maladie? La joye et la gayeté ne nous font elles pas recevoir les subjets qui se presentent à nostre ame d'un tout autre visage que le chagrin et la melancholie?" (II:12, "Apologie de Raimond Sebonde," p. 597) Here, Montaigne acknowledges the direct link between the quality of our mental processes (he names "apprehension," "jugement," and more generally, "les facultez de nostre ame" in the first sentence) and the condition of our body. Depending on our health and our mood (evoked in the last two sentences), we will experience greater or lesser clarity in our mind, memory, and discourse. Judgment is not specifically mentioned in the second sentence, but he seems to group it with all the faculties of our soul in the first sentence. Indeed, the author's own judgment is subject to vacillations all the time. In describing his own writing process, he admits: "Je ne fay qu'aller et venir: mon jugement ne tire pas tousjours en avant; il flotte, il vague…" (II:12, "Apologie de Raimond Sebonde," p. 600) The movement he describes is typical of the movement he assigns to almost any human faculty in the *Essais*, but here he seems to indicate that judgment can go either way. Certainly, his judgment "floats" and "wanders," but by qualifying the verb construction "ne tire pas" with "tousjours," he actually implies that most of the time his judgment *does* act as a reliable guide. Moreover, in a later chapter of the *Essais*, Montaigne draws a cardinal distinction between his judgment,

which is stable overall, and his ever-changing preferences ("affection" here[154]): "Mon affection se change, mon jugement, non." (II:17, De la presumption," p. 698) This would suggest that if there is a faculty capable of offering a stable vision of the whole – essential to the hermeneutic and therapeutic enterprises – judgment is this faculty. Though it may be influenced by other factors, notably the body and its movements, it has the potential to provide a glimpse of truth and wholeness, thus facilitating the process of coming home to oneself.

Developing sound judgment and gaining access to a stable vision of the "whole" do not require that we change any part of our experience. The passions, as they arise in response to physical illness, rely for their fuel on the subject's reactivity and will to control. Montaigne's wise exercise of judgment can be summed up in terms of "letting be," to use Gadamer's (and ultimately Heidegger's) terminology. When an illness become apparent, Montaigne is in favor of letting it run its course, observing it, without trying to change it, at each stage of its lifecycle[155]:

> L'expérience m'a encores appris cecy, que nous nous perdons d'impatience. Les maux ont leur vie, et leurs bornes, leurs maladies et leur santé : La constitution des maladies, est formée au patron de la constitution des animaux. Elles ont leur fortune limitée dès leur naissance : et leurs jours. Qui essaye de les abbreger imperieusement, par force, au travers de leur course, il les allonge et multiplie : et les harselle, au lieu de les apaiser. Je suis de l'advis de Crantor, qu'il ne faut ny obstinéement s'opposer aux maux, et à l'estourdi : ny leur succomber de mollesse : mais qu'il leur faut ceder naturellement, selon leur condition et la nostre. On doit donner passage aux maladies : et je trouve qu'elles arrestent moins chez moy, qui les laisse faire. (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1136)

[154] The *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 1st edition (1694) defines "affection" thus: "Inclination, passion qui fait qu'on veut du bien à quelqu'un, ou qu'on se plaist à quelque chose." Accessed October 12, 2014, http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=affection.

[155] The image is perhaps borrowed from Plato's *Timaeus* (896): "Diseases unless they are very dangerous, should not be irritated by medicines, since every form of disease is in a manner akin to the living being, whose complex frame has an appointed term of life." (Cited in Starobinski, *Montaigne in Motion*, 327 (note 82).)

Montaigne's argument that we suffer unnecessarily of impatience ("nous nous perdons d'impatience") rests entirely on the global view he has of impermanence and change. He is not concerned with overcoming temporary unpleasant conditions in order to quantifiably increase his pleasure, but instead regards his illness as possessing a life and integrity of its own. Peace, the antidote to impatience, comes not from imposing change on his material conditions, but from regarding the body's illness as one would a person or animal, leaving it to its own wisdom, knowing that it too will expire. The practice of moderating the passions – expressed here, "il ne faut ny obstinéement s'opposer aux maux … ny leur succomber de mollesse" – has less to do with positioning oneself cleverly with regard to each possible reaction, and more to do with expanding one's vision of experience to accommodate all variety of stimulus, resulting in Gadamer's "letting-be," or Montaigne's willingness to "ceder naturellement."

Starobinski was right to observe that "the best course" in Montaigne "is to adopt an attitude of resignation,"[156] explaining elsewhere that "[a]cquiescence in death is but the necessary counterpart of a total conversion to life."[157] This is true not only because the reality of death and disease permeate our being from the beginning, as Montaigne is keen to point out: "La mort se mesle et confond par tout à nostre vie: le declin praeoccupe son heure et s'ingere au cours de nostre avancement mesme." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1152) But this is also true because the presence of death and disease in the imagination actually allows spiritual healing to occur; for without them we would forever remain trapped in the fear of an idea. Because spiritual health in Montaigne

[156] Starobinski, *Montaigne in Motion*, 174.

[157] Ibid, 240.

ultimately comes down to a sort of homecoming (i.e. coming home to oneself), we cannot achieve any measure of health without the process of familiarization and accommodation. If death and illness were simply to remain ideas, they would, by definition, remain foreign to our direct experience. The moment, however, we bring them to mind and incorporate them into our bodily experience via the imagination and relate to them with judgment, we begin to close the gap between the familiar and unfamiliar. And this process could be called the ultimate medicine, because it is precisely the unfamiliar that makes us ill.

Part II: Pascal.

Sickness and health in an Augustinian framework: the aftermath of the Fall.

For Montaigne, perceiving and accepting the whole are the only viable means to ensure his peace of mind. For him, as for Pascal, spiritual illness is considered an inevitable feature of the human condition, but this did not pose a problem for the author of the *Essais*. In fact, moving towards illness, either real or imaginary, proves tantamount to the relief of the secondary suffering I referred to earlier. Pascal also emphasizes the pervasive quality of spiritual illness, but its framework must be understood differently. For one, we should distinguish between what is inevitable and what is permanent: while Montaigne acknowledges that the passions inevitably arise in response to certain phenomena, he recognizes in equal measure that the suffering they create need not be a lifelong condemnation. In fact, that very suffering he discovers to be unnecessary: the illness may persist for a long time, but the suffering need not. In Pascal, however, the spiritual suffering that comes with being human predates the author's personal history

and is permanent insofar as it is contingent on an historical event outside of his control. The latter's view is in one sense more pessimistic since it presupposes not just illness, but suffering as well, to be a condition of human existence. This is because, in the apologist's model of sickness and health, suffering in any form causes us to seek help; without it, we would remain ignorant and condemned to the effects of original sin. We might recall that Pascal's most persistent plea in the *Prière* is, indeed, to *feel* his suffering in order to better receive the help of God.

This brings us to the second major distinction between our two authors. Although Pascal inherits and applauds the basic expression of Montaigne's skepticism of human understanding, he insists that our lack of understanding be accorded its proper religious significance. In typically Augustinian fashion, Pascal locates the primary cause of all ignorance and baseness in the Fall, rather than in the conditions of society, family, culture, and personal temperament. The influence of Augustinian theology on Pascal's conception of human suffering cannot be over-estimated. After the extensive work of Philippe Sellier on Pascal and Saint Augustine, there is little doubt that, especially with respect to his view of human suffering, Pascal was Augustinian through and through; his mastery of the Augustinian corpus has even been likened to that of a scholar's.[158] The standard Augustinian account of human nature includes the rather pessimistic claim that man was corrupted at the time of the Fall, made miserable by this fact alone, but miserable, too, because the "cure" he ought to be seeking, none other than the *Deus absconditus*, is partially concealed from view. The proverbial opening to Augustine's

[158] Philippe Sellier, *Pascal et saint Augustin* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1970), 16-18.

Confessions (1:1:1) makes abundantly clear the suffering due to separation: "you [God] have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."[159]

The restless heart is itself a central thread in Pascal's theory of spiritual illness. While its reasons may be unknown to skeptics and non-believers, the symptoms of a restless heart are manifest in terms that everyone can comprehend: "Nous souhaitons la vérité et ne trouvons en nous qu'incertitude. / Nous recherchons le bonheur et ne trouvons que misère et mort. / Nous sommes incapables de ne pas souhaiter la vérité et le bonheur et nous sommes incapables ni de certitude ni de bonheur." (LG 380) The apologist frames spiritual suffering according to the contradictions that characterize every human life: our wish for truth ends in uncertainty, and our search for happiness ultimately confronts us with the reality of death and misery. There is yet an added layer of suffering that Pascal lays bare in the last sentence: as part of our condition, we cannot help but wish for these virtues and constantly end up in a state of lack. Once he has posed the conditions for our suffering in no uncertain terms, he immediately goes on to explain them according to the narrative of the Biblical Fall: "Ce désir nous est laissé, tant pour nous punir que pour nous faire sentir d'où nous sommes tombés." Pascal characterizes the dilemma in terms of desire (which is itself a passion), but the fact of having the desire and, secondarily, suffering from its unfulfillment, is only a symptom of something most of us ignore. It is placed there, as if by the hand of God, with intention: to punish and to make us aware of the paradise whence we have fallen. Rather than resolving the initial set of contradictions that open the fragment, this diagnosis, as it were, creates a new contradiction of terms. The punishment is our medicine: that is, the suffering engendered

[159] Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), Book I, i (I).

by God's punishment is also the seed of a certain *sentiment* that can ultimately reconcile each sufficiently sensitive seeker with the total view of his existence. To fully apprehend how this contradictory mechanism works, we will need to revisit Pascal's own experience of bodily suffering and its relevance to spiritual healing.

As we saw in Montaigne, spiritual health is strongly associated with one's ability to recognize, apprehend, and accommodate all the possible variations of suffering that arise from the passions and physical disruptions. It is a movement *towards* suffering, rather than away from it, and ultimately an effort to familiarize oneself with what seems most foreign—death, disease, agitation, and despair. Spiritual illness, then, can be characterized as a state of being estranged from the whole, wherein the subject possesses only a partial view of reality, nature, or the cosmos. Using similar language, Pascal defines spiritual illness most pointedly as our insensitivity to a basic truth of the human condition, our "propres misères," which removes us to some degree from the totality of our experience as human beings: "la plus grande des maladies est cette insensibilité, et cette extrême faiblesse qui lui avait ôté [à l'homme] tout sentiment de ses propres misères." (*Prière*, VII, p. 188) Insensitivity, it turns out, is an ill far graver than the physical suffering Pascal had to endure as he was composing the *Prière*. If there is a relationship between the two sorts of illness, it is figurative,[160] as the apologist suggests when he asks God to remind him that "les maux du corps ne sont autre chose que la figure et la punition tout ensemble des maux de l'âme." (*Prière*, VII, p. 187) Of all the "maux de l'âme" that Pascal could cite, he designates insensitivity as the most

[160] The strongest argument for considering sickness and health on a metaphorical plane comes from a fragment in the *Pensées retranchées*: "Les figures de l'Évangile pour l'état de l'âme malade sont des corps malades. Mais parce qu'un corps ne peut être assez malade pour le bien exprimer, il en a fallu plusieurs. Ainsi il y a le sourd, le muet, l'aveugle, le paralytique, le Lazare mort, le possédé : tout cela ensemble est dans l'âme malade." (LG 728)

pernicious—and the most ineluctable. Far more than other forms of *dis*-ease, such as fear or agitation, once discovered, it provides the primordial key to unlocking the cycle of spiritual suffering. The problem is that by its very nature its symptoms cannot be felt; and hence, we need an outside observer – the apologist – to suggest that this might be the venom that is making us ill. This would explain why all of the apologist's efforts with regard to healing converge on an attempt to *re*-sensitize the non-believer by waking up his *sentiments*.

Insensibilité, as a term, can be understood on two different planes: first and foremost, it refers to an intellectual insensitivity to the Biblical narrative of the Fall. Although knowledge of the Fall does not conclusively lead to peace of mind, it is valuable for Pascal insofar as it represents the cause, or first principle, of spiritual illness. His entire model of sickness and health rests on this primary fact of human history, but it alone cannot save us from further despair. It is only the first step to understanding man's separation from God. The second step would be to *feel* that separation; hence, the second aspect of insensitivity has to do with the felt sense. Pascal links our insensitivity to a lack of feeling ("qui lui avait ôté [à l'homme] tout *sentiment* de ses propres misères"), whereby feeling, or *sentiment*, can be emotional (misery) or sensorial (the pains encapsulated in "les maux du corps"). The physical variety of suffering aids the apologist in tapping into the state of his soul. Pascal describes the exercise this way: "considérer dans les douleurs que je sens celles que je ne sentais pas dans mon âme quoique toute malade et couverte d'ulcères." (*Prière*, VII, pp. 187-8) Pascal deploys the metaphor of a sick soul to expose a part of himself that is otherwise hidden from view. Although his soul was gravely ill ("toute malade et couverte d'ulcères"), its suffering remained unfelt

and thus unprocessed. This point is crucial to the healing process, because without *sentiment* we cannot get an accurate reading on the multiple layers of illness inherent to the human condition. Illness is prismatic in Pascal: its source and explanation are one, but its manifestations are many, and it takes both an intellectual and somatic understanding to grapple with its complexity. Healing requires that we take the figurative leap – between body and soul and between the individual and God – to widen our lens of understanding.

The emphasis on seizing the whole was not a new idea in philosophical therapeutics, nor was it a specifically Christian prescription for spiritual healing. Pierre Hadot elegantly sums up a practice common to the major Hellenistic schools of philosophy that was intended to expand the individual's awareness of his place in the whole: "Dans toutes les écoles qui le pratiquent, cet exercice de la pensée et de l'imagination consiste finalement, pour le philosophe, à prendre conscience de son être dans le Tout, comme point minuscule et de faible durée, mais capable de se dilater dans le champ immense de l'espace infini, et de saisir en une seule intuition la totalité de la réalité."[161] This sort of exercise was a familiar one to Pascal, and Hadot's description of it captures well the two varieties of experience that arise in self-reflection: feeling the self as a limited part of the whole, which corresponds to illness or "misery" in Pascal, and communing, via the imagination, with the whole. Hadot goes on to explain this experience in terms of a "double sentiment," not a far cry from Pascal's rendition of our dual *sentiment* of grandeur and misery: "Le moi éprouvera ainsi un double sentiment,

[161] Pierre Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique ?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), 313. Pascal describes *sentiment* as similarly capable of an immediate and sweeping understanding of the whole: "Le sentiment n'agit pas ainsi [comme la raison]; il agit en un instant et toujours est prêt à agir." (LG 671)

celui de sa petitesse, en voyant son individualité corporelle perdue dans l'infini de l'espace et du temps, celui de sa grandeur en éprouvant son pouvoir d'embrasser la totalité des choses. On peut dire aussi qu'il s'agit là d'un exercice de détachement, de distanciation, destiné à nous apprendre à voir les choses avec impartialité et objectivité."[162] The concept of a "double sentiment" allows for both limitation (illness) and limitlessness (health) to coexist. Though Hadot's last sentence implies that the purpose of the exercise is to attain some measure of objectivity, this result is not without having met, in a bodily way, both realities of human existence: individuation and communication. Seeing things with impartiality and objectivity, to use Hadot's words, or merging one's perspective with the divine *logos*, is one way of describing spiritual health. However, gaining access to the whole does not function at odds with inhabiting one's individuality ("son individualité corporelle"), because, as Pascal points out, the whole is already present in all of its constituent parts: "Car, Seigneur, votre royaume est dans vos fidèles, et je le trouverai en moi-même si j'y trouve votre Esprit et vos sentiments." (*Prière*, IX, p. 189) Thus any movement towards the whole should not be construed as a movement away from the individuated self; the movement that guarantees broader understanding is tantamount, rather, to a shift in one's capacity to feel, which the apologist assigns to the power of God: "Que…vous purifiiez tellement mes sentiments qu'ils ne répugnent plus aux vôtres." (*Prière*, IX, p. 189) Understanding the whole has everything to do with the proper alignment or harmonization of one's *sentiments*—not with their eradication. Nowhere in Pascal's writings do we find a narrative that unilaterally supports the negation of the body or illness in any form. On the contrary, he

[162] Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique ?*, 313. Hadot's description of the ancient exercise mirrors remarkably fragment LG 185 in which Pascal has his interlocutor imagine his place in the two infinities.

highly values the experience of physical suffering: "Que je m'estime heureux dans l'affliction." (*Prière*, IX, p. 189) He acknowledges that his illness is also the vessel in which the *sentiment* of God and the whole can come alive. In this regard, Sellier is right to conclude that, compared to Augustine, Pascal is much more concerned with his present experience—that for the latter, "[c]e qui nous intéresse, c'est notre état présent, la marche à suivre et le point d'arrivée."[163]

Although there are allusions in Pascal's thinking to a more or less Platonist spiritualism,[164] according to which the body is nothing more than an encumbrance to the soul's ascension toward the forms (or God), Pascal admits overall a deeply interdependent relationship between the body and soul. Sellier traces the apologist's syncretistic outlook to three main influences: the Aristotelian doctrine of the soul as form of the body (not in shape, but in *actuality*); Montaigne's acknowledgement of the power of instinct to rule our souls[165]; and finally, Descartes' account of humans and animals as automatons[166] (notwithstanding their capacity to reason). In addition to the influence of his predecessors, Pascal's own acuity in observing human nature along with his forays

[163] Sellier, *Pascal et saint Augustin*, 74.

[164] One outstanding example of this is a letter that Pascal wrote to Mlle de Roannez on September 24, 1656 (in *Œuvres complètes*, t. III, ed. Jean Mesnard (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1991), 1031-2): "[La paix] ne sera néanmoins parfaite que quand le corps sera détruit ; et c'est ce qui fait souhaiter la mort, en souffrant néanmoins de bon cœur la vie pour l'amour de celui qui a souffert pour nous et la vie et la mort." In the same letter he describes the relationship between body and soul as a war "qu'il faut donc se résoudre à souffrir…toute sa vie."

[165] Ann Hartle discusses Montaigne's understanding of instinct more fully in *Michel de Montaigne: Accidental Philosopher* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), esp. 43.

[166] Appropriating a Cartesian vocabulary, Pascal reminds us that "…nous sommes automate autant qu'esprit. Et de là vient que l'instrument par lequel la persuasion se fait n'est pas la seule démonstration. Combien y a-t-il peu de choses démontrées ! Les preuves ne convainquent que l'esprit, la coutume fait nos preuves les plus fortes et les plus crues. Elle incline l'automate, qui entraîne l'esprit sans qu'il y pense." (LG 671)

into empirical science most likely led him to conceive of a more nuanced relation of body to soul than the model of Platonic dualism would allow. What Sellier calls Augustine's "spiritualisme absolu"[167] is no longer salient in Pascal's account of spiritual health. Although the hierarchy of body and soul remains eminently intact throughout the *Pensées* and Pascal's other writings, the body is both spiritually and materially indispensable to the Christian seeking health through God.

In the fragment of the *Pensées* that begins "Le mystère de Jésus," Pascal uses Jesus' body as an illustration of the body's role before and after spiritual healing. He rehearses the words of Christ who reminds humanity ("tu") that in this present life we must endure our bodily condition, before the body itself is made immortal: "Les médecins ne te guériront pas, car tu mourras à la fin, mais c'est moi qui guéris et rends le corps immortel. / Souffre les chaînes et la servitude corporelle. Je ne te delivre que de la spirituelle à présent." (LG 717) In one of the few allusions that Pascal makes to the profession of medicine, he places the critique of doctors in the mouth of Jesus Christ, who is framed here as the ultimate physician. Because we shall die, the apologist reasons, it is absurd to place our faith in a profession that purports to remove the hindrances of the physical body. In accord with the presentation of illness in the *Prière*, this fragment seems to suggest that the only healing possible on this earth is spiritual in nature. While we are condemned to endure our bodily pains until death, Christ's healing presence can deliver us from *spiritual* suffering in the present ("Je ne te delivre que de la spirituelle à present"). Following such logic, we might expect Pascal to define health in terms of the body's absence, since the physical body is linked to our suffering in the present moment. However, the ultimate state of health – eternal salvation – is *embodied*, for Christ's very

[167] Sellier, *Pascal et saint Augustin*, 73.

manner of healing is to render the Christian's body immortal. When Christ declares in the above prosopopoeia, "c'est moi qui guéris et rends le corps immortel," the act of healing is equated with engendering an immortal body, and by implication, the ultimate health of the soul cannot be separated from possessing a body, albeit in a modified form. Even Montaigne, whom Pascal targeted as unsympathetic to religious doctrine, acknowledges, and even admires, the integration of body and soul in traditional Christian theology: "Les Chrestiens ont une particuliere instruction de cette liaison, car ils sçavent, que la justice divine embrasse cette société et joincture du corps et de l'ame, jusques à rendre le corps capable des recompenses eternelles : Et que Dieu regarde agir tout l'homme et veut qu'entier il reçoive le chastiement, ou le loyer, selon ses demerites." (II:17, "De la presumption," pp. 677-8) Montaigne's reminder that it is the whole person ("tout l'homme") that receives punishment or praise articulates well the relationship between the body and soul in eternal salvation. When one falls into spiritual *dis*-ease, one's soul and body are equally branded because of the "société et joincture" that Montaigne evokes above. Likewise, spiritual health rewards both the soul and the body, "jusques à rendre le corps capable des recompenses eternelles." Although there is a slight difference in the way that Pascal configures the theoretical relationship between body and soul – by claiming that the relationship is figurative, rather than cooperative (as Montaigne's société et joincture" would attest) – both authors enjoin us to attend to the entire person when it comes to spiritual healing.

Pascal relies on Christ's body to intuit precisely the methods he will need for his own spiritual healing. He explains that although Christ was in a more abominable position than him, Christ succeeded in healing himself: "il s'est guéri lui-même et me

guérira à plus forte raison." Hence, the apologist concludes: "Il faut ajouter mes plaies aux siennes et me joindre à lui, et il me sauvera en se sauvant. / Mais il n'en faut pas ajouter à l'avenir." (LG 717) The union that Pascal alludes to here begins with his bodily wounds ("mes plaies"). By adding his wounds to Jesus' own, the apologist is saved at the very same time that Jesus saves himself: in other words, what happens to the whole simultaneously happens to the part, but the part must in some way become conscious of the sins and suffering that rendered this moment of salvation possible, for the sinning is not separate from the sinner's potential for health. The use of the future tense here is significant ("il me sauvera en se sauvant"): the act of saving (and thus healing) is not a fixed event in the past, reserved uniquely for the physical body of Christ. It is a future event that Pascal, like all believers, can hope for, and which repeats itself with each new sinner. Pascal warns, however, that the responsibility falls to each individual to not add new wounds to those previously opened. Future salvation is inextricably linked to our actions in the present and can thus be considered an open process, rather than a temporally-specific event. Healing, then, is a *practice* that requires the willingness and vigilance of the individual to maintain his relationship with the whole, by surrendering to it.

Given how inextricably salvation is linked to Pascal's own experience of physical illness (especially in the *Prière*), it is fair to ask whether Pascal intended his medical references to wounds, healing, and physicians to be understood in a strictly metaphorical fashion. The notion of joining his wounds with those of Christ could certainly be interpreted as a symbolic means of relating a change in the author's mental disposition; but the metaphorical language itself incites the use of the imagination, and by imagining

these wounds, they become real in the subject's own experience. In fact, for Pascal, who suffered a great deal from physical frailty, they *were* real. We are given a *visual* representation of the body of Christ along with the author's own wounded body, which serves a therapeutic purpose unto itself. It is not incidental that Pascal uses the visual imagination to effect the necessary changes in the heart of his interlocutor. Knowing his interlocutor well, he makes a number of creative attempts – with the help of reason, the imagination, and finally the heart – to set the sufferer on the path to healing. Though he asserts, per Catholic doctrine, that no cure can be found outside of God,[168] the methods that he proposes to reach a cure belie an overwhelming concern for the concrete circumstances specific to his interlocutor, and tend to focus in no small measure on the personal body. Like Thomas Sydenham's *experimenta*, the trial-and-error application of certain medical techniques, Pascal's attempts at persuasion are often nothing other than experimental treatments intended to move the heart of his interlocutor. Those that prove most successful, evidenced by Pascal's own conversion, actually show how spiritual healing relies in large part on affect and the imagination to recover an experience of the whole.

Symptoms of spiritual Illness—affect and the limitations of reason.

Knowing that most people's experience of their *dis*-ease does not correspond to the theological model provided above, Pascal takes pains to make his practice paradigm

[168] "Tout ce qui n'est pas Dieu ne peut remplir mon attente. C'est Dieu même que je demande et que je cherche. Ô Dieu, c'est à vous seul que je demande, et c'est à vous seul que je m'adresse pour l'obtenir. Ouvrez mon cœur, Seigneur ; entrez dans cette place rebelle que les vices ont occupée. […] Vous seul avez pu créer mon âme, vous seul la pouvez créer de nouveau. Vous seul y avez pu former votre image : vous seul pouvez la reformer, et réimprimer votre portrait effacé, c'est-à-dire Jésus-Christ mon Sauveur qui est votre image, et le caractère de votre substance." (*Prière*, IV, p. 186)

accessible and useful to ordinary people in the world, the skeptic primary among them. This is perhaps why, in addition to posing the theological foundations of illness, the apologist offers an extraordinarily rich account of the affective landscape that makes up our spiritual suffering. Emotions might easily get grouped in the category of symptoms, but in Pascal's treatment of them they are in no way considered less significant than the illness itself. We need to work with ("diminish," to use Pascal's language) the passions of fear, anxiety, and despair, because they act, in a sense, as the gatekeepers to the true source of healing. Although Augustine, too, emphasized the passions when describing man's fallen state – explaining all the passions in terms of love[169] – Pascal's rendition of the passions bespeaks a more modern sensibility concerning man's place in the cosmos. Man's spiritual illness is no longer purely theologically driven; it is partly informed by a changing conception of physical reality.

By Pascal's time, gone are the spirits and gods of the ancient cosmos; Christianity itself brought about a silence of the natural world, by supposing that God had abandoned man and that man had forsaken divine will.[170] This view of double abandonment dovetailed with advances in physics that, for the first time, conceived of the universe as

[169] Augustine defined the passions thus: "[A] love which strains after the possession of the loved object is desire; and the love which possesses and enjoys that object is joy. The love that shuns what opposes it is fear, while the love that feels that opposition when it happens is grief." (Augustine, *City of God*, ed. D. Knowles (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), 14.7; as cited in James, *Passion and Action*, 114.) Note that the organizing principle is that of love, even where the passion expresses some form of aversion.

[170] Sellier refers to this as the "double délaissement," or double abandonment, which Pascal reappropriates from Augustinian theology, primarily in his *Écrits sur la grâce*: "Saint Augustin, parlant des réprouvés qui ont entré dans la justice et qui n'y persévèrent pas, dit : *Ils reçoivent la grâce ; mais ils ne sont que pour un temps ; ils quittent et ils sont quittés ; car ils ont été abandonnés à leur libéral arbitre par un jugement juste, mais caché.* Vous voyez en ce peu de paroles le double délaissement dont je parle." (Blaise Pascal, *Œuvres complètes*, t. III, ed. Jean Mesnard (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1991), 670.)

infinite and eminently impersonal.[171] The anxiety that shows up in the atheistic interlocutor is often framed as a direct response to the impersonal and ungraspable expanse of the physical universe—to his inability to appropriate the whole to himself and vice versa. To cite just one example in the *Pensées*, Pascal places the individual ("je") in an impossibly disproportionate frame of reference: "le petit espace que je remplis et même que je vois, abîmé dans l'infinie immensité des espaces que j'ignore et qui m'ignorent." (LG 64) The space of individual existence is consumed, as it were, by reaches that are unknown and unknowable. As we shall see later on, there is a tragic or traumatic quality to this ignorance, because this not knowing and not being known – which mirrors the theological model of double abandonment alluded to above – create the ineluctable conditions for man's homelessness. It is significant that Montaigne's preoccupation with being known to himself (or his readers) through the pages of the *Essais* is displaced in Pascal to an outside source of knowing: in Pascal, it is tragic not only that we ignore the whole, but that the whole ignores each of its parts. This sort of double estrangement sets the stage for the existentialist-like anxiety that keeps man from discovering any viable cure on his own.

Unlike Hadot's rendering of the ancient Epicurean or Stoic peacefully merging with the totality of the universe, Pascal's subject is shown to fear the universe because he perceives himself to be separate from it. The hostile universe, a trope common to seventeenth-century physics and twentieth-century existentialism, seems to sharpen the pain of being human by the time we come to a thinker like Pascal. The trauma of double

[171] Beginning with the work of Alexander Koyré (*From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1957)), scholars have noted a connection between the seventeenth-century trope of subjective anxiety and the Scientific Revolution's new understanding of the cosmos as infinite and eminently impersonal. See also Graeme Hunter, "Motion and Rest in the *Pensées*: A Note on Pascal's Modernism," in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 47:2 (Apr. 2000): 87-99.

abandonment is now made to play out in a vacuum of sorts, wherein any misdirected cry for help – such as that of the skeptic – will be met by silence. Pascal was uniquely poised to recognize that in order to deal with an individual's place in the whole, he needed to deal with the anxiety produced thereby—because if he did not, the *root* illness of separation from God would forever be masked by its worldly symptoms of fear, anxiety, and despair.

Taken out of a religious framework, fear and anxiety take on a much more diffuse quality, made manifest to anyone who has felt him- or herself reluctant to sit in a room alone.[172] The resulting *ennui* of being alone with oneself has a distinct correlate in the sense of homelessness produced by contemplating one's place in infinity. While traditional Catholic theology does not ignore the passions of fear and agitation, the affective aspect of man's separation from God has entered so completely into the topography of the postlapsarian narrative that the psychology underlying it is often missed. Pascal and Augustine both bring this psychology to life – Augustine in the *Confessions*, and Pascal in his *Pensées* – and take seriously the suffering induced by the passions. Pascal probes the passions to the point of taking on the pathology of his interlocutor, by rehearsing the anxiety of a man lost to himself amidst an unstable and impersonal universe. The fear he describes is personal and immediate, and rather than being linked to an authority figure, it is woven into the very fabric of space and time:

[172] "…j'ai dit souvent que tout le malheur des hommes vient d'une seule chose, qui est de ne savoir pas demeurer en repos dans une chambre. Un homme qui a assez de bien pour vivre, s'il savait demeurer chez soi avez plaisir, n'en sortirait pas pour aller sur la mer ou au siège d'une place, ou n'achèterait une charge à l'armée si cher que parce qu'on trouverait insupportable de ne bouger de la ville, et on ne recherche les conversations et les divertissements des jeux que parce qu'on ne peut demeurer chez soi avec plaisir." (LG 126)

"Quand je considère la petite durée de ma vie, absorbée dans l'éternité précédant et suivant (…), le petit espace que je remplis et même que je vois, abîmé dans l'infinie immensité des espaces que j'ignore et qui m'ignorent, je m'effraie et m'étonne de me voir ici plutôt que là, car il n'y a point de raison pourquoi ici plutôt que là, pourquoi à présent plutôt que lors. Qui m'y a mis ? Par l'ordre et la conduite de qui ce lieu et ce temps a-t-il été destiné à moi ?"[173] (LG 64) The scene, staged as a dramatic first-person monologue, captures marvelously the sentiment of a man (presumably Pascal's interlocutor) who has paused to reflect on his condition without the supporting apparatus of religion. Left only to himself and to the silence of scientific truths, he discovers the inexplicable contingency of his existence, the impersonality of all phenomena (including himself), and feels altogether alien, despite being absorbed ("absorbé") and engulfed ("abîmé") by the universe. The interlocutor's "je m'effraie et m'étonne" is not the awe of a man made to kneel before God, but the panic of one who has just realized that he is alone and abandoned to chance. He panics not for a lack of spatial coordinates, per se, but for a lack of metaphysical belonging. What was a "divine pleasure"[174] for the Epicurean who set about contemplating the infinite universe becomes sheer horror under plume of Pascal. The interlocutor's astonishment of being *now* rather than *then*, of being *here*

[173] Compare a similar passage, put in the mouth of the interlocutor: "« Je ne sais qui m'a mis au monde, ni ce que c'est que le monde, ni que moi-même ; *je suis dans une ignorance terrible de toutes choses* ; je ne sais ce que c'est que mon corps, que mes sens, que mon âme et cette partie même de moi qui pense ce que je dis, qui fait réflexion sur tout et sur elle-même, et ne se connaît non plus que le reste. Je vois ces effroyables espaces de l'univers qui m'enferment, et je me trouve attaché à un coin de cette vaste étendue, sans que je sache pourquoi je suis plutôt placé en ce lieu qu'en un autre, ni pourquoi ce peu de temps qui m'est donné à vivre m'est assigné à ce point plutôt qu'en un autre de toute l'éternité qui m'a précédé et de toute celle qui me suit. »" (LG 398; my emphasis)

[174] Hadot cites a particularly colorful passage from Lucretius to illustrate the Epicurean interpretation of contemplating infinity: "C'est dans des espaces innombrables, infinis, que l'esprit prend son essor et s'étend pour les parcourir dans toutes les directions en sorte qu'il ne voit jamais aucune borne, aucune limite à laquelle il puisse s'arrêter. […] À ce spectacle, je me sens saisi d'un frisson de plaisir divin." (Lucrèce, *De la nature*, II, 1044-1047 and III, 16 and 30; as cited in Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique ?*, 310-11).

rather than *there*, is complete, save for the last two sentences, in which he asks, *Qui m'y a mis?*. Immediately, the spell is broken. The reason-making mind cannot resist the very question that brought Adam to his downfall: the question of origins and of will, and ultimately the question of knowing the Other (God). Elsewhere in the *Pensées*, Pascal calls this thirst to know our "maladie principale." Feeling lost or alone is not what makes us ill; rather, it is our need to know what we can never know that launches the cycle of suffering. What was for the Epicurean a completely natural human capacity – to raise our consciousness to infinity and eternity – is all but impossible for Pascal's interlocutor. Pascal warns against our attempts to measure up to the whole, because in his cosmology we will never be proportionate to the divine.

For Pascal, the question of origins will never be resolved. We will only descend into infinite regress, as he explains in *De l'esprit géométrique*, or will feel some degree of separation from the source. Being human simply means that we are a poor match for many of the curiosities we tend to wonder about. Human reason is not meant to grapple with space and time, with infinite wisdom, or with the unity of body and soul; the imagination and the heart, on the other hand, *are*. This is why when the interlocutor confesses his terror – "[l]e silence eternel de ces espaces infinis m'effraie" (LG 187) – Pascal advises him to refrain from a stance of presumption: "Consolez-vous ; ce n'est point de vous que vous devez l'attendre, mais au contraire en n'attendant rien de vous que vous devez l'attendre." (LG 188; here the pronoun "le" refers to *le souverain bien*) In the guise of consoling his interlocutor, Pascal encourages him to abandon his customary efforts. The only true remedy is that moment when we give up all hope of relying on ourselves – specifically on our faculty of reason – and acknowledge the inconceivable

expanse before us. This is where hubris turns into humility, and fear into love. The same contemplation of infinity that caused the interlocutor anxiety and despair can also create the conditions for the cure—provided that the interlocutor is willing to let his heart be changed. Pascal stages the moment of transition thus: "Qui se considérera de la sorte s'effraiera de soi-même et, se considérant soutenu dans la masse que la nature lui a donnée entre ces deux abîmes de l'infini et du néant, il tremblera dans la vue de ces merveilles, et je crois que, sa curiosité se changeant en admiration, il sera plus disposé à les contempler en silence qu'à les rechercher avec présomption." (LG 185) The key moment here is when "sa curiosité se change en admiration," a moment of divine grace, it would seem. Having passed through a genuine bodily experience of fear and trembling ("il tremblera dans la vue de ces merveilles"), the subject emerges on the side of grace. The subject's reaction to the spectacle represents the main tipping point in the course of his spiritual healing: either he will continue his deliberate search for logical answers or he will succumb to the emotional experience that undermines any attempt to intellectually comprehend the whole. For Pascal, it is clear that only the latter option will sufficiently prepare one's heart for healing.

The interlocutor's despair at the sight of infinity, while unpleasant, can actually be a vehicle to make him well. If not handled carefully, however, it can easily slip into presumptuous seeking, which Pascal tags as our primary illness. Presumption, in any form, is an evil far greater than being in error: "…car la maladie principale de l'homme est la curiosité inquiète des choses qu'il ne peut savoir, et il ne lui est pas si mauvais d'être dans l'erreur que dans cette curiosité inutile." (LG 628) We are ill not only because our curiosity is "inquiète" – restless and ultimately insatiable – but because it is "inutile,"

misplaced in the sense that we are not correctly proportioned to the objects of our search. What is more, because we are chasing after things we can never know,[175] such as God or the precise relationship between body and soul, we risk offending the one who *is* all-knowing by disregarding our natural limitations, much as Adam did in the story of Genesis. Taken to the extreme, Pascal might say that this curiosity causes us to reenact original sin, obscuring our capacity to know anything at all: "C'est une maladie naturelle à l'homme de croire qu'il possède la vérité directement ; et de là vient qu'il est toujours disposé à nier tout ce qui luy est incompréhensible ; au lieu qu'en effet il ne connaît naturellement que le mensonge, et qu'il ne doit prendre pour véritables que les choses dont le contraire luy paraît faux."[176] (*De l'esprit géométrique*) For Pascal, a well-directed search is everything, and until we stop believing that we "possède la vérité directement" – that is, until we refrain from presumption – we will continue to suffer the effects of disproportion, and without knowing it, remain estranged from God.

Refraining from presumption is the main prerequisite to transforming our curiosity into admiration, just as we witnessed in the hypothetical interlocutor above ("sa curiosité se changeant en admiration"). The interlocutor cannot experience a healthy sense of wonder until he has dropped the vain "curiosité" that pretends to know the world through logical reasoning. Just as any good cure requires the proper administration of the drug or therapeutic technique, the route to salvation demands concrete strategies for dealing with the passions and the poison of presumption. Pascal is thus careful to offer

[175] Principal among them is man himself, who is "un monstre incompréhensible." (LG 121) Pascal then elaborates on all the contingencies we will never fully grasp: "Incompréhensible que Dieu soit et incompréhensible qu'il ne soit pas ; que l'âme soit avec le corps, que nous n'ayons point d'âme ; que le monde soit créé, qu'il ne soit pas, etc. ; que le péché originel soit et qu'il ne soit pas." (LG 665)

[176] Pascal, *Œuvres complètes*, t. II, ed. Michel Le Guern, 164.

his interlocutor precise instructions on how to prepare himself for the moment of grace. When all other forms of persuasion fail, the apologist applies a deceptively simple set of instructions that constitute in effect the key to healing: "mais apprenez au moins que votre impuissance à croire vient de vos passions, puisque la raison vous y porte et que néanmoins vous ne le pouvez. Travaillez donc non pas à vous convaincre par l'argumentation des preuves de Dieu, *mais par la diminution de vos passions*." (LG 397; my emphasis) Pascal traces the interlocutor's skepticism (his "impuissance à croire") not to any fault of mind or reason – if anything, logical proofs have shown him the validity of faith – but to the sheer potency of the passions. More than mere symptoms, they contribute to the persistence of his *dis*-ease by ensuring that his heart remain unavailable to God. Though they are not the illness per se, from an historical and theological perspective, the passions do prevent us from repairing our severance from the whole.

At this point in the interlocutor's trajectory, logical reasoning does not hold much potency for spiritual healing. Becoming whole is an affair of the heart, and philosophy shows us the supremacy of the emotions over logical reasoning. Even the most robust of philosophers, who has spent a lifetime refining his faculty of reason, cannot achieve real peace unless he has dealt skillfully with the strongest of passions, his fear of death. Pascal frames the example in a typically dramatic fashion by placing the greatest of all philosophers on a plank overlooking the infinite abyss: "Le plus grand philosophe du monde sur une planche plus large qu'il ne faut, s'il y a au-dessous un précipice, quoique sa raison le convainque de sa sûreté, *son imagination prévaudra*. Plusieurs n'en sauraient soutenir la pensée sans pâlir et suer." (LG 41; my emphasis) Despite the seeming solidity of reason, captured in the concessive clause "quoique…," the imagination wins out in the

end, giving rise to fear in the mind and body. The imagination poses a danger here in the sense that it places the subject in a position of helplessness and terror—a form of suffering, to be sure. However, its inherent capacity to render something factually unreal (i.e. the philosopher has not yet died) as a felt experience is not the real problem. In fact, Pascal might argue that we need these moments of imagined terror, of growing pale and breaking into a sweat, to alert us to the more profound danger lurking behind the scenes: the numbness or "ignorance" that is the root of illness. The real problem lies in our mistaken belief that philosophy will relieve us of our suffering; the imagination is just the vehicle for that message to come through. If we had not felt terror in this instance, we would be in further trouble, because, for Pascal, we need to *feel* in order to understand and properly evaluate the efficacy of various cures, the worldly and the holy alike.

In another fragment, Pascal asks us to directly reflect on the efficacy of the "philosophical cure," and it is here that the therapeutic language of illness, remedy, and healing comes into play: "Sera-ce les philosophes qui nous proposent pour tout bien les biens qui sont en nous ? Est-ce là le vrai bien ? Ont-ils trouvé le *rémède* à nos maux ? Est-ce avoir *guéri* la présomption de l'homme que de l'avoir mis à l'égal de Dieu ?" (LG 139; my emphasis) Alluding to the Hellenistic schools that accorded man the ability to raise himself to the level of the divine *logos*,[177] Pascal dismisses any possible consolation that might come from recognizing the greatness of the human soul. At the end of the *Entretien*, Pascal accuses the Greek Stoic Epictetus of leading the reader directly into

[177] The Epicureans and the Stoics both practiced the exercise of elevating one's consciousness to an omniscient perspective, looking down on earth from above, and thereby acknowledged the greatness of the human soul. See Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique ?*, 309-16. Hadot classifies these exercises as "Le regard d'en haut," already indicative of the god-like capacity accorded to the human spirit.

orgeuil, or pride and presumption.[178] The "vrai bien," and thus the ultimate consolation, must come from God. Pascal criticizes Montaigne in several fragments of the *Pensées* for precisely the same mistake that those Greek philosophers made who placed the ultimate good in man. The apologist warns, "Deux cent quatre-vingts sortes de souverain bien dans Montaigne" (LG 387), whereas for Pascal, there is only one to be found in God. Indeed, in the apologist's view, Montaigne's self-assured proclamation, "Vous n'avez besoing que de vous" (II:17, "De la presumption," p. 683), could be spun as an outright negation of the need for divine grace. Pascal's advice on this topic is worded in diametrical opposition to Montaigne's assertion above. He says, "ce n'est point de vous que vous devez l'attendre, mais au contraire en n'attendant rien de vous que vous devez l'attendre." (LG 188; again, the "le" refers to *le souverain bien*) It is easy to understand why Pascal would have been so trenchant in this regard. For him, self-reliance affirms the mistaken view that man has no need of God, whereas Montaigne's main message in the *Essais* seems to be that we can *only* rely on ourselves to attain the ultimate good.

Elsewhere, Pascal acknowledges the opposite quality in Montaigne, citing his capacity to counteract the presumption we might find in a Stoic such as Epictetus.[179] The advantage of reading the *Essais*, as we learn from the *Entretien avec M. de Sacy*, is to lessen the *orgeuil* that comes from reading Epictetus, because Montaigne consistently demonstrates the debility of our reasoning mind, questioning the very notion that human beings can arrive as some solid, unshakable truth. Indeed, several passages from

[178] Pascal is quarreling specifically with the Stoic teaching that we possess the power to achieve imperturbability (*ataraxia*) on our own by establishing a correct relationship to the impressions (*phantasiai*) that present themselves to us. The advantage of such a teaching, Pascal explains, is that it jolts us out of our complacency ("Épictète combat la paresse"), but the noted disadvantage is that it may lead us to believe that our powers are equal to those of God.

[179] This was a typically Skeptical technique (i.e. using multiple philosophers to show the inherent inadequacy of one belief system).

Montaigne's chapter on presumption support this view that he is effective at undermining the reader's sense of pride. In "De la presumption," Montaigne warns against two sorts of vainglory, which both come down to regarding oneself too highly: "Il y a deux parties en cette gloire : Sçavoir est, de s'estimer trop, et n'estimer pas assez autruy." (II:17, p. 671) Pride can come in the form of either esteeming oneself too greatly or not sufficiently appreciating the qualities of another person. When it comes to his own tendencies towards self-praise, Montaigne proclaims himself to be an objective, if not harsh, self-critic: "Et ne me prise seulement que de ce que je sçay mon prix. S'il y a de la gloire, elle est infuse en moy superficiellement, par la trahison de ma complexion : et l'a point de corps, qui comparoisse à la veue de mon jugement. J'en suis arrosé, mais non pas teint. Car à la verité, quant aux effects de l'esprit, en quelque façon que ce soit, il n'est jamais party de moy chose qui me contentast." (II:17, "De la presumption," p. 673) Montaigne professes knowing his real worth, which means recognizing – if we are to take him at his word – that the powers of his mind are actually quite mediocre ("quant aux effects de l'esprit…il n'est jamais party de moy chose qui me contentast"). This avowal places him in humble rank, and he explains that any appearance of glory in his character is merely a passing "complexion."[180] For Pascal's purposes in the apology, Montaigne's self-deprecation and skepticism of human knowledge make him a fine example of how to be humble. His opinions in this regard support Pascal's apologetic argument for the frailty of

[180] It is likely that Montaigne intended "complexion" in this context to mean "caprice" or "fantaisie," two usages that appear in the first edition of the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1694); but complexion also connoted one's "constitution du corps" and was used in early modern medical diagnostics. It was said that one's figure bore the principal signs of the body's inner workings (like a malfunctioning liver) and character traits over the long-term (such as an excess of anger). Montaigne seems to be using the term here to excuse the appearance of something as superficial or temporary ("j'en suis arrosé, mais non pas teint"). (ARTFL, accessed October 25, 2014, http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=complexion.)

human reason. Where he falls short, however, is in his reluctance to seek truth anywhere outside of himself. And for this reason Pascal recommends that we steer clear of the *Essais* and direct our efforts instead to arousing our awe of God.

Although Pascal admits that some good might come of reading Montaigne and Epictetus together, "parce que l'une s'oppose au mal de l'autre,"[181] he ultimately does not opt for a synthesis of the two authors to develop the faith of his interlocutor. They may be useful for apprehending intellectually the simultaneous *grandeur* and *bassesse* of the human soul, but their reach does not yet penetrate the realm of desire and fear, the two passions that keep us secure in our separation from God. Nor does the apologist opt for a systematic reappropriation of Augustinian theology, whose presentation of the human condition reveals many of the same truths that Pascal tries to establish in his *Pensées*. Pascal's concern is more practical: how can he, a convert, turn the heart of a nonbeliever towards a source of consolation that is eminently *unfamiliar*, when it is visibly easier to fall back on the familiar worldly habits that have become a "second nature"?[182] Logical reasoning, as we saw above, is no match for the powers of the imagination that upset our sense of equanimity at every turn. The imagination is like a cesspool for the passions that surface from time to time, which then surreptitiously arrest our powers of reason. Pascal calls this conundrum a "[g]uerre intestine de l'homme entre la raison et les passions" (LG 528), wherein reason does not stand a fighting chance, for "[t]out notre raisonnement se

[181] Pascal, *Œuvres complètes*, t. II, ed. Michel Le Guern, 98.

[182] Another way of framing Pascal's unique contribution to a very old *problématique* is Sellier's phrasing of the tension between "une puissante théologie et un imaginaire singulier." Sellier elaborates thus: "Théologien augustinien, Pascal reçoit une vision du monde élaborée bien avant lui, sans lui. Comment cette vision alors traditionnelle dans l'Eglise catholique latine s'est-elle articulée à son contact premier avec le monde, à son être natif…?" (Sellier, *Essais sur l'imaginaire classique* (Paris: Champion Seuil, 2005), 177-78.)

réduit à céder au sentiment."[183] (LG 470) Pascal further elaborates: "La raison agit avec lenteur et avec tant de vues sur tant de principes, lesquels il faut qu'ils soient toujours présents, qu'à toute heure elle s'assoupit ou s'égare manque d'avoir tous ses principes présents. Le sentiment n'agit pas ainsi ; il agit en un instant et toujours est prêt à agir. Il faut donc mettre notre foi dans le sentiment, autrement elle sera toujours vacillante." (LG 671) The power of *sentiment* to persuade the interlocutor has a direct impact on the sway of the passions. If Pascal's pith instruction to his interlocutor is to "diminish his passions," we have to wonder how this can be accomplished given that our habitual resources of reason and the like have been discredited. We have to turn to *sentiment*, declares Pascal, because that is where our deepest and most abiding habits are formed and re-formed. As we shall explore in the next chapter, the embodied quality of the passions and the role of the heart as the seat of *sentiment* will require the skeptic to work directly with his body. The inextricability of the body and the passions will help to show how spiritual therapeutics (i.e. relating one's particular experience to the whole) actually imply the participation of the body, which affects in turn both body and mind. In addition, it will show how the passions themselves, often viewed as obstructions to healing, are in fact the catalysts of spiritual healing.

Conclusion.

[183] *Sentiment* includes the passions as well as any cognition that has been made "natural" through reason and custom: "Sentiment. / La mémoire, la joie sont des sentiments, et même les propositions géométriques deviennent sentiments, car la raison rend les sentiments naturels et les sentiments naturels s'effacent par la raison." (LG 546) See also Matthew L. Jones, "Writing and *Sentiment*: Blaise Pascal, the Vacuum and the *Pensées*," in *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 32 (2001): 139-81.

In both Montaigne and Pascal, affect, or *sentiment*, figures crucially into the definition of spiritual illness and its potential cure. Illness is not a *de facto* set of circumstances that, once removed, will extinguish the suffering that came with it. Spiritual illness stems rather from our affective regard (or disregard) of physical and mental phenomena; it is relational and dynamic. Montaigne suffered from the stone, to be sure, and from the consequent awareness of his own mortality; but those facts alone are not enough to make him spiritually "ill," in the sense of being deviant from his nature. Illness, according to him, derives from a pattern of affect that places us in conflict with ourselves—hence the "secondary" suffering evoked throughout this chapter. Even where reason is considered a viable match for the unruly imagination, as staged in the consolatory dialogue between Montaigne's mind and his imagination, it is not a durable solution to being tossed about by the passions. Montaigne may be able to rationally talk himself out of *moments* of fear, but on a larger scale of human emotion the author needs to rely on instinct, rather than reason, to become whole—something that Pascal will pick up on nearly a century later. Judgment, for Montaigne, is that instinctive capacity that ensures a unity of self. Being whole is not contingent on temporal or spatial conditions, as it is for Pascal; it does not require us to go back in time to atone for misdeeds, nor does it demand that we project ourselves into a future state of reconciliation. It is based on the present entirely. To coincide with oneself means coinciding with one's *present* being, made possible through a proprioceptive form of knowledge (Starobinski) that only the author can access.

Montaigne's understanding of spiritual illness is actually two-fold. It springs from (a) not knowing oneself, and (b) not accepting what is one's own, whether it is a physical

sensation or a fleeting emotion, a recurring thought or a wild fantasy. The first form of alienation, not knowing, creates the primary, and in a sense, necessary layer of suffering. Secondary suffering comes from the manner in which we relate to the misappropriated or unappropriated parts of ourselves, especially those passions we might consider undesirable. Montaigne's unabashed avowal, "Je fay coustumierement entier ce que je fay, et marche tout d'une piece," is more than a mere assertion of will or worldly identity. It is an internal harmony (between body and mind) that creates the conditions for well-being. He both knows what belongs to him ("je n'ay guere de mouvement qui se cache et desrobe à ma raison") and consents to what he discovers ("…et qui ne se conduise à peu pres par le consentement de toutes mes parties, sans division, sans sedition intestine"). (III:2, "Du repentir," p. 853) There is an internal logic to this way of seeing himself, and it ensures that he integrates the unfamiliar parts of himself into the whole of who he is.

It is important to distinguish the whole as Montaigne conceives of it and the whole that Pascal adumbrates in the *Pensées*. Whereas for Montaigne health and integrity ultimately require no external authority for their validation, Pascal requires an additional vector for the attainment of well-being. The apologist literally maps himself onto the body of Christ, applying his wounds to the wounds of his savior, in order to coincide with the one who has been redeemed. In Pascal, God is always posited as the whole—a whole that can never be known in the way that Montaigne knows his fear and agitation or the cycle of his kidney stones. Knowing God means knowing the obstructions to God, which are the passions in the case of the interlocutor. It requires a familiarization both with oneself (one's passions) and with God, which leads to one and the same homecoming, because God's presence is that of "un être qui soit en nous, et qui ne soit pas nous."

Pascal goes on to explain: "Or, il n'y a que l'Être universel qui soit tel. Le royaume de Dieu est en nous. Le bien universel est en nous, est nous-même et n'est pas nous." (LG 485) In what appears to be a sheer enigma, Pascal locates the cure within each one of us, but is careful not to identify any one of us *as the cure*. His view is one of non-duality, but it presupposes that the subject has become aware of his belonging to God. Without this awareness, no healing is possible. If endowed with a consciousness of God, the self is a non-personal self (as is the case in Pascal's *Prière*), in service to the good of the whole, just as each member ought to work for the health of the entire body in the traditional theological metaphor. Without knowing that it belongs to God, and vice versa, the self will be like the skeptic who, when viewing his place in the vast, impersonal universe, cries out in horror at his apparent lack of belonging.

It was certainly not unusual to conceive of health in terms of wholeness or the subject's relationship to the whole. Health and wholeness have a long shared etymological history, beginning with the Greek *holon*, which shows up in a well-known passage from Plato's *Phaedrus*, in which Socrates suggests that we cannot hope to heal the body or know anything about the soul without knowing something about the whole. Gadamer offers a particularly cogent and concise summary of the relationship in *The Enigma of Health*: "In Greek the whole of being is *hole ousia*. Anyone knowing this phrase in Greek will also hear, alongside the expression 'the whole of being', the suggestion of 'hale and healthy being'. The being whole of the whole and being healthy of the whole, the healthiness of well-being, seem to be most intimately related. In German when one is unwell one says 'Es fehlt mir etwas' – literally, I am lacking in

something."[184] The sense of lack that Gadamer stresses near the end can be understood as both "some internal harmony is lacking in me" and "I am lacking in the greater harmony of the whole." As a medical term, health denotes the integrity and harmony of all the working parts of an organism, even if that harmony is hidden (as was true of the humoral system in early modern medicine). Spiritually speaking, it denotes something of the same, but with the idea that one's consciousness be attuned to the natural, theological, or cosmological whole. Coming home to the whole is a reflexive and deliberate activity that allows both authors to uproot the secondary suffering that results from any form of resistance. Resistance, in a sense, is severance from the whole. The use of the term health to describe what we would normally think of as happiness or peace of mind is particularly potent because it establishes a connection between knowing and being well. In both authors, to not know is to not be well. Equally, to not know the whole is to not know oneself. Knowing oneself requires the cooperation of many moving parts, "le consentement de toutes mes parties," says the author of the *Essais*. And it requires that these moving parts be contextualized in a greater working harmony. The therapeutic process, then, is a hermeneutic process, because it forces one to become familiar with those parts that were previously unknown, in order to restore one's belonging to the whole of being, whether it is oneself, nature, or God.

[184] Gadamer, *The Enigma of Health*, 73.

Chapter 3

Habits of Healing: Spiritual Health and the *Soma*

Introduction.

If spiritual health is a sort of psychological or emotional integrity – a being-with the unfolding of one's direct experience, or a coinciding with oneself in all the variety of affective experiences that may arise – Montaigne and Pascal show us that to attain this state of health we need to be first and foremost willing to meet the "problem" that purports to make us ill. To coincide with our best selves, they say, we need to traverse the thorny terrain of fear, anxiety, confusion, and despair, and learn to accommodate all the variety of affective responses elicited from either real or imagined disturbances. The passions were a well-established means of describing emotional *dis*-ease, and they are linked to spiritual illness inasmuch as they show each author the ways in which he is alien to the whole. To identify wholeheartedly with a particular passion is to adopt a partial view of reality, and we see this to be the case whenever Montaigne's apprehensive imagination overrides his judgment or Pascal's interlocutor gets seduced by worldly desires and misses his belonging to God. On the other hand, attending to the living, breathing body allows each author to recover his natural relationship with the whole, because of the unbiased and unobstructed view that the body affords. This means that the author's physical body has as much to do with spiritual healing as any effort to overcome the thoughts and emotions that promote "secondary," or emotional, suffering to begin with. While this argument is not at odds with previous scholars' work on philosophy as *therapeia*, the direct link between the body and emotional healing has not been

sufficiently addressed. What has been termed "spiritual exercises" by Pierre Hadot and André-Jean Voelke[185] should be understood, I contend, from a somatic perspective in Montaigne and Pascal, because both authors understand spiritual health predominantly in terms of the wholeness accessed through the body.

Whereas my focus in Chapter 2 was to identify those moments in each author's *œuvre* where the body is used metaphorically to diagnose and treat spiritual unrest, here I suggest that the relationship between the author's body and spiritual well-being is also literal. I show how the mere act of attending to the body is an expression of both physical and spiritual self-care. Philosophy is not understood in either author as a progressive separation from the body in order to access the divine and disembodied perspective of the *logos*; instead, it is properly conceived as a progressive merging with the felt sense, as an attempt to reconcile the body's messages with one's experience of the self. Montaigne's use of the body in this regard is especially illuminating. His most poignant moments of self-revelation come directly from his body's own voice and the signs it bears. Following the course of his kidney stones or falling from his horse are but two examples in which the author's awareness of his physical body promotes an awareness of the whole (nature, in both cases), which is what ultimately allows him to recover ease and tranquility. For Pascal, awareness of having a physical body, by virtue of feeling pain or terror, also has a great deal to do with spiritual healing. But the process is not so direct. Only by deliberately cultivating faith and, subsequently, receiving a new body in eternal life can the subject rejoin the whole (God) whence he has fallen. Remarkably enough, both authors are willing to submit that a fuller understanding of and respect for the body

[185] See André-Jean Voelke, *La philosophie comme thérapie de l'ame. Études de philosophie hellenistique* (Paris: Cerf, 1993) and Pierre Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002).

actually yield greater possibilities for spiritual well-being. In fact, the only genuine preparation we can make for spiritual health is to attend to the physical body.

Such is why the passions demand our attention. They provide the first level of indication that we are ill (i.e. that we are not at ease) and, because they have a bodily component, they also play an essential role in the healing process. Although the early modern period has come to be defined by what Susan James has called a "thoroughgoing dualism between body and mind," there is considerable evidence that philosophers of the time were not altogether beholden to such a view, especially when it came to therapeutic practices for managing the passions. In her monumental study *Passion and Action*, James makes a simple observation about the passions that belies a constant trafficking between affect and the physical organism: "Passions, it is agreed, have intrinsic physical manifestations which bridge emotion and action and are written on the body in facial expressions, blushings, trembling, and postures."[186] This "writing" on the body, most boldly documented by Montaigne, proves more than merely ornamental. It is a tool, in both authors, for interpretation and diagnosis—the only tool we have, apart from dialogue, to know the inner workings of the subject's mind and body.

Throughout the *Essais* we find ample descriptions of this sort, in which a person's outward expressions are explicitly linked to his or her moral integrity. One example comes from Montaigne's own "port de corps" in his chapter on presumption: "Il me souvient donc, que dès ma plus tendre enfance, on remerquoit en moy je ne sçay quel port de corps, et des gestes tesmoignants quelque vaine et sotte fierté. J'en veux dire premierement cecy, qu'il n'est pas inconvenient d'avoir des conditions et des propensions, si propres et si incorporées en nous, que nous n'ayons pas moyen de les

[186] Susan James, *Passion and Action* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 4.

sentir et recognoistre. Et de telles inclinations naturelles, le corps en retient volontiers quelque ply, sans nostre sceu et consentement." (II:17, "De la presumption," p. 670) This passage conveys well how the body, far from concealing the internal movements of the soul, becomes a screen on which others can read some truth about the character of a person. The passage begins with Montaigne recalling that "on" – the anonymous other – regularly observed some bodily sign or attitude that revealed "une vaine et sotte fierté," a characteristic one might normally try to hide. But Montaigne is not in the business of hiding—quite the contrary. He is motivated to understand the signs and symptoms of his body as a port of entry into his soul. He then makes a more general observation about the difficulty most of us have with feeling and recognizing ("sentir" and "recognoistre") our own natural inclinations, so ingrained are they into our physical disposition. We need a mirror to accurately perceive and apprehend our inner life; and without our even willing it, the body, accompanied by the author's self-awareness (an awareness that Starobinski calls "proprioceptive"), serves as just such a mirror. The body therefore has a didactic function: we can learn something quite valuable – in fact, irreplaceable – about an individual, either historical or contemporaneous, through the messages writ upon his or her body. We thus gain access to relatively unfiltered information about a person's mind and soul.

Similarly in Pascal, the body's outward expressions – trembling, perspiration, agitation, or repose – bespeaks a person's inner disposition, specifically as it relates to religious integrity. Disability and illness are nothing other than outward signs – or "figures" – of spiritual corruption. Not only do the emotions reveal something of a person's character, but classic forms of illness, such as fever or migraine, have moral

properties that await proper decoding. Until we can *feel* the symptoms of our illness, there is no hope for healing, since we will not know that we are ill. This is why both authors targeted our (physical) insensitivity as the main hindrance to health. Although most historians of the early modern period would concede that the body played a primordial role in understanding a person's moral character, it is easier to overlook the positive therapeutic potential of the body's ostensibly cumbersome signs. For Montaigne and Pascal, the bodily expressions of a particular passion, such as fear or desire, have a moral and therapeutic value in that they raise the author's awareness of his *hexis*, or internal disposition, and thus offer him a more complete and nuanced view of himself.

The primary purpose of understanding one's *hexis*, or *habitus* (Latin), is not to immediately go about changing or improving one's external behaviors—although both authors do acknowledge the power of physical behaviors to recondition internal states. The purpose of recognizing our *habitus* is instead to develop an awareness of what is always, already well, by cultivating an appreciation of our belonging to the whole. This understanding of the term will become particularly clear in Pierre Bourdieu's elaboration of *habitus* in the works of Pascal. But well before the twentieth century's sociological appropriation of the term, Aristotle defined it as a disposition arising out of action and experience in the world. In the *Nicomachean Ethics* (II. 5)*, hexis* is used to designate our ethical disposition with regard to virtuous action. In order for a behavior to become a moral disposition, it needs to be repeated numerous times, and with a considerable amount of effort in the beginning. Action is always required for the appropriate feelings to arise with respect to a particular virtue or vice. Aristotle defines *hexis* (translated here as "dispositions") in the following way: "as for dispositions, it is in terms of these that we

are well or badly disposed [*echomen*] in relation to the affections."[187] As one scholar puts is, "*hexis* is Aristotle's generic term for an entrenched psychic condition or state which develops through experience rather than congenitally."[188] In the twentieth century, Pierre Bourdieu will present a view of *habitus* that is concerned in equal measure with the quality of our relatedness to the world at hand, but this time grounded in sociology and anthropology, and in particular, Marcel Mauss' 1934 lectures before the Société de Psychologie on "les techniques du corps."[189] *Habitus*, while learned, is not something we can willfully manage, since it lies below the level of consciousness. Thus acting on it for the sake of virtue makes no logical sense; and yet, it *is* responsible for each person's capacity to meet the world with an appropriate response.

In his *Méditations pascaliennes*, Bourdieu offers a reading of the *Pensées* that is by turns sociological, spatial, and phenomenological, recasting the voice of the apologist in terms of its physical and social embeddedness. The "je" of the apologist becomes a

[187] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Christopher Rowe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 1105b25-27. Note that some translators opt for the more literal translation of *echomen* as "having" well or badly with regard to the affections.

[188] Thorton C. Lockwood, "Habituation, Habit, and Character in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*," in *A History of Habit: From Aristotle to Bourdieu*, ed. Tom Sparrow et al. (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2013), 23.

[189] In Marcel Mauss' 1934 lectures before the Société de Psychologie on "les techniques du corps," the notion of *habitus* was first introduced as a lens for understanding the variation of physical behaviors across different cultures and time periods. He framed it in terms of the techniques made available to an individual as he or she is growing up within a particular sociocultural context, "les façons dont les hommes, société par société, d'une façon traditionnelle, savent se servir de leur corps." His call was to unite the three axes of biology, psychology, and society in the study of human behavior, and *habitus*, as he saw it, succeeded in doing just that. It was the most complete expression of the concrete, circumstantial matrix within which all human beings operate, and could thus counteract our overreliance on abstract reasoning. He summarized his claims about the term thus: "Il ne désigne pas ces habitudes métaphysiques, cette « mémoire » mystérieuse, sujets de volumes ou de courtes et fameuses thèses. Ces « habitudes » varient non pas simplement avec les individus et leurs imitations, elles varient surtout avec les sociétés, les éducations, les convenances et les modes, les prestiges. Il faut y voir des techniques et l'ouvrage de la raison pratique collective et individuelle, là où on ne voit d'ordinaire que l'âme et ses facultés de répétition." (Mauss, "Les techniques du corps," in *Journal de Psychologie* XXXII (March 15 – April 15 1936), 5; accessed November 12, 2014, http://classiques.uqac.ca/classiques/mauss_marcel/socio_et_anthropo/6_Techniques_corps/techniques_corps.pdf)

habitus unto itself, "un système de dispositions"; it is "englobé, inscrit, impliqué" in social and physical space.[190] His definition of *habitus* is one that places the subject not only in a position of technical apprenticeship, following Mauss' definition, but a position, in a sense, that is no position at all, so inextricable is the subject from "le cours du monde." He defines *habitus* as a manner of relating, but, since it is a closed loop of receiving and creating reality, it is a manner of relating that does not allow for differentiation between the subject and object. In Bourdieu's own words:

> Manière particulière, mais constante, d'entrer en relation avec le monde, qui enferme une connaissance permettant d'anticiper le cours du monde, l'habitus est immédiatement présent, sans distance objectivante, au monde et à l'à venir qui s'y annonce (…). *Exposé au monde*, à la sensation, au sentiment, à la souffrance, etc., c'est-à-dire engagé dans le monde, en gage et en jeu dans le monde, le corps (bien) disposé à l'égard du monde est, dans la même mesure, orienté vers le monde et ce qui s'y donne immédiatement à voir, à sentir et à pressentir ; il est capable de le maitriser en lui apportant une réponse adaptée…[191]

The body that is "(bien) disposé" is oriented towards the world in such a way as to respond appropriately ("apport[er] une réponse adaptée"), or in Aristotle's ethical view, to act virtuously. This same body is also subject to sensation, feeling, and suffering ("sensation," "sentiment," and "souffrance")—signs that usually alert us when something is awry. But, paradoxically, it is the subject's very implication in the world – through feeling and sensation – that allows him to master the world ("le maitriser") through his sensitivity to "ce qui s'y donne immédiatement à voir, à sentir et à pressentir." He can act appropriately because he is *of the world*. In other words, his adaptive responses stem more from *acting with* the world than from *acting on* the world. Though he may perceive himself to be separate from the world, and thus "ill," his very embeddedness ensures that

[190] Bourdieu, *Méditations pascaliennes* (Paris: Seuil, 1997), 157.

[191] Ibid, 170 (original emphasis).

he is already whole. Bourdieu's view of the subject as inseparable from the world (and thus the whole) begs the question of health anew: is health a matter of "becoming whole" and "maintaining wholeness," or is it simply the awareness of something (the *habitus*) that is already well-suited to the whole? In the latter case, being healthy would mean appreciating the wholeness already present and ceasing to manipulate the whole as it is given. Montaigne's appreciation of nature's wisdom throughout the *Essais* would be a crowning example of this alternative understanding of human health.

The usefulness of the world, in this latter view, is to give us the sensation of existing by providing disruption. Through the suffering, sensation, and feeling alluded to above, illness raises our awareness—something that cannot be accomplished by health alone. Montaigne articulates this point succinctly: "Les corps raboteux se sentent, les polis se manient imperceptiblement. La maladie se sent, la santé, peu ou point : ny les choses qui nous oignent, au prix de celles qui nous poignent." (III:10, "De mesnager sa volonté," p. 1068) Disruption, it would seem, is a necessary feature of self-revelation; and, for Montaigne, it needs to be *felt* in order for it to be understood and mastered. The metaphor he employs is revealing: when our experience is too well-oiled (*oigner* in Middle French meant "huiler" or "graisser") we do not have as much information as when we are abruptly seized ("poign[é]") by reality. Hans-Georg Gadamer, three centuries later,[192] makes a similar observation: "The fundamental fact remains that it is

[192] Although Gadamer was not writing from an early modern perspective, I rely on his words throughout this chapter because he characterizes exceptionally well the questions of health and healing that pertain directly to Montaigne and Pascal (i.e. How do we know we are ill? What are the roles of self and other in the process of healing? What is the definition of health and, more broadly, well-being?).

illness and not health which 'objectifies' itself…"[193] He explains that "it is part of our nature as living beings that our conscious self-awareness remains largely in the background so that our enjoyment of good health is constantly concealed from us."[194] From this standpoint, one's sense of wholeness relies on disruption to make itself known and felt. Much more than the absence of disruption – disruption being inevitable, in any case, since we are exposed to the world – spiritual health is predicated on disruptions that are accompanied by the subject's self-awareness. Awareness of *physical* disruptions, in particular, plays a potent role in healing, because bodily illness necessarily draws attention back to the self by the sheer immediacy of pain. Provided the detail both authors give to their own physical suffering as it relates to philosophical practice, it makes sense that the physical body was considered a convincing means of self-revelation. It may not have been the only means, but in this chapter I assert that the body constituted the *privileged means* of enacting and appreciating the wholeness discussed above. Through three categories of somatic exercise (which I introduce below), I show how the authors' familiarization with their bodies is tantamount to a familiarization with the whole.

First, in *reading the body*, each author gains access to a form of self-knowledge which – if we concede that body and soul mirror one another – reveals to him his internal disposition. This practice, which could be called bodily hermeneutics, relies on a traditional understanding of the passions but is not limited to the classic medical categories of sign and symptom. There is value, to be sure, in the act of observing, recording, sorting, and interpreting various *indications*, as they were known at the time;

[193] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Enigma of Health: The Art of Healing in a Scientific Age*, trans. Jason Gaiger et al. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 107.

[194] Ibid, 112.

but for both authors, these bodily indications, when interpreted philosophically or theologically, issue a larger statement about the wellness of a person in his entirety. The data serves as a reflection of the soul, revealing the author's relationship to himself, to change, and ultimately to his own mortality. It also leaves him with a basic moral choice: how should he *use* this information about himself?

Second, in *disciplining the body*, each author sets out to relate differently to his internal disposition by disrupting the habitual patterns of his outward behavior. Since the mind is susceptible to changes in the body and different behavioral patterns, each author is effectively able to fashion himself (to use Alexander Nehamas' terminology) by choosing to practice particular gestures, postures, attitudes, movements, and expressions. Hence, Pascal thought it imperative to kneel and take holy water as a way of cultivating faith internally. Montaigne, likewise, credited his physical experiences of falling from his horse and suffering from kidney stones as training his mind to accept the inevitability of death; these bodily events were for him a concrete expression of the classic spiritual exercise *praemeditatio mortis*.

Finally, in *forgetting the body*, both Montaigne and Pascal demonstrate, each in his own way, the power of letting go, as an essentially somatic exercise but with profound spiritual consequences. In leaving the body to itself, to nature, or to God, each author becomes like a wise physician whose *technê* disappears into the natural order and whose principal creation, health, cannot be manufactured at all. In order to reach this stage, the *habitus* needs to trust the world enough to let go into the world of which it is a part. Bourdieu speaks of this moment precisely in terms of "forgetting": "The *habitus* – embodied history, internalized as a second nature and so *forgotten as history* [my

emphasis] – is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product. […] The *habitus* is a spontaneity without consciousness or will."[195] For Montaigne, this is his intimate familiarity with nature; and for Pascal, his faith in God. At this stage of transcendence, the body, although present, no longer imposes itself, for its function as a vehicle of self-revelation has receded into the background. This stage still implies a relationship between awareness and the body, but one that presumes a perfect coincidence of the two terms, such that no effort is required to manage or act upon the body.

In the following sections, I deploy these three categories of somatic exercise to ask of each author what specific purpose the body served in the larger scheme of philosophy as *therapeia*. What do reading, disciplining, and forgetting the body have to do with the passions of the soul or peace of mind? What evidence is there that the body contains both the source of illness and its cure? Finally, is there a way of understanding healing through the lens of *habitus*, even if as subjects we are not allowed to act upon it?

Part I: Montaigne.

Reading the body: historia *in service of self-healing.*

Near the end of the *Essais*, Montaigne offers a modest resume of his life's project: "En fin, toute ceste fricassée que je barbouille ici, n'est qu'un registre des essais de ma vie : qui est pour l'interne santé exemplaire assez, à prendre l'instruction à contrepoil. Mais quant à la sante corporelle, personne ne peut fournir d'experience plus utile que moy : qui la presente pure, nullement corrompue et alterée par art, et par opination."

[195] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, trans. Richard Nice (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 56.

(III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1126) While Montaigne admits that his long "register of essays" (to be taken as trials or experiments) may not provide a straightforward example of internal health – better to "prendre l'instruction à contrepoil" – the *Essais* are, he assures us, an accurate depiction of his physical health, a veritable template of self-care, because he presents it without the interference of "art" or "opination" (without excessive censure or discussion). If we take the author at his word, the *Essais* can be read as a medical text, pure and exacting in their description of Montaigne's body, unrelenting in their cataloguing of physical signs and symptoms, much like a medical case history.

Montaigne is famous for his catalogues of symptoms and habits that reveal an impressively intimate relationship with his body. His practice of carefully documenting his physical states across time echoes the ancient and early modern medical genre of *historia*, as alluded to in previous chapters. Some have argued that Montaigne's *Essais* can be read primarily as a vast collection of *historiae*, compiled in the tradition of early modern medical case histories.[196] Gianna Pomata's formidable history of the term and its proliferation across early modern Europe gives us some sense of the descriptive and observational practices associated with the genre: "…[T]he medical *historia* carried a strong empiricist connotation. It meant *sensata cognitio*, knowledge based on sense perception, as well as the report thereof. The medical *historia*, as *historia* in general, held a prominent place in the early modern vocabulary of experience, and its spectacular rise as a form of medical writing is part of the wider history of the varieties of early modern

[196] See for example Stephen Pender, "Between Medicine and Rhetoric," *Early Science and Medicine* 10 (2005): 36-64 and Idem, "Examples and Experience: On the Uncertainty of Medicine," *BJHS* 39 (2006): 1-28.

scholarly empiricism."[197] In claiming sense perception to be the centerpiece of medical *historia*, Pomata effectively places the body at the center of the "early modern vocabulary of experience." The body is both the vehicle for information-gathering (through the eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and sense of touch) and the object of study in the case of medical writing. This is crucial since it is through Montaigne's own senses, rather than through reading or conversation, that he arrives at some semblance of self-understanding. Because he is willing to be both patient and physician, the feeler and the observer, the project of writing his own *historia* becomes possible, even natural. In other words, for the *historia* to take shape and be of any use to Montaigne, the author needs to be a willing participant in his own diagnosis and treatment, at once susceptible to unpleasant sensations and objectively cognizant of the organism in its entirety, as something "other." Either too much distance will yield objective data with no felt experience, or too little distance will create a situation in which the author, engulfed by his own subjective impressions, will miss the larger patterns of illness and healing. This dual perspective creates an extraordinarily rich account of the author's body – richer perhaps than the *historia* as it would have been composed by an outside authority – and it is only by moving back and forth between the two perspectives that any satisfactory empirical description can come about. The *va-et-vient* that Montaigne exercises between the raw data gleaned from the depths of his body – from his colon, groins, or intestinal track – and the "regard d'en haut" that Pierre Hadot associates with the philosophical view on life constitutes, in effect, the author's primary mode of self-study.

[197] Gianna Pomata et al., ed., *Historia: Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 106.

In Montaigne's own words, this back-and-forth movement involves both feeling and judgment: "Mon jugement m'empesche bien de regimber et gronder contre les inconvenients que nature m'ordonne à souffrir, mais non pas de les sentir." (III:5, "Sur des vers de Virgile," pp. 885-6) He is both the feeling subject of his body's sensations and the benevolent witness to all that nature makes him suffer. Feeling is an inevitable part of the human condition, and Montaigne, like any other sentient being, cannot help but feel (*sentir*) the "inconvenients" that befall him—despite the objective filter of his judgment. Such is his *habitus*: his embeddedness in a particular body in space and time that is "exposé au monde," as Bourdieu put it, and that is susceptible to suffering and all variety of sense perceptions. Where judgment does play a role is in tempering the author's reactions to physical pain. He could "regimber" (denoting the stubbornness of a horse or donkey that balks under its owner's hand) and "gronder" (the rumbling that conceals contempt or dissatisfaction), but his judgment prevents him from doing so and thus thwarts the onset of secondary suffering that usually arises with physical pain. Instead, he reports *feeling* the pain in his body: this is a point that should not be missed, for it suggests that feeling, per se, is not the problem. In any case, feeling cannot be staved off; it is immediate and spontaneous. Not even judgment, the faculty that most ensures objective distance, can circumvent it. The main obstacle, it would seem, to feeling healthy and whole is not the raw sensation itself, but the mind's resistance to and commentary on the actual event.

Montaigne's own admission that he feels his bodily suffering keenly – "[m]ais les souffrances vrayement essentielles et corporelles, je les gouste bien vifvement" (II:37, "De la ressemblance des enfans au peres," p. 797) – should therefore not be regarded as

bad news. His capacity to "gouster" his bodily pain "bien vifvement" reveals a sensitivity that will allow him to discern with greater precision the state of his body and gain access to the bodily experiences of others. Once again, the problem is not in the feeling, but in the mind's loyalty to the imagination, which creates layer upon layer of unnecessary suffering. Montaigne's opinion on this point is unequivocal: "la pluspart des facultez de nostre ame, comme nous les employons, troublent plus le repos de la vie, qu'elles n'y servent." (II:37, "De la ressemblance des enfans au peres," p. 797) If we were to really reflect on the subtle tyranny of the imagination and all its machinations, we would see, Montaigne suggests, that it is quite difficult to rest in pure sensation. It takes not only the proper use of judgment to resist the inventions of the imagination, but a more radical form of "being-with" the body that returns one to the reality of a situation, however unsavory or grave it may seem. This follows the classic Stoic understanding that the unpleasant circumstances of life, such as physical pain, are not the cause of our discontent. Rather, our mental commentary on the events themselves, along with our lack of discernment regarding what we control, creates the conditions for spiritual or psychological *dis*-ease.

Montaigne's hypersensitivity to physical sensation puts him in greater contact with the suffering around him as well. If feeling his own body's pain allowed him to occupy the role of patient, applying this capacity to others is what allows him to develop the diagnostic skills of a physician. "La veue des angoisses d'autruy m'angoisse materiellement," he reports, "et a mon sentiment souvent usurpé le sentiment d'un tiers. Un tousseur continuel irrite mon poulmon et mon gosier. Je visite plus mal volontiers les malades, ausquels le devoir m'intéresse, que ceux ausquels je m'attens moins, et que je

considère moins." (I:21, "De la force de l'imagination," pp. 98-9) As this short passage suggests, Montaigne's understanding of others' symptoms is fundamentally physical, not just intellectual or emotional; he is anguished "materiellement" above all. Therefore, to speak of diagnostic reasoning based on analogy or exemplarity would miss the mark. He takes on the symptoms of others in an immediate way, and this, by the mere sight of their suffering. Sight, it turns out, is crucial to being able to feel what is outside of one's own experience; it is the gatekeeper between inner and outer experience, allowing one to appropriate through feeling what is not one's own. We will see this to be true in Pascal as well, when, for example, the apologist has us react to the sight of the two infinities with horror and awe, that we might understand in a bodily way our meager place relative to God.

The above passage comes in the midst of a chapter that features Montaigne's mistrust of the imagination, where it becomes apparent how often the imagination exaggerates the threat of physical pain. We could read the passage as a sign of the author's displeasure at having to feel so acutely others' suffering. But this capacity, this imbrication of self and other, is precisely what makes Montaigne an expert physician, because he is able to access phenomena that are either invisible or external to him. One of the chief hardships of the medical profession has always been to establish a reliable means of deducing a syndrome from an unorderly collection of signs and symptoms. *Historia*, in addition to a well-trained "mental sight," were considered the two pillars of a sound medical diagnosis in the Hippocratic tradition.[198] The art of reading another's body, without having recourse to dissection in most cases, was essentially an imaginative act, in which mental projections of the invisible allowed the physician to compile enough

[198] See Pender, "Between Medicine and Rhetoric," 47.

probable evidence, either through analogy or exemplarity, to diagnose a condition. But the missing component was always a direct experience of the patient's suffering, and so, Montaigne's acute physical sensitivity to others' symptoms would have given him a tremendous diagnostic advantage.

And yet, by feeling others' symptoms, Montaigne was not aiming to diagnose disease as a physician would. When he collects information about his body or another's, it is almost always with the practical intention of differentiating between what is healthy and what is not. Far from scientific or didactic, his motives are predominantly personal and therapeutic, to find out what is worth following or avoiding: "Pour m'estre dès mon enfance, dressé à mirer ma vie dans celle d'autruy, j'ay acquis une complexion studieuse en cela. Et quand j'y pense, je laisse eschaper autour de moy peu de choses qui y servent : contenances, humeurs, discours. J'estudie tout : ce qu'il me faut fuir, ce qu'il me faut suyvre. Ainsi à mes amis, je descouvre par leurs productions, leurs inclinations internes : Non pour renger ceste infinie variété d'actions si diverses et si descouppées, à certains genres et chapitres, et distribuer distinctement mes partages et divisions, en classes et regions cognues." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1123) Having developed a "studious complexion" in these affairs (*complexion* itself being a medical term, denoting one's bodily constitution relating to the balance of the four humors), Montaigne reports being able to discern a person's internal inclinations from his or her outward behaviors ("productions"). This would follow a classic model of Hippocratic diagnosis, according to which certain outward characteristics corresponded to a component of the patient's personality or temperament. Montaigne pays particular attention to the "contenances, humeurs [et] discours" that bespeak a person's moral disposition, or *hexis*. Yet, contrary

to a physician's objectifying point of view, Montaigne enters into a much more intimate relationship with the appearances of others' bodies. As we gleaned from the previously cited passage, the mere sight of others' bodies affects Montaigne in a profoundly physical way ("materiellement"). His particular capacity to "mirer [s]a vie dans celle d'autruy" qualifies as an intimate act of familiarization. His regard is never wholly objective, even when he is observing others' bodies, since his interests are eminently personal. Thus the expression "mirer [s]a vie dans celle d'autruy" can be taken as more than a symbolic or imaginative act; Montaigne literally incorporates into his repertoire of behaviors those actions he observes to be salubrious and morally sound. He makes it clear that he would not have paid such close attention to others' outward characteristics if they did not teach him something about how to conduct his own life. He admits that he studies everything for the simple reason of knowing "ce qu'il [lui] faut fuir, ce qu'il [lui] faut suyvre"—and adds, "[n]on pour renger ceste infinie variété d'actions si diverses et si descouppées, à certains genres et chapitres." His observations, in other words, are not destined for physicians' manuals or the diagnostic categories of medical treatment. Montaigne studies bodies, as a physician would, for the value they might give to his own lived experience.

A particularity of Montaigne's writing is that he is able to perform the exact same hermeneutic act with regard to his own body. The practice of recording and reviewing past examples of his body gives him a similar repertoire of artifacts to better understand his internal drives and the sum of his life experiences. His "feuilles Sybillines," as he affectionately calls them, were fragments of writing that served as concrete reminders of his body in moments past, so that his mind at present could rest with the ease of knowing the body's natural cycles. In this practice of archiving the body, as I call it, Montaigne

practically composes his own medical case history. With every new symptom that arises, he makes a note – "Et comme quelque nouveau symptome survient à mon mal, je l'escris" – and reports having compiled enough of these notes to constitute a genuine study of his illnesses and recovery patterns. His practice corresponds to two particular definitions of *historia* outlined by Gianna Pomata in her essay "*Praxis Historialis*: The Uses of Historia in Early Modern Medicine." The first, owing to Galen's transmission of ancient Empiricist views in his *De experientia medica* and *Subfiguratio empirica*, frames *historia* as "the narration of what one has either seen oneself (also called in Greek *autopsia*) or read in books as having been seen by other people (*historia*)."[199] The first aspect of this definition, *autopsia*, fits well with the author's intention throughout the *Essais* to record only his own direct, unmitigated experience. Montaigne opens a rather lengthy passage of *historia* by this notice of fidelity: "J'ay assez vescu, pour mettre en compte l'usage, qui m'a conduict si loing. Pour qui en voudra gouster : j'en ay faict l'essay, son eschançon. En voyci quelques articles, comme la souvenance me les fornira." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1127). The author assures us that he himself (the *je* here) has taken the first sample of his long experience; he is the cupbearer or "praegustator"[200] of himself, virtually offering his body for others to taste. He practically bodies himself forth, as he presents "quelques articles" from his experience, relying on memory ("la souvenance") as the only intermediary. In this, Montaigne takes the eyewitness stance

[199] Gianna Pomata, Historia*: Empiricism and Erudition in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 112.

[200] *Jean Nicot: Le Thresor de la langue francoyse* (1606), accessed November 4, 2013, http://artflsrv01.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=eschanson.

(*autopsia*) to an entirely new level. His reports are not only visual[201]; they are gustatory as well, and he is able to do this precisely because the experience he is reporting is internal to him. Since Montaigne is both the collector of experiences and the subject of experience himself, his version of *historia* creates a closed-loop system of testing and verification. The therapeutic value of the author's experiences therefore pertains primarily to himself and only secondarily to readers of the *Essais*.

The second definition of *historia* cited by Pomata concerns more directly the *individual* case history. She explains how thanks to several late Renaissance commentators on the Hippocratic corpus (specifically *Epidemics* I and III), "the term *historia* acquired new currency in medicine as applying to the description of a single case over time." She goes on to elaborate the significance of its rise to prominence in medical jargon: "This was a novelty: previously, *exemplum* had been the word most often used in medical literature to indicate the individual case, or what we would roughly call a case history. In medicine as in natural history, *historia* had usually stood instead for an orderly collection of examples."[202] This new acceptation of the term, as pertaining to the evolution of a single case across time, captures a common practice in the *Essais* in which Montaigne refers to his past recorded experiences to better apprehend his current state of being. His body of the past, now contained in the present "body" of writing, provides all the evidence or encouragement he needs to return to a semblance of peace. He explains: "feuilletant ces petits brevets descousus, comme des feuilles Sibyllines, je ne faux plus de

[201] As in this avowal: "Je m'estalle entier : C'est un *skeletos*, où d'une veue les veines, les muscles, les tendons paroissent, chasque piece en son siège. L'effect de la toux en produisoit une partie : l'effect de la palleur ou battement de cœur un' autre, et doubteusement." (II:6, "De l'exercitation," p. 398)

[202] Pomata, *Historia*, 112.

trouver où me consoler." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1141) Acting as a prophylactic against excessive alarm and despair, these "petits brevets" give the distinct impression of certitude when faced with physical uncertainty. The value of Montaigne's "feuilles Sybillines" is found in the sense of calm they impart; they are a therapeutic tool, put to paper, that positively affect the body in real time. They constitute *curationes* unto themselves, a genre of humanist medical narrative that Pomata characterizes as "therapies legitimized mainly by efficacy rather than by doctrine."[203] In addition to their standard formula of containing recipes for a cure, which became the central feature of traditional genres such as the *experimenta* and the *consilium*, the *curationes* paid unprecedented attention to the individual case narrative and contained a sometimes surprising amount of detail about the patient and physician (Pomata). Montaigne, setting out to find what works and what does not ("ce qu'il [lui] faut fuir, ce qu'il [lui] faut suyvre"), proceeds with just such "legitimization by efficacy." Observation and description are vital inasmuch as they contribute to the discovery and actualization of a cure, or *curatio*, whose Latin root, *cura*, means care or concern.

But much more than the calm they impart, these writings give the author a sweeping impression of the whole. The cyclical nature of his kidney stones was a case in point. If before he was able to find relief from intractable physical pain, why not again given the right set of conditions? Referring specifically to his kidney stones later in the same passage, he expresses undue confidence in his body's natural cycles: "Me sert aussi l'accoustumance, à mieux esperer pour l'advenir. Car la conduicte de ce vuidange, ayant continué si long temps ; il est à croire, que nature ne changera point ce train, et n'en adviendra autre pire accident, que celui que je sens." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1141)

[203] Ibid, 126.

Familiarity ("l'accoustumance"), it turns out, is the author's best ally for attaining peace of mind. By scribbling these little notes about his body's natural unfolding, he can at least be sure that matters are not likely to get worse—which is no small accomplishment, given medicine's tendency to err on the side of alarm.

It is noteworthy that when the body fails, either through old age or some disease like the stone, the author continues to rely on his body – rather than his thoughts, fantasies, reasoning, or imagination – as a source of consolation. He could have just as easily paid a physician to give him advice or opened a physician's manual to unearth some provisional solution. Or still, he could have descended into the kaleidoscopic fantasies of his mind, taking pleasure in some projection of a past or future deliverance. What did he find in the body that the mind or reason could not offer? In the final chapter of the *Essais*, he offers some clue about the value of staying with his body: "Je ne me juge que par vray sentiment, non par discours: A quoi faire ? puisque je n'y veux apporter que l'attente et la patience. Voulez-vous sçavoir combien je gagne à cela ? Regardez ceux qui font autrement, et qui dependent de tant de diverses persuasions et conseils : combien souvent l'imagination les presse sans le corps." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1144) Judgment is key to this passage, and as we saw in Chapter 2, it is the faculty that grants the author access to a vision of the whole. Here, Montaigne aligns his judgment with sensation ("sentiment") rather than with the reasoning mind ("discours"). "Je ne me juge que par vray sentiment" is a resounding statement about the author's preferred means of accessing the whole as well as a sense of wholeness. The way to wholeness is through the body—and potentially through the body that is sick and suffering. He chooses the body

because his approach to illness is to wait ("l'attente") and endure ("la patience"), an approach that already implies a keen awareness of the body's changing sensations. Further reason to pay attention to the body comes from watching those who do the opposite: it suffices to observe how oppressed ("pressés") they seem when they let "tant de diverses persuasions et conseils" rule their view of themselves. Making judgments without the body's support is therefore a grave deficiency in the way that most of us view ourselves, as well as a marked deviation from our essential nature as embodied creatures. This theme resurfaces throughout the *Essais* and is usually intended as criticism of medicine's futility (which Montaigne calls "la vanité de cet art" in the same passage). The advantage of the body is that it always tells the truth; it cannot err, for it presents itself without intermediary. *We* err, however, in our interpretation of it, in the ways that we allow the passions, such as fear and hope, to spin out of control in response to it. Hence, a key strategy for healing is to place our attention appropriately, so as to not incur further, unnecessary suffering. By paying attention to our bodies we actually gain access to a larger, more accurate perspective of ourselves and the whole.

This larger perspective is crucial for two reasons. The first is that it performs a conciliatory function. As we saw with Montaigne's "feuilles Sybillines," paying attention to the body provides enough evidence that healing and health are possible, and this evidence acts as an antidote to the passions of fear and despair. Secondly, paying attention to the body resituates the author within the context of the whole. The point is not to manufacture "quelque prognostique favorable" at every turn, but to know enough about one's body to have the freedom of mind to judge the present situation appropriately, without the added busywork of the imagination. Montaigne admits that

"[à] faute de memoire naturelle, [il] en forge de papier": he concretizes his experience, so as not to lie prey to the unruly predilections of his imagination and thus create something unreal. These observational notes, then, are more than merely clinical; they are philosophical to the highest degree, in that they help the author to transcend his partial view of reality and to know more accurately how to act with regard to the world. If we recall Pierre Hadot's definition of philosophical practice as just that – the attainment of a vision vaster than the limited concerns of one's personal, mortal body[204] – we could submit that all of the ostensibly medical practices contained in the *Essais* – *historia* and *curationes* chief among them – have additional philosophical import. Philosophy as a way of life is in part an expansion of the subject's awareness that is effected, paradoxically enough, through a sustained focus on the personal body. And this awareness necessarily includes both sides of the equation: illness and the cure, life and death.

Disciplining the body—preparing for death by death's means.

If reading the body essentially comes down to making honest contact with sensation, then disciplining the body is only an extension of that practice, since it consists in acting in accord with the sensory clues that have been collected for use in the *historia* and *curationes*. The discipline I refer to in this section does not correspond to the physical *askesis* of Plato and his followers, a much more volitional form of exercise that

[204] "[La pratique de la philosophie] est essentiellement un effort pour prendre conscience de nous-mêmes, de notre être-au-monde, de notre être-avec-autrui, un effort aussi pour « réapprendre à voir le monde », comme disait Merleau-Ponty, pour atteindre aussi à une vision universelle, grâce à laquelle nous pourrons nous mettre à la place des autres et dépasser notre propre partialité." (Pierre Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique ?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995), 415.)

was intended to deprive the body of certain pleasures in order to strengthen the spirit.[205] Montaigne's is a discipline of *acceptance* that comes from having made unmitigated contact with the body's subjective experience and then seeing clearly his belonging to the natural order. It is a just-ness with regard to himself, an alignment of his actions with concrete observation. To be *un*disciplined in this sense would mean to be out of touch, literally, with the moment-to-moment unfolding of his actual, physical experience, living instead out of hope or fear, pining after something unreal. Montaigne captures this latter state well when he describes our basic non-acceptance of pain, illness, and death: "C'est la crainte de la mort et de la douleur, l'impatience du mal, une furieuse et indiscrete soif de la guérison, qui nous aveugle ainsi : C'est pure lascheté qui nous rend nostre croyance si molle et maniable." (II:37, "De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres," p. 821) As I argued in Chapter 2, it is not illness and death, per se, that pose a problem in Montaigne's view; it is the passions that develop in response to them, creating a secondary level of suffering and rendering our morale "molle et maniable." Our cowardice in these matters, along with our ineffectiveness in managing the passions (such as "la crainte" and "l'impatience"), provide a case in point for why we need discipline.

Montaigne admits that he is no less governed by cowardice and distraction, and so he cultivates a discipline of assuming the worst and facing head-on the "accidens" of life that are out of his control: "À faute d'avoir assez de fermeté, pour souffrir l'importunité des accidens contraires, ausquels nous sommes subjects, et pour ne me pouvoir tenir tendu à regler et ordonner les affaires, je nourris autant que je puis en moy cett' opinion : m'abandonnant du tout à la fortune, de prendre toutes choses au pis ; et ce pis là, me resoudre à le porter doucement et patiemment. C'est à cela seul, que je travaille, et le but

[205] Ibid, 291-92.

auquel j'achemine tous mes discours." (II:17, "De la presumption," p. 679) Not having the "fermeté" to wrestle with nature's own plan, Montaigne makes it his practice, his "travail," to patiently coincide with life's surprises. These proclamations could easily be taken as a display of mental gymnastics, as the author's ability to replace one opinion about life with another or to modify the content of his discourse so that it aligns with a more peaceful view of life ("C'est…le but auquel j'achemine tous mes discours"). But, once again, there is more at stake than an exercise of purely mental endurance. His "travail" arises in response to the physical conditions of his existence, "l'importunité des accidens contraires," such as his ill health and aging body. The suffering that most immediately demands a philosophical response is therefore corporal, material, and existential. To be sure, facing his fear of death or abandoning himself to a love for life requires a significant shift in *mind*; but his responses to life and death only become known to him through the "accidens" of everyday life, through those concrete barriers of pain or discontent that require an equally concrete response. Rather than run away from those unsavory parts of his experience, his chooses to expect the worst and bear it "gently and patiently."

Montaigne's discipline, then, is not to ward off or diminish sickness and death, but to draw nearer, to accommodate the whole range of experiences, and, where necessary, to "s'engager dans la maladie": "Si c'est une mort courte et violente, nous n'avons pas loisir de la craindre : si elle est autre, je m'apperçois qu'à mesure que je m'engage dans la maladie, j'entre naturellement en quelque desdain de la vie." (I:19, "Que Philosopher, c'est apprendre à mourir," p. 92) In the simple dependent clause "à mesure que je m'engage dans la maladie" is contained the whole of Montaigne's

discipline, which is a form of somatic exercise. The discipline of making contact with physical sensation becomes disdain *naturally*. Hence the independent clause that ensues: "j'entre *naturellement* en quelque desdain de la vie" [my emphasis]. This is a key point, because for Montaigne nothing about philosophical discipline should be forced; if anything, the end result should be effortless and uncontrived.

Nowhere is there a more pointed example of his "natural disdain" for life than in Montaigne's famous recollection of his fall from his horse, which proves to be one of the seminal philosophical moments in the *Essais*. It is a fine illustration of the discipline that results from remaining open and accommodating to the utmost degree of uncertainty. When Montaigne unexpectedly falls from his horse one afternoon, he loses consciousness and shortly after finds himself, having regained his awareness, without the usual sensations to orient himself in his body. This is a cardinal moment, both in the course of Montaigne's life and in the evolution of the *Essais*, because for the first time the author can test his somatic experience against the hypothesis that death is something to be feared—a paramount investigation by philosophical standards. To test the hypothesis, he has at least two means of gathering information: thought and sensation. "Quant aux functions de l'ame," reports Montaigne, "elles naissoient avec mesme progrez, que celles du corps." (II:6, "De l'exercitation," p. 392) As both faculties simultaneously returned to life, he had a choice to make: he could follow the information coming from his body or listen to the commentary of his mind and imagination. Between his imagination and the simple fact of feeling, he chooses the latter: "C'estoit une imagination que ne faisoit que nager superficiellement en mon ame, aussi tendre et aussi foible que tout le reste : mais à la verité non seulement exempte de desplaisir, ains meslée à ceste douceur, que sentent

ceux qui se laissent glisser au sommeil." What captures his attention is not the mind's potential to manufacture thoughts and judgments about the situation, but the sensation of pleasure and gentleness ("douceur"), reminiscent of the feeling (he uses the verb *sentir*) of falling asleep. Whether by conscious choice or instinct, Montaigne turns his attention to his body and draws his primary conclusions about the situation *from the body*, even though the information may be faint and poorly formed. "Cependant," he writes, "mon assiette estoit à la verité très-douce et paisible : je n'avoy affliction ny pour autruy ny pour moy : c'estoit une langueur et une extrême foiblesse, sans aucune douleur." The "cependant" looms large at the head of the sentence, indicating that his expectations of the situation are contradicted by actual sensation, by a feeling "très-douce et paisible" as well as a "langueur" and "extreme foiblese." His measure of truth, indicated by "à la verité," is the state of his body, knowable at that moment through a distinct *absence* of strong sensation. Nonetheless, Montaigne trusts this modest data, and trusts it enough to diagnose his entire situation as "bien heureuse": "C'eust esté sans mentir une mort bien heureuse : car la foiblesse de mon discours me gardoit d'en rien juger, et celle du corps d'en rien sentir. Je me laissy couler si doucement, et d'une façon si molle et si aisée, que je ne sens guere autre action moins poisante que celle-là estoit." He concludes that it was a fortunate death indeed, and attributes that fact to the "foiblesse de [s]on discours," or the absence of running commentary in his mind. To not judge death and to "se laisser couler" in circumstances outside of one's control were themselves Stoic practices meant to prepare the philosopher for the moment of dying. The fact that these "exercises" arise unexpectedly for Montaigne does not discredit them as exercises at all. Rather, it suggests that his lifelong habit of paying attention to the body has paid off: in the most crucial of

moments, he entrusts himself to the physical reality of the situation and is thus able to study his situation in a new light. His particular sensitivity to somatic memory then aids him in understanding retrospectively the ideal method for practicing death.

As he closes his report of the event, Montaigne reflects on the nature of discipline itself, and on how his fall from his horse, attenuated now to "un evénement si leger," is a philosophical lesson barring none: "Ce conte d'un evénement si leger, est assez vain, n'estoit l'instruction que j'en ay tirée pour moi : car à la verité pour s'aprivoiser à la mort, je trouve qu'il n'y a que de s'en avoisiner. Or, comme dit Pline, chacun est à soy-mesmes une très bonne discipline, pourveu qu'il ait la suffisance de s'espier de près. Ce n'est pas icy ma doctrine, c'est mon estude : et n'est pas la leçon d'autruy, c'est la mienne." (II:6, "De l'exercitation," p. 396) The instruction, of course, comes well after the actual event and is not the sort of instruction he could have received in school or from reading books. In a captivating turn of phrase, Montaigne explains what he has learned using the metaphor of taming death ("s'aprivoiser à la mort"), just as one would a wild beast. The only way to do so is to draw nearer ("s'en avoisiner")—so near that he has a felt experience of its potential. In retrospect, though, he is able to neatly frame the incident using the language of the schools: *discipline*, *doctrine*, *estude*, *leçon*. Invoking the Stoic adept Pliny, he concludes that each man is a good "discipline" unto himself, the term "discipline" denoting the education one might traditionally receive from an institution. But Montaigne later turns the meaning of "discipline" on its head: his report of the incident is not a form of authoritative knowledge ("doctrine"); it is his study ("estude"). He explains, in a parallel construction, that this lesson is not for others' use, but for himself alone ("et n'est pas la leçon d'autruy, c'est la mienne"). Beginning with

his mention of "discipline" and ending with "la leçon," Montaigne succeeds in restructuring the relationship between doctrinal authority and individual application. The "instruction" and "discipline" one would normally receive in an institutional setting have been reallotted to the province of the individual, to "chacun." The teaching one would expect to receive from an authority has now been inverted into a study; and, likewise, the lesson usually intended for another is now reserved for Montaigne alone. The instruction that he gains from the incident bespeaks a thoroughly intimate relationship with himself, exempt from authority and outside observation. Perhaps that is the "suffisance" that we need in order to properly learn from ourselves. We need to spy on ourselves, he says, from very close up, which is tantamount to developing the appropriate discipline with regard to ourselves, both in the sense of learning a lesson and in the sense of using one's body well; for the "spying" that he does is focused primarily on *sensation*, made possible through a basically trusting relationship with his body.

Forgetting the body—discipline and its aftermath.

We begin to learn that trusting the body is tantamount to trusting nature's course. Countless times throughout the *Essais* we hear the author's injunction to entrust our experience to the wisdom of nature when faced with illness or death: "nature mesme nous preste la main, et nous donne courage" (I:19, "Que Philosopher, c'est apprendre à mourir," p. 92); "[m]ais nature nous y force" (I:19, "Que Philosopher, c'est apprendre à mourir," p. 94); "[q]ue nous ne sçaurions faillir à suivre nature" (III:12, "De la Physionomie," p. 1106); or the more ironic "[s]i vous ne sçavez pas mourir, ne vous chaille, nature vous en informera sur le champ, plainement et suffisamment ; elle fera

exactement ceste besogne pour vous, n'en empeschez vostre soing" (III:12, "De la Physionomie," p. 1097). These are pleasing axioms in their own right, but their application is quite specific to the author's own body. Montaigne's discovery of nature is facilitated through his experience of his body, and he has license to make such general claims because his understanding of nature is an understanding of nature *as it unfolds in his body*. In the passage below, Montaigne explains how these grand precepts might translate into a living practice of letting his body be: "J'ay pris, comme j'ay dict ailleurs, bien simplement et cruement, pour mon regard, ce precepte ancien : Que nous ne sçaurions faillir à suivre nature : que le souverain precepte, c'est de se conformer à elle. Je n'ay pas corrigé comme Socrates, par la force de la raison, mes complexions naturelles : et n'ay aucunement troublé par art, mon inclination. Je me laisse aller, comme je suis venu. Je ne combats rien." (III:12, "De la Physionomie," p. 1106) Most readers would recognize the so-called Epicurean voice of Montaigne in a passage such as this. The "precepte ancien" could refer to any number of Epicurean aphorisms that emphasized our absolute belonging to the material universe and our right to live a life of ease and pleasure. Characterizing Epicureanism as a practice of relaxing one's efforts, Pierre Hadot makes a case for Epicurean disciplines that resonates clearly with Montaigne's conception of following nature. In *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique ?*, Hadot summarizes the practice thus: "[E]n tout cela il fallait éviter l'effort et la tension. Bien au contraire, l'exercice fondamental de l'épicurien consistait dans la détente, la sérénité, dans l'art de jouir des plaisirs de l'âme et des plaisirs stables du corps."[206] His description finds a clear correlate in Montaigne's "Je me laisse aller, comme je suis

[206] Ibid, 194.

venu" and "Je ne combats rien," or his "Mes deux maistresses pieces vivent de leur grace en paix et en bon accord" (same passage as above). Still, we should not take the author's proclamations as vague spiritual ideals. They are grounded in the physical constraints of an ailing body—or inversely, in the tactile pleasures of a body in good stead. When Hadot cites "les plaisirs stables du corps," he is pointing primarily to the Epicurean attitude of knowing how to be satisfied with the body's basic needs: "Surtout il faut pratiquer la discipline des désirs, il faut savoir se contenter de ce qui est facile à atteindre, de ce qui satisfait les besoins fondamentaux de l'être, et renoncer à ce qui est superflu."[207] Montaigne's own contentment is expressed in his claim, "Je n'ai pas corrigé comme Socrates, mes complexions naturelles." Any correction of this sort would have been excessive, thus contradicting those basic Epicurean tenets of renouncing the superfluous and being satisfied with what is given; for in no case has nature demanded that the author change his natural state of being. Whereas Socrates was said to have gone to great efforts to redress his soul in compensation for an exceedingly ugly appearance, Montaigne will have none of that. Fortunately, for the latter, his nurse's milk, "mediocrement sain et temperé" (III:12, "De la Physionomie," p. 1106), bore a favorable outcome for both body and soul, and thus not much was in need of correction. But the same attitude applies to his faults and weaknesses: Montaigne does not go about counteracting his laziness, suppressing his fear, or operating on his kidney stones. He has not corrected his "complexions naturelles" by reason (philosophy) or his "inclination" by art (medicine). He exercises *in*action in all these cases, which is not to be confounded with passivity: the attention he brings to his bodily processes trains him in the subtle discipline of acceptance and letting-be.

[207] Ibid, 192.

In the medical context, this paradoxical sort of discipline was also a basic source of therapeutic wisdom. From a contemporary perspective, Gadamer reflects on the particular capacity of medicine to engage in a discipline of "letting be" or "leaving alone" that ultimately entrusts the final product of health to forces greater than the physician alone. In describing the practices of a mature physician, Gadamer encapsulates well the chief technique of medicine that stands apart from most traditional forms of *technê*. "What is supposed to emerge from the exercise of the physician's art," proclaims Gadamer, "is simply health, that is, nature itself." He continues: "[I]t is from the beginning a particular kind of doing and making which produces nothing of its own and has no material of its own to produce something from. The expert process of this art inserts itself entirely within the process of nature in so far as it seeks to restore this process when it is disturbed, and to do so in such a way that the art can allow itself to *disappear* once the natural equilibrium of health has returned."[208] If we look closely, this is what gives medicine its "enigmatic" and "elusive" character, to use Gadamer's words. The power to heal, like Montaigne's own sense of well-being, hinges on a return to nature itself, not on a deliberate course of action meant to yield a concrete result. Unlike other *technê* of the ancient world, health and well-being cannot be created and therefore the results belong to no one in particular. When Montaigne invokes the infallibility of nature's course, it is a gesture akin to the ancient physician entrusting the success of his *technê* to the evolution of a natural process. Gadamer is right to conclude that "the *techne* which is in question here [i.e. in ancient medicine] is clearly integrated into the course of nature in such a way that it can make its contribution within the natural process as a

[208] Gadamer, *The Enigma of Health*, 34 (my emphasis).

whole and in all of its phases."[209] It is important to highlight the fact that the *technê* of medicine (treating the individual) contributes to the natural process *as a whole*, signaling the role of individual application in the overall functioning of the whole. What that would mean for Montaigne is that the *technê* of investigating the self eventually bleeds into the *technê* of investigating nature, for the two are exactly the same. The individual method, be it reading the body or disciplining the body, can then disappear into nature's process and Montaigne can at last "se laisser aller."

Part II: Pascal.

Reading the body—diagnosing the monster within.

As we saw in Montaigne, the body provides unique access to the mind and soul. Because its signs and symptoms appear before the mind or imagination has the chance to intervene, there is a sense, in both authors, that a gesture or grimace, a feeling or sensation, gives a much more complete and truthful account of a person's moral disposition. Montaigne could discern a great deal about his friends or figures from Antiquity based on the way a person moved across the room or changed his tone of voice. In his own case, he used the spontaneous expressions of his body as a way of familiarizing himself with his temperament and opinions. It is uncanny, perhaps, that the characteristics of his own body and mind were not immediately familiar to him and that he needed to carefully study and document them in order to accommodate them. But that is precisely the human condition as he lays it bare: no individual starts out knowing all the various parts of himself and their belonging to the whole—hence the great Socratic injunction to know thyself thoroughly in order to be well. Without this crucial stage of

[209] Ibid, 34.

knowing and accommodating, the author has no chance of feeling whole, of existing "sans division, sans sedition intestine." His sense of health and well-being is in large part dependent on his ability and willingness to reappropriate those parts of himself that were hitherto unknown, neglected, or despised.

The hermeneutic value of reading bodies is that they disclose information about a person's *hexis*, or moral disposition. Montaigne, like Pascal a century later, was steeped in a religio-philosophical tradition that presumed a correspondence between outer appearance and inner integrity. Even if the relationship between the body and moral disposition was an ironic one, as it was for Socrates,[210] the body was still considered a reliable gauge of the person's moral journey. As Timothy Hampton puts it, many sixteenth-century humanists saw in the figures of both Socrates and Christ "an illustration of the verity that the most internally beautiful creations are externally ugly,"[211] and that in their very ugliness they contained medicine for the world. Ugliness, from a Christian perspective, did not pose a problem. In fact, it was Christ's woundedness that allowed Pascal to draw nearer to him and open himself up to being saved.[212] Socrates' self-corrective measures,[213] particularly if we imagine a Christian Socrates, provide one model of how to arrive at virtue. However, this model would require further nuance,

[210] Timothy Hampton rightfully calls this relationship "ironic" in the *Essais*' portrayal of Socrates: "The relationship of Socrates' face to his vice is an ironic one. His ugly features are a text bearing the traces of his "propension naturelle." Socrates' mere appearance attests to the distance between his soul and his ugly face, even as it signifies forth the contour of his life's story—a story of self-correction. The rhetoric of exemplarity thus brings us to the rhetoric of the body. The problem of reading the exemplary figure as a coherent self seems to find a resolution, not in the interpretation of action, but in the relationship between narrative and body." (Timothy Hampton, "Montaigne and the Body of Socrates: Narrative and Exemplarity in the *Essais*," *MLN* 104 (1989): 889.)

[211] Ibid, 889.

[212] "Il faut ajouter mes plaies aux siennes et me joindre à lui, et il me sauvera en se sauvant." (LG 717)

[213] See Hampton, "Montaigne and the Body of Socrates," 889-90. Hampton appropriates Nehamas' term "self-fashioning" to describe something of a spiritual exercise in the life narrative of Socrates.

because for Pascal the value of reading the body is not to issue a corrective by eliminating vice and enhancing virtue; rather, it is to reappropriate what has been estranged from the integrity of the whole, however coarse or vicious it may seem. Owning and acknowledging the ugliness or illness is considered the first step to healing on the Christian path. In fact the gravest error, as Pascal sees it, would be to remain in ignorance of our ill condition.

Throughout the *Prière pour demander à Dieu le bon usage des maladies*, we hear an emphatic refrain of the danger of insensitivity: "Seigneur, la plus grande des maladies est cette insensibilité, et cette extrême faiblesse qui lui avait ôté [à l'homme] tout sentiment de ses propres misères. Faites-les-moi sentir vivement ; et que ce qui me reste de vie soit une pénitence continuelle pour laver les offenses de ma vie passée." (VII, p. 188) Here the semiotics of ugliness is quite straightforward: physical illness is a sign of spiritual depravity, "les offenses de [s]a vie passée," emblematized by the Biblical narrative of the Fall. Any outward manifestation of these "offenses" is considered a great advantage, because the subject is made aware of the conditions of both his downfall and his redemption, if we consider that the condition of feeling (*sentir*) works in both directions. The sensitivity that he develops in relation to his illness is none other than that which will allow him to feel the wounds of Christ and ultimately the presence of God. In fact, the two cannot be separated: feeling his vulnerability opens him up to God.

In the excerpt of the *Prière* cited above, Pascal opens with a sweeping claim: man's greatest illness is his habitual "insensibilité" that prevents him from feeling his meagerness and misfortune. The prayer quickly takes a turn for the personal when Pascal asks to be cured through the felt sense of his body: "Faites-les-moi sentir vivement."

Contained in this phrase are all the essential elements of Pascal's therapeutic program. He asks to feel something, personally and vividly, in his body. We should not underestimate the significance of the verb *sentir* for Pascal and other philosophical thinkers of the time. *Sentir* literally meant to feel with one's body but was also heavily implicated in the seventeenth century's conception of experience and experiment, as Matthew L. Jones has analyzed in detail.[214] Any careful reader of Pascal knows that *sentiment* provides proof in the heart where demonstration and logic fail; an intellect "feels" or "senses" that there are three dimensions, and does not need proof of it intellectually. Pascal's call to "feel" his own infirmity functions according to the same logic by which he is able to apprehend the "presence of an absence" in nature[215]: in both cases, *sentiment* is the primary gauge of truth. Without it, we cannot progress towards any form of irrefutable knowledge, including and above all *self*-knowledge. Although reading the body might include, for Pascal, considering the outward signs of illness as figures of the sick soul, for the purposes of his own healing, reading the body occurs from the inside, from a proprioceptive form of knowledge that can be likened to Montaigne's use of sensation.

We must remember that throughout the *Pensées*, Pascal is addressing a humanity cloaked in its own ignorance of truth, paradoxically beguiled by all the trappings of the material world while ignorant of its own material suffering. We are not only numb to our spiritual potential; we are numb in even the most ordinary of ways, a case in point being the way that we relate to physical illness: "Nous nous connaissons si peu que plusieurs

[214] See in particular Matthew L. Jones, "Writing and Sentiment: Blaise Pascal, the Vacuum, and the Pensées," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 32 (2001): 139-81 and Idem*, The Good Life in the Scientific Revolution: Descartes, Pascal, Leibniz, and the Cultivation of Virtue* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

[215] Jones, "Writing and Sentiment," 140.

pensent aller mourir quand ils se portent bien et plusieurs pensent se porter bien quand ils sont proches de mourir, ne sentant pas la fièvre prochaine ou l'abcès prêt à former." (LG 602) The insensitivity that Pascal describes is bodily in nature: when we think we are healthy, we barely feel the onset of illness, and often when we are well, we think we are about to die. This confusion, while seemingly absurd, is fundamental to the human condition. It can be found already in Montaigne's observation that even minor bodily disturbances obscure the proper use of judgment:

> Il est certain que nostre apprehension, nostre jugement et les facultez de nostre ame en general, souffrent selon les mouvemens et alterations du corps, lesquelles alterations sont continuelles. N'avons nous pas l'esprit plus esveillé, la memoire plus prompte, le discours plus vif, en santé qu'en maladie ? (…) Ce ne sont pas seulement les fievres, les breuvages, et les grands accidens, qui renversent nostre jugement : les moindres choses du monde le tournevirent. Et ne faut pas doubter, encores que nous ne le sentions pas, que si la fievre continue peut atterrer nostre ame, que la tierce n'y apporte quelque alteration selon sa mesure et proportion. (II:12, "Apologie de Raimond de Sebonde," pp. 597-8)

Pascal appropriates this thesis about the susceptibility of human judgment and condenses Montaigne's lengthy description to an incisive statement on human error: "Nous avons un autre principe d'erreur, les maladies. Elles nous gâtent le jugement et le sens. Et si les grandes l'altèrent sensiblement, je ne doute pas que les petites n'y fassent impression à leur proportion." (LG 41) Pascal essentially reiterates Montaigne's initial point: that our understanding ("jugement" in either case) of a situation is closely contingent on our physical condition and will err in direct proportion to any disturbance that assails our body. In other words, the body and mind are so inextricably linked that if one goes awry the other will falter in equal measure. Following a typically Skeptical line of argument, both would agree that human judgment is a weak apparatus for gauging truth and getting

in touch with reality, because it is so susceptible to the changing conditions that surround it (the "alterations continuelles" that Montaigne mentions above).

Yet Pascal's point, like Montaigne's, is not to blame our bodies; they are not at fault for human delusion. Our lack of self-awareness ("Nous nous connaissons si peu," declares Pascal) is what leads to erroneous conclusions—another theme that was dear to Montaigne. For the latter, the imagination usually causes us to err in the interpretation of an event, particularly if it concerns us personally. We might recall Montaigne's decree that "la pluspart des facultez de nostre ame, comme nous les employons, troublent plus le repos de la vie qu'elles n'y servent." (II:37, "De la resemblance des enfans aux peres," p. 798) Allowing ourselves to get carried away by imaginary dangers, we disrupt our own peace of mind and give ourselves little chance of discerning our actual state.

This would indicate that we are poor readers, and even poorer physicians, of ourselves. Although Montaigne was considerably more optimistic on this point, both authors generally have very low expectations for the certainty of human knowledge. For Montaigne, this was largely because we are creatures subject to continuous flux, whereas for Pascal it is because we have inherited, as if congenitally, an ignorance from the time of the Fall. This ignorance cannot heal itself; it needs some obvious signs coming from a benevolent creator to redress our understanding of illness. Pascal lays this fact bare in a letter to his sister, Gilberte, explaining that the body's purpose is to express spiritual truth, because God necessarily communicates to man through "bodily things": "car, comme nous avons souvent dit entre nous, les choses corporelles ne sont qu'une image des spirituelles, et Dieu a représenté les choses invisibles dans les visibles."[216] In the

[216] Lettre à sa sœur Gilberte, 1er avril 1648, in Blaise Pascal, *Œuvres completes*, t. II, ed. Michel Le Guern (Paris: Gallimard (« Bibliothèque de la Pléiade »), 2000), 8.

Pensées, Pascal gives a Biblical example of how this communication plays out: "Les figures de l'Évangile pour l'état de l'âme malade sont des corps malades. Mais parce qu'un corps ne peut être assez malade pour le bien exprimer, il en a fallu plusieurs. Ainsi il y a le sourd, le muet, l'aveugle, le paralytique, le Lazare mort, le possédé : tout cela ensemble est dans l'âme malade." (LG 728) The relationship between the body and soul is framed in terms of figure and representation. While it may be necessary to proceed by figures in the hermeneutic process, the therapeutic process requires that we relate to our bodies *directly* to understand the nature of our illness. The figurative messages that point the reader back to the narrative of original sin can also be taken *literally*: they can provoke the bodily shock that causes some to begin a process of seeking.

Reading the body's signs is therefore central to Pascal's apologetic project, but its importance lies principally in the affective strategies that underlie it. When Pascal alludes to the illness of the human condition, there is a fair amount of theater in addition to actual case history. At one point in the *Pensées* he declares: "Ce repos dans cette ignorance est une chose monstrueuse, et dont il faut faire sentir l'extravagance et la stupidité à ceux qui y passent leur vie, en la leur représentant à eux-mêmes pour les confondre par la vue de leur folie." (LG 399) On one level, to call our persistent ignorance a monstrous thing is poetic hyperbole, and on quite another, it conforms to a classic understanding of physical disease at the time. For Pascal, those who do not seek are monstrous, in the sense that their decision contradicts even their own self-preservation: "Cette négligence en une affaire où il s'agit d'eux-mêmes, de leur éternité, de leur tout, m'irrite plus qu'elle ne m'attendrit ; elle m'étonne et m'épouvante : c'est un monstre pour moi. Je ne dis pas ceci par le zèle pieux d'une dévotion spirituelle. J'entends au contraire qu'on doit avoir ce

sentiment par un principe d'intérêt humain et par un intérêt d'amour-propre." (LG 398) There is something *un*natural (i.e. against human interest) that allows this state of ignorant repose to persist; indeed, Pascal describes it in the same fragment as fueled by "des sentiments si dénaturés," "dénaturé" connoting a state of having lost all affection for one's kin.[217] Having an inappropriate *sentiment*, in other words, creates a disturbance in the whole. Just as one who was missing a limb at birth was considered a "monster" in early modern medical vocabulary, those who lack "ce sentiment" for seeking are monsters too—literally. Pascal goes so far as to say, in the same passage, that those who are not interested in their own salvation must have lost all sentiment whatsoever to remain in their present state: "L'immortalité de l'âme est une chose qui nous importe si fort, qui nous touche si profondément, qu'il faut avoir perdu tout sentiment pour être dans l'indifférence de savoir ce qui en est." Since *sentiment* refers to the somatic process of having an intuition in the heart, which influences one's beliefs, actions, and opinions, the loss of *sentiment* is literally a bodily loss. The monster Pascal refers to in the passage above is not simply metaphorical; it has to do with the way the apologist understood the human make-up. If one significant component went missing, then the entire system would naturally lose its health.

In its early modern guise, monstrosity referred to all manner of birth defects that were thought to be expressions of God's wrath. It also described our inability, in a postlapsarian world, to act as physicians to ourselves, since we lost a particular form of

[217] The 1694 definition reads: "Qui manque d'affection & de tendresse pour ses plus proches parents." (*Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 1st edition, accessed November 17, 2014, http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=d%C3%A9natur%C3%A9.)

self-knowledge at the time of the Fall.[218] The first aspect of the term was widely elaborated in early modern medical circles. Ambroise Paré (1510-1590), the father of modern surgery, set down a theory of monstrosity that took into account all of its possible spiritual causes. Of the thirteen causes of monstrous birth listed in *Des Monstres et prodiges*, the first two have to do directly with God: "Les causes des monstres sont plusieurs. La première est la gloire de Dieu. La seconde, son ire."[219] The link between divine will and physical aberration was a common chord in early modern medical diagnosis. The profession took to interpreting aberrant bodily signs in the same spirit as one might attempt to decode the occult figures of religious experience. As one scholar eloquently puts it: "In this sense, medicine was itself contaminated, as it were, by the monstrous, and intimately linked with the mysteries that surrounded the Creation. […] The art of diagnosis and the search for cures did not limit themselves to practical observations, but constantly sought to decipher secrets and riddles, interpreting the relationship between diseases and remedies in much the same way they sought to interpret the obscure origins and meanings of monstrous births."[220] For Pascal, similarly, any attempt to read the body went beyond a clinical interpretation of its signs and symptoms; for every source of suffering had spiritual significance and it was up to the seeker, the "vrai Chrétien," to decipher the religious meaning behind illness. An unrelenting empiricist in his scientific works, the apologist variously shows himself to be thoroughly Augustinian, and by turns, mystical, in the way he interprets the messages

[218] Marie-Hélène Huet, "Monstrous Medicine," in Laura Lunger Knoppers et al., ed., *Monstrous Bodies/Political Monstrosities in Early Modern Europe* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004), 135.

[219] Ambroise Paré, *Des Monstres et prodiges*, ed. Jean Céard (Geneva: Droz, 1971), 4.

[220] Marie-Hélène Huet, "Monstrous Medicine," 128.

sent from a hidden God (*Deus absconditus*). In his *Prière*, he constantly equates his physical sickness with some hidden form of spiritual malignancy: "Faites-moi bien connaître que les maux du corps ne sont autre chose que la figure et la punition tout ensemble des maux de l'âme : faites qu'elles en soient aussi le remède, en me faisant considérer dans les douleurs que je sens celles que je ne sentais pas dans mon âme quoique toute malade et couverte d'ulcères." (VII, pp. 187-8) His body gives him access to a soul "toute malade et couverte d'ulcères," the monster he has inherited from original sin. However, the monstrosity of human life is not only due to the fact of having a soul "covered in ulcers" and a body riddled with pain; it is also due to our repeated failure to see the correspondence between physical health and spiritual integrity—to see, in other words, the body as a *figure* of the soul. This is why the recognition of bodily ailments is also the cure ("faites qu'elles en soient aussi le remède"), a typically Augustinian trope. The author's more obvious, physical suffering gives him access to another form of suffering, hidden from view. Feeling the former is a prerequisite to understanding the latter, and without both, we have but a partial view of human illness.

The second aspect of monstrosity derives from Biblical narrative. In her essay "Monstrous Medicine," Marie-Hélène Huet describes the commonplace belief in early modern medicine, beginning with Paré, that the Fall of Adam and Eve robbed humanity of both its innocence and its knowledge of medical cures. In her words, "[i]t was one of the most disastrous effects of the loss of Eden that the Fall, which caused the diseases and pains that plagued all creatures, also deprived men of the knowledge to cure themselves. Left to itself, the human species would have had no hope of recovering the lost

understanding of the virtues of plants, were it not for God's revelations."[221] She goes on to cite Paré in his *Introduction à la chirurgie* on the ability, given to some, to exercise the virtues of medicine: "God has imparted this knowledge to certain men, who have been called to administer Medicine, and whose mission has been to deliver and prescribe [remedies] to those who would be in need of them."[222] On the one hand, given the prevalence of such beliefs, Pascal's insistence that physical malady is the ongoing result of original sin can be understood more broadly in terms of the medical culture of the time. On the other hand, whereas physicians were liable to assign numerous causes to a particular illness (be they ordinary, demonic, or divine), Pascal all but assumes a tacit understanding from his readers that the whole of humanity is ill because of the Fall: "Mais quand j'ai pensé de plus près et qu'après avoir trouvé la cause de tous nos malheurs, j'ai voulu en découvrir les raisons, j'ai trouvé qu'il y en a une bien effective, qui consiste dans le malheur naturel de notre condition faible et mortelle, et si misérable que rien ne peut nous consoler lorsque nous y pensons de près." (LG 126) This "malheur naturel de notre condition faible" provides the key to all the various forms of illness we witness in humanity. But the paradoxical condition of its monstrosity is that it applies to everyone. The only distinguishing variable between those who remain ill throughout their lives and those who recover health is the ability to feel and relate to God.

Such is why Pascal insists that non-seekers be *shown* their monstrosity, as though with a mirror, in order to confuse them ("les confondre," as we saw in LG 399) and make them *feel* their own extravagance and stupidity. Until they feel the unpleasant sensations of their own depravity, there can be no hope for a cure. Since lacking a certain

[221] Ibid, 135.

[222] From Paré's *Introduction à la chirurgie*, as cited in Huet, "Monstrous Medicine," 135.

"sentiment" for seeking made one a monster, restoring sensation to a body ensconced in ignorance is the first step to regaining health. That said, it is not that we are altogether without "sensibilité," but that we have misdirected this inborn capacity: "C'est une chose monstrueuse de voir dans un même cœur et en même temps cette sensibilité pour les moindres choses et cette étrange insensibilité pour les plus grandes." (LG 398) We have the capacity to feel, to be sure, but many of us exercise it in matters of little value ("les moindres choses"). In order to resensitize his interlocutor to the enormity of what he is missing, Pascal will need to deploy dramatic and seemingly violent measures. In all cases, it is not enough to have him "confondu" in mind alone. He will need to have a memorable bodily experience that leads him in the direction of seeking. In other words, he will need to be shocked out of his small-mindedness, because the gap he needs to bridge is infinite: "La distance infinie des corps aux esprits figure la distance infiniment plus infinie des esprits à la charité, car elle est surnaturelle." (LG 290) It would seem that to bridge the "infinite distance" between body and spirit, and then between spirit and charity, we would need to do away with all bodily constraints. The passage below would particularly seem to suggest just that, by virtue of the limited view that certain material contingencies afford: "Si l'homme s'étudiait le premier, il verrait combien il est incapable de passer outre. Comment se pourrait-il qu'une partie connût le tout ? / L'homme par exemple a rapport à tout ce qu'il connaît. Il a besoin de lieu pour le contenir, de temps pour durer, de mouvement pour vivre, d'éléments pour le composer, de chaleur et d'aliments pour se nourrir, d'air pour respirer." (LG 185) Pascal presents a portrait of our bodies *as they are*, situated in space, time, movement, and so forth. Without divine grace and discipline, we are capable of relating only to that which we

know ("L'homme…a rapport à tout ce qu'il connaît"), and this precludes us from relating directly to the whole (God). Pascal's question, "Comment se pourrait-il qu'une partie connût le tout ?," encapsulates the supreme dilemma of the human condition, and recasts the notion of illness in terms of part and whole. That which cannot know the whole is inevitably ill, for the medicine of salvation lies somewhere between our relative individual existence and the absolute perspective of God.

However, this particular presentation of embodiment is not a foregone conclusion. While it is true that we suffer, in part, from being enclosed in bodies, our bodies provide one of the privileged inroads into understanding illness, because even spiritual illness comes to us in the form of bodily things ("choses corporelles"). The requirements of having a body, delineated above, need not be taken as absolute limits to our self-understanding. In philosophical terms, the ancient concept of the body as *soma* (flesh) need not be confused with the body as *sema* (entombment), as it was commonly held up in Plato's dialogues.[223] For Pascal, having a body is simultaneously cause for separation from God and a port of entry into divine grace, illustrated most keenly in the figure of Christ, who appeared, perished, and rose in bodily form. But in order to receive divine grace, we need proper discipline, which brings us to the most practical dimension of Pascal's religious writings.

Disciplining the body—prayer and the power of habitus.

[223] I owe this distinction to Dmitri N. Shalin in his article "Signing in the Flesh: Notes on Pragmatist Hermeneutics," *Sociological Theory* 25 (2007): 194. Shalin cites specifically *Gorgias* 493a and *Phaedrus* 250.

The practice of prayer provides an excellent example of the discipline Pascal found useful for himself and potential readers. In the only prayer we have by the hand of Pascal,[224] published posthumously right after the first editions of the *Pensées*, the author follows a familiar liturgical format of a "prière de demande" which addresses both God and, in this case, the world. With a regular cadence, he entreats the "Seigneur" or "Christ" to let him feel, more and more pointedly, his body's frailty as a reminder of both his sin and his potential redemption through grace: "Mais je demande, Seigneur, de ressentir tout ensemble et les douleurs de la nature pour mes péchés et les consolations de votre Esprit par votre grâce, car c'est le véritable état du christianisme, que je ne sente pas des douleurs sans consolation, mais que je sente mes douleurs et vos consolations ensemble, pour arriver enfin à ne sentir plus que vos consolations sans aucunes douleurs. (XI, p. 190) As is clear from this excerpt, Pascal does not hasten to put an end to his ills. It is crucial to appreciate that the prayer was not intended to restore the author's physical health in conventional terms. Rather, it was intended to develop the appropriate *relationship* to illness and health. Strictly speaking, Pascal does not presume to exercise any control over the origination of pain and consolation, only his ability to *feel* them; and the idea is certainly not to reduce the former and augment the latter, but to strike the appropriable balance with regard to feeling them. Pain and consolation are, in a sense, given, whereas a person's capacity to register them is highly variable. The way to healing is feeling, and the way to feeling, apparently, is to ask—and Pascal does so four times in this short passage. Each of the four clauses is mobilized by a feeling verb, "ressentir" in the main clause and "sentir" in the three dependent clauses. In what appears to be the

[224] For a more complete study of the prayer's possible sources, date of composition, and intended audience, see Jean-Paul Amann, "La « Prière » de Pascal « pour demander à Dieu le bon usage des maladies »," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 3 (2000): 381-96.

same request four times over, Pascal presents, with subtle variations, the proper criteria for feeling. In the first clause, he introduces the two terms along with their respective origins: “les douleurs” come from nature and are justified by sin, whereas “les consolations” are an expression of Christ’s spirit delivered by divine grace. It is curious to note that pain, by definition, is considered the more natural experience, one that is rooted in our earthly, material existence. Consolation is equated at its source with something spiritual, rather than bodily, and yet the author’s appropriation of it occurs through *feeling*. In the following three clauses, Pascal deploys the verb *sentir* (connotative of bodily sensation) in a tertiary gradation that begins with an emphasis on feeling pain and ends with consolation. In the first of the three clauses, he asks to not feel pain without consolation; in the second, to feel both pain and consolation together; and in the third, to not feel consolation without pain. The first and the third form a classic chiasmus, with the second uniting the two terms in a union of opposites. In this way, Pascal guards against all the possible pitfalls of erring on one side of the equation or the other. If he had remained only on the side of *douleur*, without the accompanying consolation of God’s presence, the prayer would be of scant use to those skeptics who think they live in an empty universe. On the other hand, if he felt consolation without bodily pain, he would, logically speaking, fail to appreciate the consolation when it comes (we might recall his aphorism “Le froid est agréable pour se chauffer.” (LG 646)) His appeals, therefore, are not teleological, in the sense of placing consolation as the end goal of his search. The last clause in which Pascal circles back to feeling pain is most significant, for it affirms the therapeutic value of being cast in a human body, subject to punishment and imperfection. Like Pascal’s dual paradigm of *misère* and *grandeur*, the

douleur and *consolation* must work in concert if man is to realize Christianity's full therapeutic potential, the "véritable état du christianisme." And this can only occur when no side of the equation is left out.

The question, then, of how to use one's health and illness becomes utterly relevant. In an earlier section of the prayer, Pascal laments his past misuse of bodily health, explaining his current illness in terms of that misuse: "Vous [Dieu] m'aviez donné la santé pour vous servir, et j'en ai fait un usage tout contraire et profane. Vous m'envoyez maintenant la maladie pour me corriger : ne permettez pas que j'en use pour vous irriter par mon impatience. J'ai mal usé de ma santé, et vous m'en avez justement puni. Ne souffrez pas que j'use mal de cette punition." (II, pp. 184-5) He is referring in this passage to his years spent in the world among the *libertins* of his time, gambling, conjecturing, and innovating in mathematics and science, prior to his first mystical conversion to Christianity. Following the logic of opposites that pervades much of Pascal's writings, the passage presupposes a mutual dependency between health and illness. Illness is used to correct or compensate for misuse of good health, and health is justifiably regained once the author has learned to use his illness well (i.e. in service of God). His final plea to God, "Ne souffrez pas que j'use mal de cette punition," is in effect the key to healing. It suggests, as we saw in the previous passage, that a return to health would not be devoid of illness, punishment, or pain; but the proper use of illness is already health itself, because it places the author in proper alignment with the source of healing. Health takes on a much broader connotation in Pascal's writings, as the "harmonious tension" of opposites, to borrow a phrase from Starobinski. It is the acknowledgement of the codependency of opposites and the willingness to work with

them both with the proper intention. It also marks a choice in the path of the author: seeing how he has misused his past bodily states, he can thus relate to them differently, this time through the filter of divine will.

Throughout the *Prière* Pascal reflects not only on the choices he has made but on the very nature that underlies those choices: "Et puisque la corruption de ma nature est telle, qu'elle me rend vos faveurs pernicieuses, faites, ô mon Dieu, que votre grâce toute-puissante me rende vos châtiments salutaires. Si j'ai eu le cœur plein de l'affection du monde pendant qu'il a eu quelque vigueur, anéantissez cette vigueur pour mon salut, et rendez-moi incapable de jouir du monde, soit par faiblesse de corps, soit par zèle de charité, pour ne jouir que de vous seul." (II, pp. 184-5) Pascal begins with a given human condition: our corrupt nature ensures that any "faveurs" (signs of good health) from God will be turned into something "pernicious." Given the opposite condition (God's grace), he makes a case for the opposite outcome using analogical reasoning: our punishments can actually become medicine ("salutaires"). This second outcome, cast in the subjunctive, belongs to the rhetoric typical of the *prière de demande*, beseeching God to intervene for some future state of divine grace. Pascal explains what will need to occur for his "châtiments" to become "salutaires," for this distant-seeming potentiality to become real. First, his heart will need to be made weak and humble, a process that Pascal describes as chiefly physical: he associates his heart of worldly affections with a certain "vigueur" and, in asking that this "vigueur" be destroyed, he is assuming that the energetic quality of the heart is the cause for separation from God. Secondly, but along the same lines, he asks to no longer take pleasure ("jouir") in the world, and this too has strongly physical connotations. The point is that enjoying the world requires a certain

robustness of heart and body – the primary definition of "vigueur" being "[f]orce & promptitude, pour agir, pour se mouvoir"[225] – and that attenuating this capacity, *in a physical way*, is what allows one to turn away from the world and seek God. Pascal finally presents us with two options for weakening the heart's vigor: one would be to weaken the body directly, through illness for example, and the other would be to develop a zeal for charity, or a love of God. Pascal asks for either one or the other, but is already enacting the first option. By the time he is composing the *Prière*, his illness is already a fact, and the dominant cause for his seeking. Health and illness, then, are the deciding factors for conversion, if we are to follow Pascal's own life example. It is no accident that the term *salutaire* (as in the oxymoron "châtiments salutaires") was used to denote both physical health and spiritual salvation.[226] Here, because Pascal is writing from the perspective of physical illness, there is a strong somatic component to his request. Salvation comes in a form of health, which is the result of having worked on a component of the physical body, the heart.

Although Pascal uniformly holds up charity as the highest good, on par with Christ's divinity, his prayer is essentially a response to a corporeal condition—illness. The virtues of physical illness are many. For one, it diminishes the passions in the most direct of ways: "Quand on l'est [malade], on prend médecine gaiement, le mal y résout ; on n'a plus les passions et les désirs de divertissement et de promenades que la santé donnait et qui sont incompatibles avec les nécessités de la maladie." (LG 543) Secondly,

[225] *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 1st edition (1694), accessed November 21, 2014, http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=vigueur.

[226] The *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 1st edition (1694) gives this definition: "Utile, avantageux pour la conservation de la vie, des biens, de l'honneur, de la santé, pour le salut de l'ame. *Remede, medicament salutaire. telle herbe est fort salutaire contre la peste. avis salutaire. conseil salutaire. loix salutaires. salutaire à l'Estat. doctrine salutaire. instruction salutaire*." (Accessed November 17, 2013, http://artflsrv01.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=salutaire.)

it helps us distinguish between necessary, material suffering and the secondary suffering we fabricate in the imagination: "La nature donne alors des passions et des désirs conformes à l'état présent. Il n'y a que les craintes que nous nous donnons nous-mêmes, et non pas la nature, qui nous troublent parce qu'elles joignent à l'état où nous sommes les passions de l'état où nous ne sommes pas." (LG 543) Illness is a case in point for how we interfere with nature's natural harmony. Instead of leaving illness to itself, we stir up fear, adding another layer of suffering that may have little or nothing to do with our actual state. Montaigne's firm belief that "la pluspart des facultez de nostre ame, comme nous les employons, troublent plus le repos de la vie qu'elles n'y servent" (II:37, "De la resemblance des enfans aux peres," p. 798), is a direct predecessor to Pascal's observation that fear "troubles us" (the same verb that Montaigne uses) more than the illness itself. It is important for both authors to identify the slippery role of the passions in spiritual suffering. Being healthy in a physical way is never enough to be whole in the broadest sense; in fact, we can be physically very ill and still enjoy a complete sense of well-being. Illness can even be a happy state because it returns us to our most natural disposition, devoid of excessive passions and ultimately appropriate to the situation at hand. But learning to use illness in a way that encourages happiness and well-being will require that we attend to the passions that obscure it.

This is why Pascal directs us time and again back to the heart. We need to work directly with the heart, not only because it is the seat of the passions, but because it is our only vessel for receiving the grace of God. If we have "le cœur plein de l'affection du monde" or "plein d'ordure,"[227] the heart will be ill prepared to receive anything other

[227] "Que le cœur de l'homme est creux et plein d'ordure !" (LG 129)

than worldly debris. In a typically Platonic or Augustinian view of worldly attachments, affection, or the passions, is something to be quelled and overcome, "anéantie" to use Pascal's own verbiage. In addition to filling the heart with garbage, the passions were thought to contain a volatility inimical to spiritual seeking. Susan James describes below how the passions came to have such a negative connotation from within an Augustinian framework: "In *The City of God*, Augustine had noted that there are various Latin translations of the Greek term *pathe*, of which he favours the literal *passiones*, the term eventually taken over in French and English. Like the related deponent verb *patior*, this combines the idea of passivity with that of suffering, a sense nowhere more vividly conveyed than in the story of Christ's Passion. But two other translations listed by Augustine have more volatile connotations. *Pathe* is also rendered, he reminds us, as *perturbationes* (notably by Cicero) and as *affectiones* or *affectus*."[228] The two latter connotations, *perturbationes* and *affectiones*, correspond precisely to Pascal's use of the French "affection" as it pertains to worldly desire. The volatility of this sort of passion is conveyed no more pointedly than in Pascal's description of the human condition as a "[g]uerre intestine de l'homme entre la raison et les passions."[229] The language used to convey the passions often borders on belligerence and assault, "anéantir" being just one example. However, it is important to note that the passions themselves are not the culprit. Pascal asks not that God destroy his fear and desire, but that He destroy the energy or "vigueur" *of the heart* that gives expression to the passions ("anéantissez cette vigueur

[228] James, *Passion and Action*, 10-11.

[229] The entire fragment reads: "Guerre intestine de l'homme entre la raison et les passions. / S'il n'avait que la raison sans passions… / S'il n'avait que les passions sans raison… / Mais ayant l'un et l'autre il ne peut être sans guerre, ne pouvant avoir paix avec l'un qu'ayant guerre avec l'autre ; aussi il est toujours divisé et contraire à lui-même." (LG 528)

pour mon salut"). The passions are threatening only insofar as they misdirect the search and energetically turn one away from God: "Donc tout ce qui nous incite à nous attacher aux créatures est mauvais, puisque cela nous empêche, ou de servir Dieu si nous le connaissons, ou de le chercher si nous l'ignorons. Or nous sommes pleins de concupiscences, donc nous sommes pleins de mal, donc nous devons nous haïr nous-mêmes, et tout ce qui nous excite à autre attache qu'à Dieu seul." (LG 525) One of the apologist's main strategies for destroying the heart's vigor is to encourage us to "hate ourselves," "nous-mêmes" being the equivalent of *le moi* and *amour-propre*, the repository of worldly desires. While such a solution may have been self-evident for Pascal, it will take more to convince the skeptical interlocutor of the sad state of his heart. For one who does not realize that he is "plein de concupiscences" and thus "plein de mal," another kind of discipline will be necessary, one that capitalizes on the proof of bodily experience.

Pascal regularly insists that we make full-bodied efforts to acquaint ourselves with God. Many of us, he laments, have made only perfunctory efforts in this direction: "Ils croient avoir fait de grands efforts pour s'instruire, lorsqu'ils ont employé quelques heures à la lecture de quelque livre de l'Écriture, et qu'ils ont interrogé quelque ecclésiastique sur les vérités de la foi. Après cela, ils se vantent d'avoir cherché sans succès dans les livres et parmi les hommes." (LG 398) Few, it would seem, have explored what they need to change about their lives in a concrete way. One of the most pivotal moments of the *Pensées* comes when the skeptical interlocutor, having exhausted his reasons for not believing, asks the apologist how to proceed. The apologist gives a

lengthy response, but one that is firmly grounded in the practical exigencies of embodied life:

> — Il est vrai, mais apprenez au moins que votre impuissance à croire vient de vos passions, puisque la raison vous y porte et que néanmoins vous ne le pouvez. Travaillez donc non pas à vous convaincre par l'argumentation des preuves de Dieu, mais *par la diminution de vos passions*. Vous voulez aller à la foi et vous n'en savez pas le chemin. Vous voulez vous guérir de l'infidélité et vous en demandez les remèdes, apprenez de ceux, etc., qui ont été liés comme vous et qui parient maintenant tout leur bien. Ce sont gens qui savent ce chemin que vous voudriez suivre et guéris d'un mal dont vous voulez guérir ; suivez la manière par où ils ont commencé. C'est en faisant tout comme s'ils croyaient, en prenant de l'eau bénite, en faisant dire des messes, etc. Naturellement même cela vous fera croire et vous abêtira. (LG 397; my emphasis)

Pascal's entire response hinges on the argument that the interlocutor's illness – his "impuissance à croire" – has to do with a bodily disposition, or his way of relating to the passions. This is key because the passions are at once the cause of our illness and the portal to our well-being. Pascal's initial suggestion to the interlocutor is to convince himself not by logical arguments, but by "diminishing his passions." He follows that up by giving the interlocutor a practical path to follow: one ought to imitate those who have healed from the same illness ("Ce sont gens qui savent ce chemin que vous voudriez suivre et guéris d'un mal dont vous voulez guérir ; suivez la manière par où ils ont commencé."), by acting as though one already believes ("C'est en faisant tout comme s'ils croyaient…"). Pascal offers two concrete examples: taking holy water and reciting masses. These outward behaviors are significant because they illustrate the mode of learning that Pascal deems most appropriate to conversion: mimesis, it turns out, is highly useful to those who lack a certain spiritual disposition. Perhaps its main advantage is that it *naturally* causes one to believe and become less sophisticated ("abêtir"). The point is not to become altogether daft and unthinking, as *abêtir* might suggest, but to temporarily

disable the tyranny of reason so that another kind of learning can take place, though action and feeling.

Pierre Bourdieu compares these exercises in the *Pensées* to certain practices in the theater, in which the body is the privileged site of learning and transformation: "Et nombre de metteurs en scène recourent à des pratiques pédagogiques qui ont en commun de chercher à déterminer la mise en suspens de la compréhension intellectuelle et discursive et à obtenir de l'acteur, par une longue série d'exercices, que, selon le modèle pascalien de la production de la croyance, il retrouve des postures corporelles qui, étant grosses d'expériences mnésiques, sont capables de mettre en branle des pensées, des émotions, des imaginations."[230] The secret to such learning lies in the temporary suspension of intellectual and discursive reasoning, in favor of the repetition of certain bodily postures. We thus create new memories for ourselves – these postures are "grosses d'expériences mnésiques" – and actually create disturbances ("mettre en branle") in our habitual mental and emotional patterns. From the perspective of these practices, belief is something produced (Bourdieu refers to the Pascalian model of "la production de la croyance"), rather than innate or inherited. Believing or disbelieving becomes an exercise like any other, the mechanism of which need not be entirely exposed in order for a particular exercise to work. The efficacy of "une longue série d'exercices" remains undisputed, and Bourdieu is right to lay emphasis on this theatrical mode of learning in the context of religious conversion.

Pascal relies on these exercises primarily because of their proven efficacy. Near the end of his conversation with the interlocutor, the apologist offers these words of wisdom from his own experience: "Si ce discours vous plaît et vous semble fort, sachez

[230] Bourdieu, *Méditations pascaliennes*, 172.

qu'il est fait par un homme qui s'est mis à genoux auparavant et après, pour prier cet être infini et sans parties, auquel il soumet tout le sien, de se soumettre aussi le vôtre pour votre propre bien et pour sa gloire, et qu'ainsi la force s'accorde avec cette bassesse." (LG 397) Pascal credits certain bodily practices, such as kneeling and praying, with having developed his faith both before and after conversion. He then turns to his interlocutor and expects him to do the same, both for the interlocutor's own good and for the glory of God. In this way, "la force" of God (perhaps an echo of the heart's "vigueur" we saw earlier) can coincide with man's meek condition ("cette bassesse"). Just as we have seen elsewhere, the ideal state for Pascal is not devoid of illness, but is instead dependent on the union of illness and health ("bassesse" and "force") realized through the merging of man and God. Health, then, would be to render oneself worthy, though bodily practice, of joining with the "force" of God.

Pascal's belief in the power of the body to affect one's internal disposition had ample precedent in seventeenth-century philosophical thought. In Susan James' scholarship on the passions, particularly in the works of Descartes and Malebranche, it becomes clear that most philosophers of the time were grappling with the passions as both bodily and spiritual phenomena. In fact, they often used the passions as a means of articulating the relationship between these two long-contested terms. We have grown accustomed to expect from Descartes' radical dualism a certain this-or-that stance on the building blocks of human experience: either the passions belong to the non-extended soul or they arise, passively, as part of the bodily "machine." The divide was exacerbated as well by changes to medical theory around the same time, which, in the estimation of

James, "had begun increasingly to suggest that the powers traditionally allotted to the nutritive or vegetative soul could be explained mechanically in purely physical terms."[231] This provided but more reason to believe that physical functions were purely mechanical and did not cross over into the realm of thinking and feeling.

Nevertheless, it was precisely on the subject of the passions that Descartes had to concede something of a mysterious, even mystical, relationship between the body and soul, which we will find later in Pascal. We need to look to his *Principles of Philosophy* to find explicit references to the union of body and soul. After distinguishing, in Section 48, between bodily functions and functions that belong to thinking substances, he delineates a third category of experience that cannot be assigned to either: "Il y a encore outre cela certaines choses que nous expérimentons en nous-mêmes qui ne doivent point être attribuées à l'âme seule, ni aussi au corps seul, mais à l'étroite union qui est entre eux…tels sont les appétits de boire et de manger, etc., comme aussi les émotions ou les passions de l'âme qui ne dépendent pas de la pensée seule, comme l'émotion à la colère, à la joie, à la tristesse, à l'amour, etc."[232] This "third" category of experience (introduced by "outre cela") includes the passions and emotions, along with other functions responsible for our well-being. The "étroite union" between body and mind would suggest that, at least where the passions are concerned, the entire person needs to be accounted for, thus attenuating the belief that a person's well-being can be brought about

[231] James, *Passion and Action*, 88.

[232] René Descartes, *Principes de la philosophie* (Paris: Hachette, 1892), 143. HathiTrust Digital Library: http://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015063590338. Susan James, citing an English translation of the *Principes*, also draws her reader's attention to this passage in *Passion and Action* (p. 94).

by mind or body alone. I leave the further significance of this passage to James, who admirably nuances this underappreciated aspect of Descartes' thinking:

> While passions are thoughts, and are therefore allocated to the soul, their dependence on the body pulls them across the boundary so that, in order to understand what they are and how they work, one has to take account, as Descartes implies, of their bodily causes. To this extent, they straddle the very divide Descartes has created. […] [H]e also emphasizes that the passions are completely dependent on the body, so that the whole process of feeling an emotion contains both physical and mental components. In addition, he argues that habits of feeling are, so to speak, stored in the body, in the particular folds and configurations of the brain. Putting these points together, it is not hard to imagine that a less metaphysically rigorous defender of the Cartesian view of the soul might conclude that the body thinks, and that among its thoughts are the passions.[233]

By James' account, Descartes was far more syncretistic than history would like to think. To consider the passions as a sort of crossover phenomenon, a product of the soul and yet profoundly beholden to the body, invites a much more holistic view of human health. And if we need further evidence of Descartes' syncretism, we can look to his *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, in which he explains how bodily motion is actually imprinted on the pineal gland, which in turn alters the movements of the soul.[234] Or, better still, in his personal correspondence, he frequently alludes to his bodily health as the primary vector for achieving philosophical virtue.[235] In 1645 he wrote to the Earl of Newcastle that "the preservation of health has always been the principal end of my studies."[236] He not only focused his efforts, though in vain, on creating a reformed medicine based on

[233] James, *Passion and Action*, 106.

[234] René Descartes, *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. John Cottingham et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), i, rule 12; as cited in James, *Passion and Action*, 93 (note 37).

[235] See Steven Shapin, "Descartes the Doctor: Rationalism and Its Therapies," *BJHS* 33 (2000): 131-54.

[236] Letter from Descartes to Newcastle, October 1645, in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, ed. John Cottingham et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), iii, 275; as cited in Shapin, "Descartes the Doctor," 136 (note 18).

infallible philosophical principles, but throughout his life he prescribed medical advice to anyone in his circle, from Pascal to Mersenne to Princess Elizabeth. When issuing advice, it usually boiled down to the ways in which bodily use might help one to philosophize better.

So it is that when Pascal, a partial heir to Cartesian thought, acknowledges the body's role in spiritual development, it reflects some of the key preconceptions about the mind-body relationship in seventeenth-century thought. But Pascal's interest, like Montaigne's, is primarily therapeutic, so, unlike Descartes, he does not linger over a systematic theory of the body and all its working parts, but highlights moments of insight with regard to what works. Whether it is through prayer or other forms of religious practice, bodily exercises fulfill the dual function of revealing the illness and offering the first steps to healing. While it is true that prayer functions discursively, implicating the body through words primarily, it is also an *embodied* form of practice. Each time Pascal would have recited a prayer, he would have had to place himself in the correct posture of humility, joined his palms together, and moved his mouth in accord with his intention. If we think of prayer in the context of *hexis*, as an expression of how gross outward behavior can shape one's inner disposition, then prayer can be considered a bridge between the physical and material worlds, similar to the way that the passions "straddle" (James) the divide between the body and soul in Descartes. So too with other forms of religious practice, such as taking holy water and reciting masses. It is as James points out with regard to Descartes: "habits of feeling…are stored in the body," and so spiritual and religious inclinations are never separate from the material constraints of human life.

Forgetting the body, forgetting the self.

Having a body that has been well disciplined according to certain religious or cultural norms does not yet describe the highest rung of human health, for there is still a sense of the body as other, as alien, and as something to be managed in times of adversity. Health implies not just that we possess a body in good working order, but that we *are* our bodies, that we have familiarized ourselves with them to such a degree that both they and we disappear. Gadamer calls this the "miraculous capacity we have to forget ourselves," explaining that health is "not something that is revealed through investigation but rather something that manifests itself precisely by virtue of escaping our attention."[237] Although Gadamer is referring here to having bodies in good physical condition, there is an additional layer of forgetting that can occur when each author entrusts his body, whether ill or healthy, to the working harmony of the whole. Montaigne's seminal phrase, "Quand je dance, je dance : quand je dors, je dors," (III:13, "De l'expérience," p. 1157) contains a good deal of wisdom about the letting-be-ness (*Gelassenheit*), to use a Heideggerian term, required for an unmitigated sense of well-being. Montaigne's health is due in part to his capacity to bring his mind's awareness back to the body. In the same passage, he explains: "quand je me promeine solitairement en un beau verger, si mes pensées se sont entretenues des occurrences estrangeres quelque partie du temps : quelque autre partie, je les rameine à la promenade, au verger, à la douceur de cette solitude, et à moy." He uses his physical bearings, accessible through his body, to reorient himself to the present moment, and in this we have the whole of Montaigne's iconoclastic philosophy—one of presence, naturalness, and openness.

[237] Gadamer, *The Enigma of Health*, 96.

Letting go into the "douceur," as Montaigne would have it, becomes a much more deliberate stroke of surrender in Pascal. For the latter, forgetting the body can mean nothing other than a complete annihilation before God, through, remarkably enough, the *body* of Christ: "La conversion véritable consiste à s'aneantir devant cet être universel qu'on a irrité tant de fois," (LG 358), an "être" that Pascal refers to elsewhere as "[u]n *corps* universel et immortel" (LG 738; my emphasis). This vocabulary of annihilation also shows up in the contemplative exercises that Pascal offers to his readership. Inviting the reader to imagine his place in the two infinities – the vastness of the physical universe and the imperceptibility of the tiniest mite – leads to the following conclusion: "Qui se considérera de la sorte s'effraiera de soi-même et, se considérant soutenu dans la masse que la nature lui a donnée entre ces deux abîmes de l'infini et du néant, il tremblera dans la vue de ces merveilles, et je crois que, sa curiosité se changeant en admiration, il sera plus disposé à les contempler en silence qu'à les rechercher avec présomption." (LG 185) Though the words of the mystic, "contempler en silence" and "dans un secret imprénétrable," might ring of pure spiritualism, this exercise is a fine example of the self-forgetting we are capable of through the body. Here, the medicine just happens to be the body of the universe, a precursor to that "corps universel et immortel." Even though the subject has long forgotten his body and physical surroundings out of the sheer awe he feels before infinity, the entire contemplative exercise hinges on his personal bodily experience: the "trembling" of this "mass" that nature has given him. Sight is absolutely crucial to producing the desired result, for it seems to have an immediate effect on the subject's capacity to feel. It represents a way of understanding that bypasses discursive thought and brings one's body into contact with the imagined situation. Feeling fear in a

bodily way produces an equally bodily result: the subject finds himself more inclined to contemplate his situation in silence (reminiscent of prayer) than to presumptuously seek a definitive answer. The resulting silent contemplation provides a roadmap for the remainder of the search: set in opposition to the phrase "rechercher avec présomption," it represents the embodied alternative to a search based on ideas and opinions. Fear and trembling, then, are the first signs of health, in that they pave the way to admiration and contemplation. Without them, we would need to rely on logical argumentation, a relatively ineffectual alternative to direct bodily experience.

Conclusion.

Habitus *and the art of healing*.

By now I hope to have advanced two main arguments: first, that each author's understanding of spiritual health cannot be separated from his understanding of the body, insofar as what we call mind, spirit, or soul, along with the passions and emotions, are conspicuously embodied; and secondly, that illness and health are non-dual, since each author's study of illness is in itself an expression of good health. The very same practices that promote healing – reading, disciplining, and forgetting the body – also point us back to the source of illness, the ontic fact of embodiment. It is most evident in Pascal how embodiment, because it implies limitation, is the condition for illness itself. And yet, where other thinkers of the time might have settled for a blanket demonization of the body, the body surfaces in Pascal as a source of profound healing—theologically, through the incarnation and resurrection of Christ, and pragmatically, through the religious rituals that develop faith. We need both aspects of embodiment to become free of suffering,

much as we need bodily techniques to be both "traditional" and "efficacious," according to Marcel Mauss' original definition of *habitus*.[238]

For Montaigne, likewise, spiritual illness is initially felt in the body and healed in the same manner. Fundamentally, our *dis*-ease comes down to a profound anxiety about death that prevents us from truly living life—an anxiety about losing our bodies. And yet, we can only confront this anxiety ("agitation" in the *Essais*) through becoming intimately familiar with our bodies as they change with time, as Montaigne does in his *autopsia* and *historia* of the *Essais*. The author documents and disciplines his body, only then to "die," at the hoofs of his horse, before the actual fact of his passing. The Stoic exercise of *praemeditatio mortis* comes alive in him as if inadvertently, given that his brush with death was decidedly *un*premeditated. The exercise, in this sense, is retroactive; after having fallen from his horse, he organizes the events and sensations in his mind in order to "tirer une leçon." It is defined as much by what he does as by what he does *not* do. In the moments following the fall, just as in moments of agony from his kidney stones, he leaves his body to itself, without much commentary, so that nature can do her work. As Starobinski rightly notes, Montaigne allows his body to speak for itself.[239] This profound attitude of "letting-be" forms itself primarily in Montaigne's body – not his mind –

[238] "J'appelle technique un acte *traditionnel efficace* (et vous voyez qu'en ceci il n'est pas différent de l'acte magique, religieux, symbolique). Il faut qu'il soit *traditionnel et efficace.* Il n'y a pas de technique et pas de transmission, s'il n'y a pas de tradition. C'est en quoi l'homme se distingue avant tout des animaux : par la transmission de ses techniques et très probablement par leur transmission orale." (Marcel Mauss, "Les techniques du corps," 9.)

[239] "The body-subject, such as it feels itself to be, demands a legitimacy superior to that of science's discourse on the body. Better yet, the enterprise of speaking the body (*dire le corps*) ends up in granting the body permission not only to express itself (*se dire*) (through the living voice, gestures, movements) but also to provide the necessary metaphorical repertoire by means of which all the acts of thought will be represented in the writing of the book. To speak the body is, in a way, to return to the source, when so many objects—and, possibly, everything which can be spoken—are capable of being spoken by the body…" (Jean Starobinski, "the Body's Moment," trans. John A. Galluci, *Yale French Studies* 64 (1983): 278.)

because it takes the concrete evidence of pain and pleasure for such an attitude to arise. It is crucial that Montaigne develop the habit of letting-be first with regard to his body, so that the imagination does not become enthralled with its own fantasies.

Habitus, broadly defined as a matrix of habits occurring below the level of consciousness, points to an essential truth about the nature of healing in both authors. The individual body is ill not simply by its own vice, but because it belongs to an entire network of bodies predisposed to a particular type of suffering: fear of death, the passions, attachment to *le moi*, separation from nature or God. To be human is to be ill, and so even though a body may suffer from a particular illness, no true healing can occur until the individual realizes his belonging to the whole. The process of healing, by the same token, belongs to society and humanity at large, if only through the sociocultural and religious habits imprinted on the individual from an early age. However, the individual's role in healing is not entirely passive. Bourdieu gives a reading of *habitus* in the *Méditations pascaliennes* that lays specific emphasis on the individual's power, even though the individual himself has been socially determined: "C'est précisément la fonction de la notion d'habitus qui restitue à l'agent un pouvoir générateur et unificateur, constructeur et classificateur, tout en rappelant que cette capacité de construire la réalité sociale, elle-même socialement construite, n'est pas celle d'un sujet transcendantal, mais celle d'un corps socialisé…"[240] We need first to acknowledge the "socialized body" as having already been shaped to a certain degree, and then we can respond in appropriate ways to the task at hand (what I interpret to be the meaning of "un pouvoir générateur et unificateur"). The individual's power need not be understood as the power to change reality, but rather, as the power to coincide with what already is. That is why no amount

[240] Bourdieu, *Méditations pascaliennes*, 164.

of force will remove Montaigne's fear of death or convert Pascal's interlocutor: in both cases, the remedy is to acknowledge the pre-existing conditions of illness and work with the illness on its own terms. For Montaigne, this meant coinciding with nature, and for Pascal, surrendering to God. Only then could they realize something of the harmony that was synonymous with good health.

The body and its being-at-home.

Central to Bourdieu's explanation of *habitus* is the idea that, being exposed to the world, the agent is necessarily subject to suffering, as well as all manner of sentiment and sensation. This was a frequent observation in both Montaigne and Pascal. Montaigne paints himself as being so porous that he cannot help but feel others' symptoms in his own body. Pascal, likewise, was no stranger to the power of *sentiment* in understanding the basic truths of our world. Contrary, though, to most conventional understandings of suffering and its causes, the fact of our being so susceptible to the world is not presented as a problem per se.[241] Being in relationship with the world implies suffering, to be sure, but by the very same stroke of logic, it also points to our capacity to "maitriser [le monde] en lui apportant une réponse adaptée," in the words of Bourdieu.[242] As *habitus*, it is our nature to respond well to the world, and this would imply that we are "ill" (subject to suffering) and "healthy" (well-adapted to our suffering) all at once. Bourdieu's definition illustrates perfectly well the non-duality of the cause of suffering and its cure:

[241] We need only recall Descartes' famous injunction that we become "maîtres et possesseurs de la nature" through scientific reason and argument. (René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), 168.) Here, the opposite holds true: to be at peace, we need to coincide with the world as it presents itself.

[242] Bourdieu, *Méditations pascaliennes*, 170.

the place of our utmost vulnerability, where we are inevitably "*exposé au monde*," is also our place of power, where we can respond to the world appropriately. The *habitus*, in Bourdieu's words, "comprend [le monde] en un sens trop bien, sans distance objectivante, comme allant de soi, précisément parce qu'il s'y trouve pris, parce qu'il fait corps avec lui, qu'il habite comme un habit ou un habitat familier."[243] The well-suitedness of the subject to his world verges on seamlessness, and the assertion that *habitus* "fait corps avec le monde" can be taken quite literally. Even on the cellular level, our bodies are kept alive, and occasionally become ill, by the constant transactions of matter between the so-called inner and outer worlds. To consider the body as separate from its environment would be an "appréhension naïve," in the words of Bourdieu.[244] We also literally "wear the world" as a garment or a place of shelter, largely by the choices we make on a daily basis of what material objects or people we come into contact with, based on the storehouse of sentiments already active in our bodies.[245] This is what allows us to feel at home in the world ("chez soi dans le monde"[246]) and what creates the

[243] Ibid, 170.

[244] Ibid, 158. Bourdieu, throughout the *Méditations*, makes no effort to hide his hostility vis-à-vis the (largely Cartesian) "personnaliste" and "mentaliste" readings of human behavior, which neglect the body as agent and subjectivity. The body as object can be traced to our habitual position as spectators with regard to the world: "Ce corps chose, connu du dehors comme simple mécanique, dont la limite est le cadavre livré à la dissection, démontage mécaniste, ou le crane aux orbites vides des vanités picturales, et qui s'oppose au corps habité et *oublié*, éprouvé de l'intérieur comme ouverture, élan, tension ou désir, et aussi comme efficience, connivence et familiarité, est le produit de l'extension au corps d'un rapport au monde de spectateur." (160)

[245] Bourdieu explains it more fully thus: "L'habitus comme système de dispositions à être et à faire est une potentialité, un désir d'être qui, d'une certain façon, cherche à créer les conditions de son accomplissement, donc à imposer les conditions les plus favorables à ce qu'il est. […] C'est là un des principes majeurs (avec les moyens de réalisation disponibles) des choix quotidiens en matière d'objets ou de personnes : guidés par les sympathies ou les antipathies, les affections et les aversions, les goûts et les dégoûts, on se fait un environnement dans lequel on se sent « chez soi » et où l'on peut réaliser ce plein accomplissement de son désir d'être que l'on identifie au bonheur." (Ibid, 178.)

[246] Ibid, 170.

conditions for happiness itself ("ce plein accomplissement de son désir d'être que l'on identifie au bonheur"[247]).

To be well, then, has a good deal to do with the choices we make: whether Pascal's interlocutor chooses to recite masses or go gambling, and whether Montaigne chooses to fight his kidney stones or let them run their course. It all comes down to the material injunction to coincide, to harmonize, *in corpore*, with the world as it is, so that we know how to act in accord with the situation. Appropriate action is, in a sense, health itself, if we understand health to be the expression of harmony, the sort of harmony that Bourdieu describes between a *habitus* and its field of action: "L'action du sens pratique est une sorte de coïncidence nécessaire – ce qui lui confère les apparences de l'harmonie préétablie – entre un habitus et un champs."[248] The moment we diverge from appropriate action, the delicate equilibrium that is our health ruptures and illness forms. The action implied here originates in the body, as we have shown in our two authors, but has far-reaching consequences for the entire person. In fact, any appropriate action, leading to health, well-being, conversion, or salvation, must come from the body, because, to again use Bourdieu's words, "l'action symbolique ne peut, par soi seule…extirper les croyances corporelles, passions et pulsions."[249] We see this most clearly in Pascal, who, in his apologetic guise, relies on bodily ritual to reach the soul of his interlocutor. Language, thought, or any other symbolic virtue fundamentally cannot change a person's core beliefs, for, as Pascal eloquently put it, "[c]'est le cœur qui sent Dieu et non la

[247] Ibid, 178.

[248] Ibid, 170.

[249] Ibid, 215.

raison. Voilà ce que c'est que la foi. Dieu sensible au cœur, non à la raison." (LG 397) He could have just as easily said "Dieu sensible au *corps*, non à la raison."

Chapter 4

Philosophy as an Embodied Way of Life

Introduction.

The questions I pose in this final chapter are an attempt to resituate the writings of Montaigne and Pascal within a broader conversation about philosophy as a way of life. Having established the primordial role of the body in the philosophical practices of each author and having linked philosophy with early modern medical therapeutics, I would like to step back and consider how somatic discipline informs our understanding of philosophy as a practice. One concern that may arise is that by emphasizing the body we are once again creating a separation, or dualism, between body and mind, thus reinforcing the potential for bias in either direction. As I hope to show in this chapter, my use of the body as a privileged point of entry into philosophical practice is a temporary measure intended to disrupt our habitual reliance on cognition to describe philosophical exercises. My use of the term "somatic" or "bodily" is intended to extend beyond the aspects of philosophy that focus on eating and drinking, gymnastic training, and forms of ascetic practice. I highlight instead the *processes of embodiment* that seem to distinguish philosophy as a way of life from other more theoretical approaches to philosophy as a discipline.

It is my contention that framing the central issue as one of mind versus body significantly obscures the fact that philosophical practice does not belong to one province in particular, or even to two in dialectical relationship. In order for philosophy to be a way of life and, in the words of both Montaigne and Pascal, become a "second nature,"

the practitioner needs to undergo a rigorous process of appropriation and habituation that classic definitions of philosophy as a way of life do not necessarily make explicit. That is why, in addition to Pierre Hadot and Michel Foucault's respective definitions of the philosophical way of life, I turn to the Bourdieusian concept of *habitus* as a lens for understanding the process-oriented nature of embodiment. In a few key passages from the *Essais* and the *Pensées*, I show not only the vestigial importance of bodily habits in effecting philosophical change, but I suggest that embodiment itself – which lies at the heart of each author's philosophy – implies an engagement of the entire person in a nonlinear process of transformation, a process that can be distorted when we oppose mind and body as separate sites of practice. I consider below the two prevailing approaches to philosophy as a way of life, both as guideposts for understanding the practical aims of philosophy and, more critically, as possible barriers to a wider and more supple appreciation of philosophical practice.

The two preeminent figures that have shaped our current understanding of philosophy as a way of life – Pierre Hadot and, subsequently, Michel Foucault – focus chiefly on the Hellenistic schools of philosophy and devote considerable attention to the intellectual or spiritual aspects of philosophical exercises. Since the topic is vast, I will draw our attention to the sorts of exercises each theorist deemed essential to the philosophical way of life. Pierre Hadot, a Classical philologist at heart, took great care to remain true in his choice of words to the spirit of ancient philosophical practice. At the same time, his vision was vast, some would say mystical, in the sense that for him philosophy's highest purpose was to grant the subject access to the universal perspective

of the *logos* and help him to surpass his limited sense of self. Comparing the respective approaches of Hadot and Foucault, Arnold Davidson referred to Hadot's vision as a "divinization of the self" (in contrast to Foucault's "aestheticization of the self").[250] For Hadot, it was important to capture the all-embracing quality of philosophical practice and he struggled to find a name sufficiently prodigious to characterize the sorts of exercises associated with philosophical transformation. In his most exhaustive account, he described his process this way:

> « Exercices spirituels ». L'expression déroute un peu le lecteur contemporain. Tout d'abord il n'est plus de très bon ton, aujourd'hui, d'employer le mot « spirituel ». Mais il faut bien se résigner à employer ce terme, parce que les autres adjectifs ou qualitatifs possibles : « psychique », « moral », « éthique », « intellectuel », « de pensée », « de l'âme » ne recouvrent pas tous les aspects de la réalité que nous voulons décrire. On pourrait évidemment parler d'exercices de pensée, puisque, dans ces exercices, la pensée se prend en quelque sorte pour matière et cherche à se modifier elle-même. Mais le mot « pensée » n'indique pas de manière suffisamment claire que l'imagination et la sensibilité interviennent d'une manière très importante dans ces exercices. Pour les mêmes raisons, on ne peut se contenter d'« exercices intellectuels », bien que les aspects intellectuels (définition, division, raisonnement, lecture, recherche, amplification rhétorique) y jouent un grand rôle. « Exercices éthiques » serait une expression assez séduisante, puisque, nous le verrons, les exercices en question contribuent puissamment à la thérapeutique des passions et se rapportent à la conduite de la vie. Pourtant ce serait là encore une vue trop limitée. En fait, ces exercices…correspondent à une transformation de la vision du monde et à une métamorphose de la personnalité. Le mot « spirituel » permet bien de faire entendre que ces exercices sont l'œuvre, non seulement de la pensée, mais de *tout le psychisme de l'individu* [my emphasis] et surtout il révèle les vraies dimensions de ces exercices : grâce à eux, l'individu s'élève à la vie de l'Esprit objectif, c'est-à-dire se replace dans la perspective du Tout.[251]

The main point of his lengthy account is that, after a series of considerations about the relationship between the subject and his practice, the term "spiritual" seemed uniquely

[250] Arnold Davidson, "Ethics as Ascetics," in *Foucault and the Writing of History*, ed. Jan Goldstein (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994), 77.

[251] Pierre Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002), 20-21.

poised to capture the breadth and depth of most philosophical exercises—and this, because the term evoked the entire psychic structure of the individual. Hadot eschewed most overtly mentalist terminology, such as "thought exercises" or "intellectual exercises," precisely because they failed to capture "tous les aspects de la réalité" involved in philosophical practice, such as sensibility and the imagination (which are both bodily faculties).[252] This last point is particularly salient because it shows that Hadot *was* in some way concerned with the embodied aspects of philosophical practice, which is further reinforced by his belief that philosophy should affect the entire person. But his approach ultimately falls short in two ways. First off, he ends his description on a distinctly psychological note. After claiming that the term "spiritual" captures more than just cognition, he settles on another term, *psychisme*, which, while more inclusive of the entire range of individual experience (such as emotion and memory), remains covertly mentalist. *Psyche* in Greek meant soul and was generally thought to be distinct from the *soma*. By settling on an individual's *psychisme* Hadot ends up circling back to the mentalist vocabulary he initially shied away from. His description of spiritual exercises as evocative of one's entire *psychisme*, while attempting to convey a wider range of experience, actually risks reinforcing a disembodied view of philosophical practice—one that runs counter to the definition of philosophy as a *living* practice.

Furthermore, Hadot stops short in describing the process of transformation that occurs in the philosophical adept. He is right to expand the classic definition of philosophical exercises to include imagination and sensibility, but gives scant information about the actual chain of events that brings about a dramatic transformation

[252] Though, we should note, he does admit that thought figures crucially into these exercises: "la pensée se prend en quelque sorte pour matière et cherche à se modifier elle-même." (Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, 20.)

of the individual. To describe the end result of these exercises as a "transformation of one's vision of the world" or a "metamorphosis of one's personality" gives the impression that the adept's experience is contained in his mental projections alone. Although Hadot later specifies these claims by alluding to the Stoic ideal of attaining the "objective Spirit" ("l'individu s'élève à la vie de l'Esprit objectif") and the "perspective of All" ("c'est-à-dire se replace dans la perspective du Tout"), the vision we are left with seems to abstract the individual from his bodily experience. I would argue that the evidence of philosophical transformation should be gleaned from how a person actually lives – in other words, how a person uses his body and mind – and not just from how one sees the world. The processes of embodiment that I discuss in this chapter are an attempt to clarify the transmutation of philosophical ideals into a way of life.

Embodiment itself poses a major challenge to the traditional way of framing the problem of individual agency: neither the body nor the mind is uniquely responsible for change. In the classic schema of mind versus body, or spiritual versus material, there is little room to consider the more complex varieties of experience brought about by serious philosophical practice. In this chapter, instead of either accepting or rejecting Hadot's terminology in a summary way, I propose to revisit that moment of hesitation in Hadot's own thinking, in which it was not altogether evident where to place the emphasis when describing philosophical practice. That Hellenistic philosophy was practice-based, in addition to being theoretical, seemed self-evident to Hadot; but it was not always clear where to look for the evidence of philosophical transformation (in the content of one's thoughts? in one's choice of words? in the reports of how much fear was present at the moment of death?). My overall contention is that we need to look more specifically at the

details of an author's everyday behavior – such as the bodily habits that Montaigne enumerates in "De l'Experience" (III:13) – to find evidence of philosophy *as a way of life*, because these details are symptoms, as it were, of the otherwise mysterious elevation of the self to the universal *logos* (Hadot). It should now be clearer why the medical approach to interpreting the causes of an obscure condition (i.e. via symptomology) has a direct application to philosophical training: in both cases, an individual's outward (bodily) signs serve as a proxy for a deeper process of transformation. Description, as we have seen in the last three chapters, helps to clarify this process.

Michel Foucault, in his later work on the care of the self, would seem to offer a more somatically-based alternative to the spiritual exercises outlined by Hadot. Because his approach to philosophy as a way of life bordered on the aesthetic, he more explicitly made reference to a person's physical characteristics as evincive of his philosophical *êthos*: "L'*êthos* était la manière d'être et la manière de se conduire. C'était un mode d'être du sujet et une certaine manière de faire, visible pour les autres. L'*êthos* de quelqu'un se traduit par son costume, par son allure, par sa manière de marcher, par le calme avec lequel il répond à tous les événements, etc. C'est cela, pour [les Anciens], la forme concrète de la liberté ; c'est ainsi qu'ils problématisaient leur liberté."[253] More aligned with my approach to Montaigne and Pascal, Foucault's definition of *êthos* assigns philosophical significance to a person's ordinary bodily behaviors. For philosophy to be a "mode of being" ("mode d'être"), it must be visible to others; that is, it must be worn on the body, like an *habit* (French), which shares its etymological origins with the French

[253] Michel Foucault, "L'éthique du souci de soi comme pratique de la liberté," in *Dits et écrits*, t. 4 (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 714.

habitude and the Latin *habitus*. Foucault gives a few examples of how this might look in real life: in a person's dress, look, way of walking, or emotional responses to life's unfolding events. It is significant that Foucault is willing to name some of the concrete forms of philosophical *êthos*, because in so doing he demonstrates how to take seriously the idiosyncratic behaviors, habits, and appearances of an author such as Montaigne or Pascal. Of course, to focus primarily on appearance might strike the philosopher as superficial; and this is precisely what Hadot objected to in Foucault's accounts of ancient philosophical practice, calling Foucault's approach "no more than a new form of dandyism."[254] However, when it came to describing ancient philosophical practices, Foucault did not stop at the mere appearance, or aestheticization, of the self. His version of "knowing oneself" included many of the same exercises that Hadot himself highlighted, such as ascetic practices ("procédures d'épreuve"), the examination of conscience ("l'examen de conscience"), and meditation ("un travail de la pensée sur elle-même").[255]

In Foucault's discussion of such practices, only the first (ascetic practices) relates directly to the body. For the Epicureans, ascetic practices amounted to the recognition that satisfying basic bodily needs, like eating and drinking, engenders a pleasure far beyond that born of our habitual indulgences. For the Stoics, these practices were a way of seeing that what is absolutely necessary is always at our disposal, and that we can rely on our own bodies to be content. By contrast, the two other practices that Foucault named are chiefly intellectual, in that they attend to the movements of the mind or soul. A

[254] Pierre Hadot, *The Present Alone is Our Happiness*, trans. Marc Djaballah (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 136.

[255] See Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité. Le Souci de soi.* (t. 3) (Paris: Gallimard, 1984), 87-90.

common practice in Antiquity as well as early Christianity, the examination of conscience was intended to give the practitioner a dispassionate view of the desires and errors that lurked in the wrinkles of his soul, often through a process of scrupulous note-taking. Finally, the practice of meditation consisted of "examining, controlling, and sorting" the representations that came to mind ("les examiner, les contrôler et les trier"). Not simply an isolated exercise, Foucault described meditation as an attitude of vigilance that the practitioner adopts vis-à-vis himself.

All told, what these three practices have in common is that they bring about a conversion to the self (in the words of Foucault: "la conversion à soi," or *epistrophe eis heauton* in Greek and *conversio ad se* in Latin), by which the subject realizes that "on ne relève que de soi-même."[256] Foucault described the process of conversion as "une trajectoire grâce à laquelle, échappant à toutes les dépendances et à tous les asservissements, on finit par se rejoindre soi-même, comme un havre à l'abri des tempêtes ou comme une citadelle que ses remparts protègent." The idea of returning to oneself and becoming self-reliant is in itself evocative of becoming whole. Here, the simile of the self as a haven or a citadel where one is free from danger ("à l'abri des tempêtes" and protected by "remparts") would suggest that peace of mind is acquired only when one has freed oneself of external dependencies. The point is not to remove oneself from the world literally; rather, Foucault considered the enjoyment of life to be complete only when one stopped *believing* that well-being is something external to oneself. To be free from danger is, in a sense, to believe in one's own capacity for well-being. This theme was especially dear to Montaigne, who never missed an opportunity to express his skepticism of dictates and prescriptions coming from outside authorities. He

[256] Ibid, 90.

thought that one should know oneself well enough to be like that refuge Foucault evokes above, knowing exactly what conditions are necessary for one's own well-being.

By the above accounts, Foucault is a more reliable guide to somatic practices than Hadot. In Foucault's later writings, we have several examples of bodily use that measure up to the lofty ideals of philosophical realization. Foucault places the body front and center in his definition of philosophical *êthos*, as we have seen, the key point being that *êthos* is something worn on the body and visible to others. Similar to the symptoms that aid in diagnosing illness, the evidence of philosophical integrity (or lack thereof) becomes available as some physical manifestation. Because of their visibility, bodily habits play a vital role as teachers (i.e. we learn something essential about a person through his or her bodily behaviors, which Montaigne was keen to point out) and as training (i.e. we effect lasting change in our life through repeated bodily actions). This is why the notion of habit (*habitude*), as an extension of the groundwork laid by Hadot and Foucault, should figure prominently in any discussion of philosophy as a way of life; for it shines light on the material exigencies involved in developing virtue and tranquility of the soul. Whenever we pause to consider how Montaigne liked to eat or what position Pascal took to pray, it is because these details are evocative of an entire way of being in the world. In Part I, I will explore the various ways each author uses his body or the bodies of others to learn about himself—the essential first step to becoming a philosopher of a way of life. Then in Part II, I will turn to specific methods of somatic training that focus on habituation as a positive means of inducing change in the entire person.

Part I: Somatic Apprenticeship.

Teachings of the Body: Historical and Personal Exempla.

Both Montaigne and Pascal, while relying on slightly different examples, characterize the ideal learning process as natural, invisible, and effortless.[257] However, the learning processes they evoke usually do not occur by happenstance alone. In "De l'institution des enfans," Montaigne specifies several concrete parameters for training a young boy to grow up noble and wise, and Pascal advocates practicing particular rituals and gestures in imitation of Christian converts and of Christ. Learning may happen as if by chance, but it is only "as if," for it is set in motion by particular behaviors intended to produce a desired effect on the soul. At first glance, this would seem to place both authors closer to the Aristotelian notion of *hexis* than to the modern sociological acceptation of *habitus*.[258] One scholar succinctly sums up *hexis* in these terms: "c'est en forgeant qu'on devient forgeron : c'est en produisant des œuvres qu'on devient ouvrier, fabricant."[259] In the Aristotelian view of habit, an individual has the power to fashion himself by performing particular actions, just as one might become adept at playing a musical instrument or carving wood through deliberate practice. At the same time, the

[257] Pascal insists that we learn to believe through habit, without willful exertion, because we are as much "automate" (body) as "esprit" (mind): "Il faut acquérir une créance plus facile, qui est celle de l'habitude, qui sans violence, sans art, sans argument, nous fait croire les choses et incline toutes nos puissances à cette croyance, en sorte que notre âme y tombe naturellement." (LG 671). Montaigne, for his part, describes the ideal education of a young boy as being so agreeable as to not be felt: "Mais comme les pas que nous employons à nous promener dans une galerie, quoy qu'il y en ait trois fois autant, ne nous lassent pas, comme ceux que nous mettons à quelque chemin dessigné : aussi nostre leçon se passant comme par rencontre, sans obligation de temps et de lieu, et se meslant à toutes nos actions, se coulera sans se faire sentir." (I:25, "De l'institution des enfans," pp. 171-72)

[258] The former includes conscious practices aimed at developing a certain skill, craft, or moral disposition, whereas in the latter case, embodied *habitus* is not considered the result of intentional action. Because it originates in a process of unconscious imitation, it lies beyond the pale of conscious reflection and manipulation. See Francis Goyet, "La notion éthique d'*habitude* dans les *Essais* : articuler l'art et la nature," *MLN* 118:4 (2003): 1069-91. Goyet gives a more detailed genealogy of the term *habitus* at it begins with Aristotle and later applies to Montaigne; see esp. pp. 1071-72.

[259] Goyet, "La notion éthique d'*habitude* dans les *Essais*," 1073.

traditional notion of "practice makes perfect" requires some nuance in the case of our two authors. Practicing to become virtuous may produce some of the desired effects of moderation, but spiritual health ultimately results from a shift in one's entire being to coincide with the fact of being whole. The radical move of either author is to suggest that the imitator must eventually realize that the ideal he is imitating is already a part of himself. That is, he must realize that the illness of being human and imperfect contains health itself. Until then, of course, practice does matter.

One of Montaigne's favorite sources of inspiration when it comes to living well and dying with dignity is the august assembly of philosophers and politicians that he has read about from Antiquity. Whether it is Seneca, Plutarch, Socrates, or Cato, he looks to these figures for concrete evidence of their ability to be at peace with life and death—which is, after all, the cardinal aim of philosophy as a way of life.[260] Rather than rely on the maxims and rhetorical prowess of such figures, Montaigne judges their characters by the signs of their bodily comportment—by their blood, sweat, and tears, as it were, at the moments when they were most pressed. Action, gesture, appearance, and posture are indispensable guides for understanding the inner disposition of each man. In two different examples, Montaigne pairs two figures from Antiquity (Socrates and Cato, and then Seneca and Plutarch) to illustrate the embodiment of virtue. In the first passage I cite, Socrates and Cato are portrayed as the emblems of virtue itself, so thoroughly has virtue passed into the constitution of these two men:

> On voit aux ames de ces deux personnages, et de leurs imitateurs (car de semblables, je fay grand doubte qu'il y en ait eu) une si parfaicte habitude

[260] In many of his works, Pierre Hadot refers to the ultimate aim of philosophy as "la paix intérieure" and "la tranquillité de l'âme." See for example: Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique ?*, 162.

> à la vertu, qu'elle leur est passée en complexion. Ce n'est plus vertu penible, ny des ordonnances de la raison, pour lesquelles maintenir il faille que leur ame se roidisse : c'est l'essence mesme de leur ame, c'est son train naturel et ordinaire. Ils l'ont rendue telle, par un long exercice des preceptes de la philosophie, ayans rencontré une belle et riche nature. Les passions vitieuses, qui naissent en nous, ne trouvent plus par où faire entrée en eux. La force et roideur de leur ame, estouffe et esteint les concupiscences, aussi tost qu'elles commencent à s'esbranler. (II:11, "De la cruauté," p. 446)

The value of *exempla* in this passage is twofold: philosophical precepts provide an example of virtue for Socrates and Cato, who practice them enough that virtue eventually becomes a part of them; then, as embodiments of virtue, they serve as examples to their "imitators" and later readers such as Montaigne. Although Montaigne initially points to their *souls* as the seat of virtue, the body, while unnamed, plays the larger role in assuring that these figures are truly wise. Montaigne's use of "habitude" is especially instructive in this regard. He defines our relationship to virtue in terms of habit, rather than as a congenital character trait, thereby implying that we each have a part in cultivating it (although nature contributes her part as well). In its most perfect expression, the habit of virtue is said to become one's "complexion," a term that was widely used in early modern medical diagnostics. One historian of medicine describes the direct relationship that was thought to exist between complexion and the humoral system around the time of Montaigne: "To grasp the internal state of the human body, people relied on the signs inscribed on the body's exterior: the color of the skin, the set of the limbs, and especially the testimony of the visage. Complexion, for example, showed on the facial features. A red or florid color revealed the sanguine personality, yellow a bilious one. Likewise, the "black looks" of the melancholic and the phlegmatic soul's "dull eye" were immediately

recognizable."[261] Complexion could reveal a great deal about the balance (or imbalance) of the body's internal fluids, and not just that, it pointed to certain character traits (indicated by the sanguine and bilious personalities above) and lifestyle choices (how a person ate, slept, or worked). Thus, it would have been no stretch to imagine a habit, such as virtue, living in the folds of a philosopher's face, for along with every other internal disposition, virtue had a physical manifestation. Perhaps, too, by referring to complexion, Montaigne was trying to signal the enduring quality of virtue in these figures' lives. No longer just a thought or fantasy circulating in the soul, virtue had become a physical reality, the very "essence" of their soul, as well as a "natural" and "ordinary" way of being. By passing from soul into body, virtue became like a second nature.

The key to this transmutation is habit, as I noted above: it is what concretizes the ideal (associated with the soul) into a bodily disposition (*complexion*). The secret to developing the proper habit, according to Montaigne, is a long exercise of philosophical precepts ("un long exercice des preceptes de la philosophie") in conjunction with a nature well suited to philosophical training ("une belle et riche nature"). In other words, language alone ("les preceptes") will not suffice. We need exercises to redirect our inclination to virtue, but once a habit has passed into complexion, it has a momentum all its own and may be difficult to change. Francis Goyet has an apt way of conveying the gradual development of habit in Montaigne: "Le pli est le résultat d'une action passée, d'un processus à long terme."[262] He adds, following Aristotle's definition of *hexis*, that

[261] Mary Lindemann, *Medicine and Society in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 24.

[262] Goyet, "La notion éthique d'*habitude* dans les *Essais*," 1079.

"cela s'incorpore à nous progressivement."[263] One small action at a time, the habit "s'incorpore," that is, becomes *in corpore*, or em-bodied.

Of course, vice can also pass into complexion if vicious habits are "reprins, deliberez et consultez."[264] In his chapter on repentance, Montaigne refers to the "pechez de complexion" that develop in contrast to the "pechez impetueux, prompts et subits." He admits that it would be difficult to believe that there is not some part of reason or will that contributes to long-term patterns of vicious behavior. But even negative habits, which draw us away from the virtuous mean, are susceptible to change with the help of sincere penitence. Otherwise, the vices remain stubbornly "acharnés," to use Montaigne own language, and become fodder for but greater and greater "endurcissement."[265] Near the end of the passage praising Socrates and Cato, Montaigne uses similar vocabulary to describe the inculcation of virtue into the souls of these two men. He characterizes their souls of as one might describe an athlete's body, containing the force and durability that would be necessary to vanquish a stout enemy. He reports, "[l]a force et roideur de leur ame, estouffe et esteint les concupiscences, aussi tost qu'elles commencent à s'esbranler." Because of a long and gradual habituation to virtue, their souls have taken on the dependable attributes of strength and vigor, such that the principles of philosophy have become a sort of bodily characteristic, requiring almost no effort to maintain. They

[263] Goyet follows this remark with an explanation from Aristotle: "les actes singuliers qui s'y ajoutent par la suite échappent à notre conscience, comme dans le cas des maladies. (trad. Tricot)." (Goyet, "La notion éthique d'*habitude* dans les *Essais*," 1079.) Aristotle's analogy of sickness is significant, because it suggests that change that occurs in the body can have greater power over us than conscious thought or will.

[264] The entire passage reads: "Il y a des pechez impetueux, prompts et subits: laissons les à part. Mais en ces autres pechez à tant de fois reprins, deliberez et consultez, ou pechez de complexion, voire pechez de profession et de vacation, je ne puis pas concevoir qu'ils soient plantez si long temps en un mesme courage sans que la raison et la conscience de celuy qui les possede, le veuille constamment et l'entende ainsi; et le repentir qu'il se vante luy en venir à certain instant prescript, m'est un peu dur à imaginer et former." (III:2, "Du repentir," p. 853)

[265] Goyet, "La notion éthique d'*habitude* dans les *Essais*," 1080.

have become "natural" and "ordinary" by Montaigne's own estimation, requiring significantly less effort to maintain than if reason were in charge ("Ce n'est plus vertu penible, ny des ordonnances de la raison, pour lesquelles maintenir il faille que leur ame se roidisse.") Although Classical examples such as these might have been considered out of reach for readers like Montaigne, they still carried tremendous weight insofar as they exposed the mechanism (habituation) by which certain qualities become a way of life.

By drawing on the example of Socrates and Cato, Montaigne is able to reflect on the ways that virtue can become a second nature. Though it is not immediately apparent how Montaigne makes their attributes his own (since the *éloge* quality of his reflection creates some distance between himself and the example), the example is significant because it projects the consummation of philosophical practice—a model worth striving for. Montaigne is linked to these two figures and can learn something from them because all men begin with the basic conditioning of having strong passions ("Les passions vitieuses, qui naissent en nous…"). What separates him from these figures is the simple fact of habituation. Through the practice of habituation Socrates and Cato have succeeded in creating the conditions necessary to avoid succumbing to the passions; and hence the passions, which we are universally subject to, "ne trouvent plus par où faire entrée en eux." Their natures, though propitious, were not perfect from the beginning. They needed the long training in philosophical precepts to bring them to the point that Montaigne is describing. In Montaigne's own life, somatic apprenticeship occurs at that moment when he acknowledges a shared bodily experience (the passions) and identifies a means to cope with that experience.

Commenting on the value of historical *exempla* in the *Essais*, Timothy Hampton points to a possible problem in the use of examples for one's own philosophical and moral training. In relying on ancient examples such as Socrates and Cato, or elsewhere Seneca and Plutarch,[266] Montaigne runs the risk of becoming *less* himself, rather than becoming more attuned to his basic nature, because the mere knowledge of another person's character – especially a figure one admires – has an immediate and all-pervasive effect on the observer. In the words of Hampton: "This movement out of the self involves great risk. As Montaigne points out near the beginning of "De La Phisionomie," knowledge is quite unlike every other product which we bring home from the market, in that by the time we have unwrapped and examined it, it has already affected us. Thus to follow the example of another is to risk ever more corruption. To submit to the "custom" of borrowing is to risk deformation even as one seeks correction."[267] Though this "risk" does not seem to prevent Montaigne from remaining thoroughly himself in most cases, we can imagine the above to be true particularly where the example concerns another person's body, since bodies communicate without intermediary—hence the subtle and

[266] In an oft-cited passage near the end of the *Essais*, Montaigne compares the bodily examples of Seneca and Plutarch as they each face death: "À veoir les efforts que Seneque se donne pour se preparer contre la mort, à le voir suer d'ahan, pour se roidir et pour s'asseurer, et se debattre si long temps en ceste perche, j'eusse esbranlé sa reputation, s'il ne l'eust en mourant, tresvaillamment maintenue. Son agitation si ardante, si fréquente, montre qu'il estoit chaud et impetueux luy mesme. (…) Il le faut convraincre à ses despens. Et monstre aucunement qu'il estoit pressé de son adversaire. La façon de Plutarque, d'autant qu'elle est plus desdaigneuse, et plus destendue, elle est selon moy, d'autant plus virile et persuasive : Je croirois aysément, que son ame avoit les mouvemens plus asseurez, et plus reiglez. L'un plus aigu, nous pique et nous eslance en sursaut : touche plus l'esprit. L'autre plus solide, nous informe, establie et conforte constamment : touche plus l'entendement. Celuy là ravit nostre jugement : cestuy-ci le gaigne." (II:12, "De la Physionomie," p. 1086) The value of *exempla* in this case is both pedagogical and therapeutic: through their bodily comportment, these figures at once reveal their moral character and provide consolation and inspiration for the reader. They roughly correspond to the two opposing but complementary poles of ancient philosophical practice, as outlined by Hadot: one "fortifies" and promotes tension, like the Stoics, and the other "touches" and encourages relaxation, like the Epicureans.

[267] Timothy Hampton, "Montaigne and the Body of Socrates: Narrative and Exemplarity in the *Essais*," *MLN* 104:4 (1989): 891-92.

sometimes insidious power of *habitus*. Montaigne himself admits being unduly influenced by the mere sight of another person's illness, such that he takes on the qualities of that illness.[268] So when it comes to a virtuous quality, one would imagine the author's health and well-being to increase. Observing virtuous qualities in another, one begins, often unconsciously, the long and gradual process of habituation to virtuous action, which eventually develops into virtuous disposition. If there is indeed a risk, as Hampton argues, it is that borrowing, as a form of apprenticeship, necessitates a departure from "nature" while bringing us closer to the "corruption of culture" and the "distortion of representation."[269] Yet it is a necessary risk, and an inevitable one. The process of borrowing is always, already taking place, whether or not we actively seek it, because the body learns from its environment in an unmitigated way. What is more, borrowing is tantamount to the development of a virtuous self and is therefore an essential feature of philosophical training. Hampton acknowledges this by stating: "Raised to borrow, the self can only move toward a full realization of its natural capacities after having first borrowed from others."[270] In other words, if we were not susceptible to borrowing and appropriation, we would not be capable of change as fully formed adults.

One way to avoid the risks associated with borrowing is to begin the process of virtuous habit-formation early in a child's education. This is perhaps why Montaigne spends painstaking detail considering the ideal education for a young noble. In his

[268] "La veue des angoisses d'autruy m'angoisse materiellement : et a mon sentiment souvent usurpé le sentiment d'un tiers. Un tousseur continuel irrite mon poulmon et mon gosier. Je visite plus mal volontiers les malades, ausquels le devoir m'intéresse, que ceux ausquels je m'attens moins, et que je considère moins." (I:19, "De la force de l'imagination," pp. 98-99)

[269] Hampton, "Montaigne and the Body of Socrates," 892.

[270] Ibid, 891.

chapter "De l'institution des enfans," he gives practical advice on almost every aspect of social and moral training, and a great deal of it concerns the use of one's body. Similar to the passage analyzed above, Montaigne draws upon historical examples to illustrate the advantages of bodily, or embodied, learning in children, as opposed to rhetorical or theoretical training, which he disdainfully terms "une continuelle exercitation de la langue" (I:24, "Du pedantisme," p. 148).[271] The Lacedaemonians, in the way that they raised their children, serve as a model for active and experiential pedagogy and thereby provide one of the clues as to how virtuous qualities become integrated into one's "nature" and "habit," and not just remain a method. Montaigne begins by explaining that since learning, by definition, can only teach us *about* the virtuous qualities we seek – such as wisdom, integrity, and resoluteness – the Lacedaemonians recognized this and took a wholly different approach to introducing their children to virtue: "…ils ont voulu d'arrivée mettre leurs enfans au propre des effects, et les instruire non par ouïr dire, mais par l'essay de l'action, en les formant et moulant vifvement, non seulement de preceptes et parolles, mais principalement d'exemples et d'œuvres : afin que ce ne fust pas une science en leur âme, mais sa complexion et habitude : que ce ne fust pas un acquest, mais une naturelle possession." (I:24, "Du pedantisme," p. 148) Montaigne uses the example of the Lacedaemonians to set up a series of opposing terms that structure many of his opinions expressed throughout the *Essais* about education and morality, truth and authenticity, and integrity and wisdom. Here, with the rhetorical effect of accumulation,

[271] "On allait, dit-on, aux autres villes de Grece chercher des Rhetoriciens, des peintres, et des Musiciens : mais en Lacedemone des legislateurs, des magistrats, et Empereurs d'armée : à Athenes on aprenoit à bien dire, et icy à bien faire : là à se desmesler d'un argument sophistique, et à rabattre l'imposture des mots captieusement entrelassez ; icy à se desmesler des appats de la volupté, et à rabattre d'un grand courage les menasses de la fortune et de la mort : ceux-là s'embesognoient après les parolles, ceux-cy après les choses : là c'estoit une continuelle exercitation de la langue, icy une continuelle exercitation de l'ame." (I:24, "Du pedantisme," p. 148)

he opposes "ouïr dire" and "l'essay de l'action," "preceptes" and "exemples," "parolles" and "œuvres ," "science" and "complexion et habitude," and, finally, "acquest" and "naturelle possession." Common to all of these oppositions is the cardinal distinction between intellectualization and embodiment, or between idea and action. Montaigne implies through these oppositions that to arrive at "complexion," "habitude," and "naturelle possession," we cannot remain at the helm of ideas and words. We need the weight of action in order for any desired quality to become a second nature—and this not only requires the use of one's body proper, but it is the very definition of embodiment itself. Francis Goyet rightfully emphasizes the quality of *in corpore* in the above passage from Montaigne: "…à force de pratique, d'exercice, d'*usus*, les enfants intègreront les leçons de courage et de justice. Ils les feront leurs, se les mettront dans le corps (« incorporé ») et non seulement dans la tête ou au bout de la langue. Habitude = complexion = possession. Dire que cette possession doit être « naturelle », c'est dire qu'elle doit devenir une nature, donc devenir *comme* une seconde nature."[272]

As in the previous passage featuring Socrates and Cato, here Montaigne distinguishes between two types of learning: one based on "preceptes" and another based on "habitude." Just as Socrates and Cato were said to transform philosophical precepts into their natural complexion through the proper development of habit, the Lacedaemonians supplemented their children's education of words and precepts ("preceptes" and "parolles") with examples and deeds ("exemples" and "œuvres"). Here, it is worth noting that "habitude" is placed on equal terms with "complexion," rather than being framed as a means to it. We may recall that Socrates and Cato possessed "une si parfaicte habitude à la vertu, qu'elle leur est passée en complexion" (indicating a two-

[272] Goyet, "La notion éthique d'*habitude* dans les *Essais*," 1086 (original emphasis).

step process), whereas here, the result of the learning process is at once "complexion et habitude," implying that habit and complexion are one and the same phenomenon, both visible on the body. Montaigne opposes the two terms with a science that can be possessed ("une science en leur âme"), a *doctrina* or *disciplina* acquired from an external authority. The primary distinction is one between *having* and *being*, delineated by a science existing "in their soul" and the soul being virtue itself, and further reinforced by the final opposition between an "acquest" and a "naturelle possession."

It has been said that the culminating expression of Montaigne's philosophy is the ability to remain natural in all circumstances, to be free from contrivance and all the borrowed conventions that society and culture impose upon us. "Natural possession," to use Montaigne's exact term, opposes the risks usually associated with borrowing, such as corruption and distortion, which prompted Timothy Hampton to designate borrowing a "dangerous" practice in the *Essais*. The Lacedaemonians are proof of a less risky alternative, and for Montaigne, they provide the *exemplum* of how to go about the process of making a precept one's own. *Exempla* function on two levels here: the Lacedaemonians themselves use examples to teach their children virtuous action, and Montaigne in turn uses that fact as an example of how to best learn. His own *Essais* are a perfect mirror for the "essais" that the Lacedaemonians use on their children. The key is that from the beginning they throw their children into the "test of action"—in other words, they make them *use their bodies* in new or challenging situations. If learning stops short of this, Montaigne seems to imply, we remain separate from the words and ideas that are meant to aid us. If, however, we are able to plunge into the process of appropriation, using our body to respond to changing circumstances, we *become* a

particular quality and need not reach out to it in a deliberate way. The quality then becomes not just "like" a second nature, as Goyet suggests (with emphasis on the "comme"); it *is* a second nature through and through. At the pinnacle of this process, we have the examples of Socrates and Cato in "De la cruauté." And yet, even as ideals of virtue, Montaigne does not hide the fact that each man spent a lifetime devoting himself to "un long exercice des preceptes de la philosophie" (II:11, p. 446). They are an example of the final product, as it were, whereas the Lacedaemonians provide a snapshot of the earlier stages of somatic training that ought to begin in childhood. The recommendations that Montaigne gives to Madame Diane de Foix in "De l'institution des enfans" regarding her son's education are, not surprisingly, in exact accord with the values gleaned from the Lacedaemonians and the later fruition of these values in figures like Socrates and Cato.

Without neglecting the more traditional aspects of a respectable education in his time, Montaigne pays particular attention to the physical components of a boy's training—not only to ensure the boy's success and ease in a worldly sense, but to cultivate the philosopher's freedom that gives rise to tranquility of the soul. The main thrust of his chapter on education is that the boy ought to be prepared for anything that might come his way. Hence he lays the groundwork for an apprenticeship suffused with physical labor, athleticism, games, and play. In the passages I cite below, Montaigne recommends harsh physical exercises both to protect against the hazards of sixteenth-century life in France and to support the proper functioning of the boy's soul. "It is not enough to toughen his soul," he advises, "we must also toughen his muscles…":

> Ce n'est pas assez de luy roidir l'ame, il luy faut aussi roidir les muscles, elle est trop pressée, si elle n'est secondée : et a trop à faire, de seule fournir à deux offices. Je sçay combien ahanne la mienne en compagnie d'un corps si tendre, si sensible, qui se laisse si fort aller sur elle. Et

> apperçoy souvent en ma leçon, qu'en leurs escrits, mes maistres font valoir pour magnanimité et force de courage, des exemples, qui tiennent volontiers plus de l'espessissure de la peau et durté des os. J'ay veu des hommes, des femmes et des enfants, ainsi nays, qu'une bastonade leur est moins qu'à moy une chiquenaude ; qui ne remuent ny langue ny sourcil, aux coups qu'on leur donne. Quand les Athletes contrefont les Philosophes en patience, c'est plustost vigueur de nerfs que de cœur. (I:25, "De l'institution des enfans," p. 159)

From the beginning, Montaigne sets up a precise relationship between the strength of the body and the health of the soul: the body backs up ("seconde"[273]) the soul in its work of maintaining magnanimity and courage ("magnanimité et force de courage"). Without the body's aid, the soul actually performs two jobs instead of one, a burden it is ill equipped for. Montaigne uses his own experience as an example of what happens to the soul when the body is not properly disciplined: the soul exhausts itself ("ahanner," meaning in Middle French "souffler, être essouflé, gémir," particularly in the context of agricultural labor[274]) when the body leans so heavily upon it, the implication being that we ought to develop the opposite relationship, wherein the soul can lean upon the body. Montaigne goes on to cite the writings of his "masters" who, in order to illustrate virtue (Montaigne uses "magnanimité et force de courage" here), prioritize deeds that owe more to physical fitness than to the soul's finesse. This is a seminal point because Montaigne is likely referring to *philosophers* here (prefiguring the last sentence of the passage), and he traces their expressions of virtue to their physical robustness ("l'espessissure de la peau et durté des os"), not to their souls. The final example he gives is of men, women, and children (peasants presumably) who routinely handle beatings with unsurpassed Stoic

[273] Besides meaning "aider, favoriser, servir quelqu'un dans un travail" in a generic context, "seconder" referred to the second position of a player in a tennis match (*jeu de paume*). (*Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 1st Edition (1694), accessed December 14, 2014, http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=seconder.)

[274] Emile Littré, *Histoire de la langue française* (Paris: Didier, 1873), 161.

equanimity—an ordinary occurrence, perhaps, but yet another allusion to a philosophical quality that owes directly to physical fitness. After underscoring the importance of developing bodily strength (literally, "les muscles"), Montaigne concludes with a rather elusive turn of phrase. Comparing athletes to philosophers, he makes a distinction between two types of endurance: a physical endurance, manifest in the body's nerves or sinews, and a more ephemeral sort of endurance cultivated in the heart. At the same time, he suggests that there is a close relationship between the two. There is an endurance that appears "philosophical" (as when athletes mimic philosophers), but which actually comes from the body (the "nerfs") rather than from the soul or heart. This would support the second example he gives of those figures in his masters' writings who perform virtuous deeds owing more to their bodies than to their souls. Although philosophers are associated here with deeds of the heart, the overarching implication of the passage is that they would do well to strengthen their bodies to facilitate the functioning of their souls.

Certainly, it is also worth developing physical endurance for the sake of resisting bodily pain, as the Ciceronian proverb *labor callum obducit dolori* ("le travail oppose le cal à la peine") attests to in the passage below. And there was a real value to this endurance for a boy growing up in sixteenth-century France, since he might have been subject to all manner of bodily punishments, such was the political climate of his time: "Or l'accoustumance à porter le travail, est accoustumance à porter la douleur : *labor callum obducit dolori* [le travail oppose le cal à la peine]. Il le faut rompre à la peine, et aspreté des exercices, pour le dresser à la peine, et aspreté de la dislocation, de la colique, du caustere : et de la geaule aussi, et de la torture. Car de ces derniers icy, encore peut-il estre en prinse, qui regardent les bons, selon le temps, comme les meschants. Nous en

sommes à l'espreuve. Quiconque combat les loix, menace les gents de bien d'escourgées et de la corde." (I:25, "De l'institution des enfans," p. 159) Though these precautions might resemble the classic Stoic practice of *praemeditatio malorum*,[275] Montaigne's manner of preparing the boy for future ills has a distinctly physical component. Rather than "premeditating" in the classic sense of imagining or bringing to mind, which may or may not create the intended affective state, Montaigne places his pupil squarely in the midst of actual physical misfortunes, so that another kind of learning – this time, somatic – can take hold. The *sententia* that Montaigne borrows from Cicero opens with the Latin *labor*, denoting physical toil or exertion. It is not the same as pain, but provides a layer of protection against pain when it inevitably arises. It represents, in a sense, the *body's* premeditation on the physical misfortunes to come.

The advantages of training the body in this way are physical, to be sure, but they are also linked to the soul's ability to function with ease, as we saw in Montaigne's comparison of athletes and philosophers. This is in part because the process of becoming accustomed to physical strain already involves a transformation of the soul. The main question is not how to avoid pain (Montaigne acknowledges that pain, like certain forms of punishment, is either inevitable or likely), but how to reduce the suffering around that pain—a question of philosophical significance. Being accustomed to physical strain, the boy will have less chance of suffering later on, when he may be subject to corporal punishments or misfortunes. To the degree that suffering can be reduced, tranquility of the soul becomes possible, and although it is suffering, not pain, that determines our

[275] "Une des pratiques spirituelles stoïciennes les plus fameuses consistait dans le « pré-exercice » (*praemeditatio*) des « maux », disons, dans l'exercice préparatoire aux épreuves. Il s'agissait de se représenter à l'avance les difficultés, les revers de fortune, les souffrances et la mort." (Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique ?*, 212-13) Montaigne himself uses the language of "épreuves" (as in: "Nous en sommes à l'espreuve.") to describe the misfortunes that might befall his pupil.

degree of philosophical tranquility, Montaigne readily acknowledges that pain does have something to do with our happiness or lack thereof. It may not be directly responsible for our sense of philosophical fulfillment, but our relationship to pain intimately informs our capacity to experience peace. Hence, the boy's training focuses a great deal on habituating him to difficulty, in a bodily way, so that he is not averse to pain or strain when it inevitably arises: "Endurcissez le à la sueur et au froid, au vent, au soleil et aux hazards qu'il luy faut mespriser : Ostez luy toute mollesse et delicatesse au vestir et coucher, au manger et au boire : accoustumez le à tout." (I:25, "De l'institution des enfans," p. 172) By accustoming the boy to "everything," Montaigne is banking on the possibility that the boy's relationship to difficult circumstances will move from aversion to neutrality. In this way, his physical "labor" can actually aid in training his mind. In the eyes of Montaigne, we should train as athletes not only for the physical advantages that it grants us, but for the opportunity to change our *relationship* to pain and difficulty—in other words, to train ourselves in the reduction of suffering.

Pain and difficulty need not be the only means of reducing suffering and cultivating wisdom. The other face of somatic apprenticeship has a distinctly lighter appeal. Just as we need the constant tension of the Stoic practices in tandem with the relaxation into joy of Epicureanism,[276] so too does the boy need hard toil and exertion accompanied by pleasure, games, and play. Montaigne uses the example of games and physical exercises to but further illustrate the mutual cooperation of body and mind in the

[276] Hadot frequently refers to the approaches of Stoicism and Epicureanism as the opposing but complementary poles of our psyche. We need both, he contends, to practice philosophy in a balanced way. "[E]picurisme et stoïcisme, par exemple, correspondent à deux pôles opposés mais inséparables de notre vie intérieure : l'exigence de la conscience morale et l'épanouissement dans la joie d'exister." (Hadot, *Exercices spirituels et philosophie antique*, 301.)

learning process. The body is shown to not only have a causal relationship with the soul (i.e. physical endurance is responsible for developing an inner attitude of resilience), but to develop alongside one's moral faculties. This is crucial because philosophy and the good life have to do with the entire person, not simply a mind on a stick. Montaigne is unequivocal on this point: "Ce n'est pas une ame, ce n'est pas un corps qu'on dresse, c'est un homme, il n'en faut pas faire à deux." (I:25, "De l'institution des enfans," p. 171) This phrase by itself adequately sums up Montaigne's attitude towards philosophical training and its implications for the mind-body problem. Rather than affirming that man is either a body or a soul, or even both a body and a soul, he uses the negation of each term to arrive at his final description of the whole: "c'est un homme." This would imply that "un homme" is greater than the sum of his parts, which is perhaps why Montaigne warns against any sort of compartmentalization that would reduce a person to a myriad collection of faculties. Montaigne's insistence that we treat the entire person, and not just an isolated part, is moreover on par with some of his more holistic predecessors in the field of medicine. Galen, for one, was adamant about considering all the factors of a patient's inner and outer life in order to accurately diagnose a condition and prescribe a treatment. Philosophy, likewise, needed to attend to the entire person. Plato recognized this and furnished the image of two horses (representing the noble and ignoble qualities of the soul) tethered to the same pole, which Montaigne then reappropriated for his own argument about the inseparability of the body and soul: "Et comme dit Platon, il ne faut pas les dresser l'un sans l'autre, mais les conduire également, comme une couple de chevaux attelez à mesme timon. Et à l'ouïr semble il pas prester plus de temps et de solicitude, aux exercices du corps : et estimer que l'esprit s'en exerce quant et quant, et

non au contraire ?" (I:25, "De l'institution des enfans," pp. 171-2) Not only does Montaigne declare (with Plato) that all parts of a man should be trained together, but he asserts (again following Plato's example) that we might do well to err on the side of training the body. Whereas Plato's original image presented his tripartite vision of the soul, Montaigne's shifts the emphasis of the trope to the body, explaining that even Plato deemed the body more useful than the mind because it trains the entire person all at once.

In this spirit, Montaigne advocates using games and physical exercises as much as possible to train his young pupil: "Les jeux mesmes et les exercices seront une bonne partie de l'estude : la course, la lucte, la musique, la danse, la chasse, le maniement des chevaux et des armes. Je veux que la bienseance exterieure, et l'entre-gent, et la disposition de la personne se façonne quant et quant l'ame." (I:25, "De l'institution des enfans," p. 171) The key exigency for Montaigne is that all parts of the boy work together to develop a noble disposition. Whereas in the previous passage we saw how the body was meant to support (*seconder*) the soul, here the body ought to develop *alongside* ("quant et quant") the soul. The boy's outer aspects ("la bienseance exterieure, et l'entre-gent, et la disposition de la personne") should be cultivated simultaneously with his inner life ("l'ame"). Physical exercises, like wrestling or dance, are particularly useful because they simultaneously affect physical adaptability and spiritual integrity. By laying equal emphasis on the boy's physical aspect and his soul, Montaigne seems to imply that wisdom does not originate in the soul alone. We tend to think of the philosopher's skill in terms of mental agility or rhetorical precision, but if we follow Montaigne's reasoning above, the philosopher's wisdom is also the product of a well-trained body—for it is there that he develops the resources needed to think and act well. Fashioning the body is

an indispensable part of becoming virtuous, not because it causes us to possess virtue per se, but because the body's influences cannot be contained to itself alone and are responsible, especially in the beginning, for developing a spontaneous predisposition to virtue.

Such is why philosophical training ought to begin early on in a child's education. In childhood, "[l]e corps est encore souple," Montaigne explains, and "on le doit à cette cause plier à toutes façons et coustumes." (I:25, "De l'institution des enfans," p. 173) The longer one waits, the more entrenched certain habits will be, and thus the more treacherous it will be to develop a new moral disposition. Once again, we see that when it comes to moral training Montaigne concerns himself primarily with the body. He does not say, for example, that the mind of the child is still supple and should be shaped according to custom, but that the *body* is available to be "bent" in accord with certain ways of being. By the time we reach adulthood, "[l]e pli est pris," to use an expression from Francis Goyet, who was referring to the well-known formula "meshuy c'est fait" at the opening of "Du repentir" (III:2). There, Montaigne describes in a very matter-of-fact tone the mold that his own life has taken on: "Les autres forment l'homme, je le recite : et en represente un particulier, bien mal formé : et lequel si j'avoy à façonner de nouveau, je ferois vrayement bien autre qu'il n'est : meshuy c'est fait." (III:2, "Du repentir," p. 844) Montaigne's adult form, his particular *habitus*, is already an established fact. Since he cannot go back in time to retrain himself, the most he can do – and this gets to the heart of his writing practices in the *Essais* – is to represent the present form he takes. Whereas others might seek to reform, correct, punish, or improve ("Les autres forment l'homme"), Montaigne is here simply to report the facts of his being, without excuse or equivocation.

Montaigne's conclusive stance might seem to encourage complacency or an abdication of responsibility, thus rendering philosophical practice largely irrelevant. But this is not exactly the case. Goyet touches on this point and offers a more nuanced interpretation of the relationship between individual responsibility and the development of *habitus*: "Le pli est pris: une telle formule semble denier toute responsabilité à l'individu. Mais l'important dans la pensée de l'habitus, et en général d'Aristote, est le lien entre être et temps. « Meshui c'est fait » : l'important ici est le passé composé. Le pli est le résultat présent d'une action passée, d'un processus à long terme. La responsabilité est dans le processus."[277] As this analysis suggests, *habitus* is process-oriented, and therefore we cannot hope to rewire our present moral disposition with a single precept or action. *Habitus* develops in us as if without our consent, because we are often unaware of the small actions that constitute it across time; or, as Goyet frames it, "cela s'incorpore à nous progressivement." However, it is only because we are unaware of the actions that continue to reinforce a particular moral disposition that we are held hostage, as it were, to the force of long-term habit. We are only exempt from responsibility insofar as "les actes singuliers" escape our attention. While it is true that an individual's responsibility for his *habitus* lies in the process, Goyet does not sufficiently elaborate on how and why this is so. What Goyet fails to mention is that the rules of the game change the very moment we become conscious of the minor actions that inform habit. We are responsible for the process of habit formation when we decide to consciously act in a way that contributes to the habit or detracts from it. Conversion to virtue and the good life need not be displaced in time, as Goyet argues in the case of Montaigne: "Chez Montaigne, le refus provocateur du repentir revient donc à déplacer dans le temps le problème de la conversion morale au

[277] Goyet, "La notion éthique d'*habitude* dans les *Essais*," 1079.

bien, à la vertu. C'était au début qu'il fallait s'en occuper, quand on était jeune, à cette époque où les mauvaises habitudes ne sont pas encore prises."[278] Childhood, indeed, is a propitious time to develop moral habits, but as adults we are still capable of bringing into our consciousness the habits that are already in motion. Montaigne provides proof of this page after page: he at once acknowledges the difficulty of changing himself *and* continues to practice as though all the change in the world were possible, and this, because he observes a constant stream of change in himself and the world around him. While it is true that we have the greatest advantage when we are young, before "le pli est pris," it is also true that there exist other ways of training in virtue as adults. Montaigne's task of observing and recording the myriad habits of his full-grown self had a practical aspect to it; in addition to leaving behind a detailed portrait of himself for future generations (and it is doubtful that this was his primary intention), it served to polish his awareness of the change and variability already present. Montaigne's all-important discovery was not that "le pli est pris," or that "meshuy c'est fait," but that we can effect change from within the fold of habit by developing a keen awareness of how we use our bodies and minds in the present. Developing this awareness, which is centered on the body and sensation, constitutes the foundation of "Somatic Training," the subject of our next section.

Although Pascal's project differs significantly from Montaigne's, in that his definition of the "good life" amounts to religious salvation, his means of arriving at the good life through example and habit are an echo of the practices most cherished by the author of the *Essais*. In both authors, finding good examples to follow is an important

[278] Ibid, 1079.

first step to aligning oneself with virtuous disposition. However, for Pascal, before we can even begin looking for worthwhile examples, we need to agree on a certain number of principles. The first is that salvation by God is the end goal. Though this may look, in many regards, like the philosophers' "tranquility of the soul," it should not be mistaken for a life that locates the ultimate good in humanity. The prerequisite, for Pascal, is that the interlocutor seek God—not some baser form of freedom or virtue, and certainly not some pagan or philosophical ideal of the good life. The second agreed-upon principle is that the interlocutor acknowledge the lack of God in his life. Quite simply, if he thinks that he has found the remedy, there will be no room for seeking. Finally, the interlocutor must admit to needing help in finding God—in other words, he needs to ask the apologist for guidance. Pascal readily avers that he cannot give faith to anyone: "Or c'est à vous à commencer. Si je pouvais, je vous donnerais la foi. Je ne puis le faire…" (LG 669) The skeptic needs to be willing to take some risk – such as giving up his habitual pleasures – in order to begin his quest. Once all of these principles are in place, the interlocutor can actually begin practicing in a way that develops faith, and an essential component of that practice will be the imitation of Christian examples.

What makes these examples so compelling is that they invariably feature the body. As we saw in the passages from Montaigne, an example is useful for the ways in which it conveys unmitigated information about virtue through physical behavior. Montaigne studies the bodies of Ancient philosophers and rulers to understand how thoroughly virtue has penetrated their lives. In a similar way, Pascal points to the bodily comportment of Christian converts (his preferred example) to understand how faith functions in a human life. He does not direct our attention, for instance, to scripture, to

thoughts or beliefs, or even to the logic of his own apologetic argument—but to the ways that other skeptics have used their bodies to catalyze the process of conversion. The repeated gestures and postures that might seem banal in the beginning are what help to overhaul the skeptic's moral disposition over time. It is as Goyet points out with regard to the development of *habitus*: a person's somatic apprenticeship, and thus his responsibility in relation to it, lie in the "actes singuliers" that accumulate over time, which eventually become a way of life.

That is not to say that examples are always our most reliable guides. In a well-known reflection on the means of arriving at happiness, Pascal points to the futility of examples in learning about our own past follies. He explains that because each new situation brings with it a new set of expectations, along with subtle variations, we continue to expect different (i.e. improved) results from the same behaviors. Example, in this regard, "nous instruit peu."[279] (LG 138) The difference between this sort of example and the examples Pascal gives of Christian converts seems to be one of first principles. Examples of profane behavior instruct us little because their foundations are inherently untrue. Reaching for happiness in worldly goods will deliver only *relative* satisfaction, and our continuing to act in the same deluded way is driven by the false belief that we are capable of attaining happiness on our own (Pascal mentions our "impuissance d'arriver au bien par nos efforts" in the same fragment). This erroneous belief is then what causes us to endlessly misinterpret the conditions needed for appropriate action. We need God, the *absolute* condition, to reach happiness. For Pascal, this represents an infallible truth,

[279] The entire passage reads: "Une épreuve si longue, si continuelle et si uniforme devrait bien nous convaincre de notre impuissance d'arriver au bien par nos efforts. Mais l'exemple nous instruit peu. Il n'est jamais si parfaitement semblable qu'il n'y ait quelque délicate différence, et c'est de là que nous attendons que notre attente ne sera pas déçue en cette occasion comme en l'autre." (LG 138)

and therefore any action (such as praying or reciting mass) that is performed on that basis will give some indication that it is working. However, we will not know that something is worth following until we begin performing the action, which requires faith, and therefore we cannot learn anything valuable from the examples of Christian converts by just seeing them perform certain actions. There is nothing particularly compelling, for instance, about seeing someone kneel down to pray. The evidence of right action is to be found in the action's aftermath, in the *sentiment* that it imparts when we actually try it on. Pascal's entire apologetic argument is based on that fact alone: he affirms that no amount of demonstration, prior to conversion, will allow a person to develop the appropriate *sentiment*. He can only suggest alternative ways of behaving and then convince the interlocutor that it is worth taking the risk. This is a major difference from Montaigne, who was able to glean from others' behaviors the information he needed before trying on a behavior himself. For Pascal, the examples of Christian converts do not provide any reason, per se, to believe (for this, we need faith); they do, however, present an alternative set of behaviors that, once adopted, will bear the proof (so the apologist argues) that the skeptic was initially looking for.

Such is why developing habits *firsthand* is the most powerful means of learning and the best way to convince a man of anything profound, be it a geometrical principle or the existence of God. Custom is eminently more persuasive than logical demonstration—so persuasive that it is responsible for dividing up the world's population into different religions and professions. It is, Pascal tells us, what creates a Christian, a Turk, a pagan, or a soldier. (LG 671) According to him, we arrive at our beliefs via two main conduits, the body and the mind, or "l'automate" and "l'esprit." (LG 671) His singular observation

was that the body is by far more effective than the logic-making mind at integrating external information into new ways of being. Where religious faith is concerned, it is especially important to find an embodied means of acquiring belief, because logical proof does not change what we believe and how we behave. Hence, "[i]l faut acquérir une créance plus facile, qui est celle de l'habitude, qui sans violence, sans art, sans argument, nous fait croire les choses et incline toutes nos puissances à cette croyance, en sorte que notre âme y tombe naturellement." (LG 671) Change actually occurs most easily below the threshold of our consciousness, and therefore the sorts of people we are exposed to, just as the country into which we are born, determine to a large degree our *habitus*—before we even have a chance to decide what that will look like.

All of the above begs a most interesting question: if we are automatons, just as much as we are mind or spirit, and if our automaton nature is what ultimately gives shape to our *habitus* and moral being (i.e. our religious beliefs, social behaviors, etc.), are we not then exempt from needing to change? For Pascal, as for Montaigne, the answer is no. Once we realize that a certain set of conditions has been imposed upon us, and that this is not all there is to reality, we are faced with the choice of implementing small changes. Just as we saw in Montaigne, such change does not occur overnight. We need to create a social and cultural environment conducive to the development of a new *habitus*, even if we are already fully-formed adults. Pascal offers the community of Christian converts as just such an environment. In doing so, he hands the interlocutor his medicine and, at the same time, his responsibility—for, having been given these examples, the interlocutor has the choice of following them or not. Pascal says in no equivocal tone: "Vous voulez vous guérir de l'infidélité et vous en demandez les remèdes, apprenez de ceux, etc., qui ont été

liés comme vous et qui parient maintenant tout leur bien. Ce sont gens qui savent ce chemin que vous voudriez suivre et guéris d'un mal dont vous voulez guérir ; suivez la manière par où ils ont commencé. C'est en faisant tout comme s'ils croyaient, en prenant de l'eau bénite, en faisant dire des messes, etc. Naturellement même cela vous fera croire et vous abêtira." (LG 397) Pascal offers the example of Christian converts as a way of luring his interlocutor in. He does not ask that the skeptic perform some Olympic feat of logical demonstration, and then hold that demonstration in his mind with every new doubt that may arise. Instead, Pascal suggests that he take a minor risk: before changing his entire worldview, the interlocutor can change some simple behaviors and observe the changes that naturally and gradually take hold.

Having such examples at hand is an essential step—but it is only the first step in changing one's beliefs. The last two sentences of the above passage provide the key to the sort of change that Pascal proposes: they describe the actions that *naturally* produce a fundamental shift in one's beliefs. Changing one's *habitus* must ultimately come from the actions one takes, and thus somatic apprenticeship (examples) must be paired with somatic training (habituation) in order for lasting change to take hold. In the next section, I examine some of the seemingly prosaic actions that contribute, often unwittingly, to each author's way of life. It is not until we acknowledge the cumulative effect of these actions on the author's life that we can clearly conceptualize philosophical transformation and the realization of wholeness or health.

Part II: Somatic Training.

The body matters.

Near the end of the *Essais*, Montaigne makes a bold summary statement about the different attitudes we might adopt vis-à-vis our bodies: "Moy qui ne manie que terre à terre, hay ceste inhumaine sapience, qui nous veut rendre desdaigneux et ennemis de la culture du corps. J'estime pareille injustice, de prendre à contre cœur les voluptez naturelles, que de les prendre trop à cœur. (…) Il ne les faut ny suyvre ny fuyr : il les faut recevoir." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1156) His statement comes in the middle of the *Essais*' most exhaustive catalogue of the author's bodily habits and preferences. He bears no shame in telling his reader all about the foods that cause him indigestion, his preference for sleeping alone, or the amount of walking he can endure before growing tired. The list might seem desultory and mundane, but contained in it are the very rudiments of Montaigne's philosophical outlook. Given his statement concerning the body above, we are called to take seriously all that he reports about his body, and even accord it philosophical importance where appropriate.

The first sentence alone tells us a great deal about his approach to philosophical practice: he operates close to the ground ("terre à terre"), rather than in the realm of superstition and speculation. He uses his material body, rather than his thoughts and beliefs, as the primary means of testing himself in the world. He goes so far as to say that any philosophy that denies the importance of the body is "inhuman." By calling it "*ceste* inhumaine sapience," he implies that this particular bias against the body would have been a familiar argument to readers at the time. Montaigne "hates" this worldview and extends his observation to the way most of us relate to pleasure. Just as it is inhuman to deny the cultivation of the body, it is completely unnatural to flee the pleasures that naturally arise in the body. The same goes for the other extreme of dwelling on pleasures.

We need to "receive" them and accept them as a part of our total human experience—just as we need to receive and accept all the possible variations of illness and health as part of this human life.

Montaigne's statement clarifies two essential aspects of somatic training: first, the need to recognize that the body itself is important; and second, the call to become aware of *how we relate to our bodies*. This last point is made especially clear in the ways that the author relates to pleasure. Because our sense of the body is tightly bound to our experiences of pleasure and pain, the ways we relate to pleasure reveal a great deal about the ways we relate to our bodies more generally. Montaigne's advice when it comes to "les voluptez naturelles" is that we neither follow them nor flee them, but accept them ("Il ne les faut ny suyvre ny fuyr : il les faut recevoir"). Elsewhere, using the pleasure of eating as an example, he describes the special care he devotes to "la volupté," sometimes using austerities to increase his appreciation of pleasure: "Dès ma jeunesse, je desrobois par fois quelque repas : ou à fin d'esguiser mon appétit au lendemain (car comme Epicurus jeusnoit et faisoit des repas maigres, pour accoustumer sa volupté à se passer de l'abondance : moy au rebours, pour dresser ma volupté, à faire mieux son profit…" (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1152) Pleasure is not an experience to be regulated, as it was for Epicurus, or to be fled, as is the case for Pascal. It is to be received, acknowledged, and accepted.

Knowing how to use pleasure wisely is even considered a sign of health. Sensual pleasure is the main benefit of good health as Montaigne describes it: "L'extreme fruict de ma santé, c'est la volupté : tenons nous à la premiere presente et cognue. J'evite la constance en ces loix de jeusne. Qui veut qu'une forme luy serve, fuye à la continuer :

nous nous y durcissons, nos forces s'y endorment : six mois après, vous y aurez si bien acoquiné vostre estomach, que vostre profit, ce ne sera que d'avoir perdu la liberté d'en user autrement sans dommage." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1153) The preservation of sensual pleasure depends on our not becoming too attached to a particular habit. What aids us in this is nature herself. Because the body is constantly undergoing change, we need only pay attention to the changes that naturally, often unwittingly, take hold. Once again, Montaigne's relationship to the pleasure of eating is illustrative: "Il y a des mouvemens en nous, inconstans et incognuz. Car des refors, pour exemple, je les ay trouvez premierement commodes, depuis fascheux, à present derechef commodes. En plusieurs choses, je sens mon estomach et mon appétit aller ainsi diversifiant…" (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1152) Whereas in the previous passage Montaigne seemed to suggest that we must guard against becoming too dependent on a single habit, for fear that it might rob us of the initial pleasure, in this passage he concedes that his body already knows how to maintain variety on its own. His appetite, "ainsi diversifiant," can never be pinned down—and this, for the better. Whereas we might expect a virtuous way of being to be sturdy and unwavering, here Montaigne argues for just the opposite. Because pleasure plays a cardinal role in Montaigne's vision of the good life, we need to make way for new sensory experiences by tuning in to the variations already present in the living body. It is not enough to just mold the body in such and such a fashion so that it looks appealing or performs admirably. The essential point for Montaigne – which is easily missed in many critiques focused on self-fashioning – is that a neutral awareness of the body *as it is* opens up the possibility for minor adjustments to a deeply ingrained

habitus, because it opens one up to the change and variability already occuring in the body. In other words, where there is change there is already a wedge of freedom.

Montaigne's somatic training is defined as much by what he does with his body, time and time again, as by what he *lets happen* to his body (as we saw in the example of his fall from his horse). Instead of focusing on the myriad bodily habits Montaigne catalogues throughout the *Essais*, in this section I aim to highlight the ways in which Montaigne relates to the habits that are already in place, thanks to the mechanism of *habitus*. Rather than seeing his bodily habits as a problem, he names them, one after another, in a spirit of acceptance, just as he recommends doing in the case of sensual pleasures. One of his most persistent habits, it turns out, is his restlessness. Though a restless body would seem to run counter to the traditional philosophical disciplines of *meditatio* and the examination of conscience, it poses no special problem for Montaigne. He even cites an example of a Stoic philosopher who displayed a similar temperament: "…je ne suis jamais venu à bout, que quelque piece des miennes n'extravague tousjours : encore que j'y sois assis, j'y suis peu rassis : Comme la chambriere du philosophe Chrysippus, disoit de son maistre, qu'il n'estoit yvre que par les jambes : car il avoit ceste coustume de les remuer, en quelque assiette qu'il fust : luy n'en sentoit aucune alteration. On a peu dire aussi dès mon enfance, que j'avoy de la follie aux pieds, ou de l'argent quelque lieu, que je les place." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1155) Just like Chrysippus who "n'en sentoit aucune alteration" from his drunken legs, Montaigne is not bothered by the fact that his body is "peu rassis" most of the time. Beyond the amusement of having "la follie aux pieds" or "de l'argent quelque lieu," we might wonder why Montaigne chose to include lengthy descriptions of such bodily idiosyncrasies in this all-important

chapter of the *Essais*. Is a passage such as this mere *historia* or does it somehow aid the author in practicing philosophy as a way of life? In other words, what does Montaigne's physical restlessness have to do with *habitus* and philosophical training at large?

For one, restlessness is Montaigne's primary way of being in the world, and thus his *habitus*. Just as Marcel Mauss described certain ways of walking, eating, talking, and standing that were shaped by particular cultures and societies, Montaigne describes particular ways of using his body that he himself did not choose or create. Whether due to genetics or culture, or both, his is a body of ceaseless movement. The attitude he adopts towards his bodily condition, however, is largely up to him. This is the second philosophical point: the *soma* provides an opportunity for the classic Stoic practice of differentiating between what depends on us and what does not depend on us. Montaigne can either accept his body as it is or attempt to mold it into something different, thus creating an additional layer of suffering. Wherever Hadot describes the ancient Stoic attitude, an essential ingredient that always resurfaces is one's acceptance of the inevitable conditions of life, one's acknowledgement of *how things actually are*: "Marc Aurèle, par exemple, ne cesse de le répéter : il faut que je concentre mon attention sur ce que je pense en ce moment, sur ce que je fais en ce moment, sur ce qui m'arrive en ce moment, de façon à voir les choses telles qu'elles se présentent à moi en ce moment, de façon à redresser mon intention dans l'action que je suis en train de faire, en ne voulant faire que ce qui sert la communauté humaine, *de façon à accepter, comme voulu par le destin, ce qui m'arrive en ce moment et ne dépend pas de moi*."[280] Though Montaigne never speaks of destiny per se, his relationship to experience could grossly be summed up by the last sentence of Hadot's description. Accepting his physical condition as it

[280] Hadot, *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie antique ?*, 295 (my emphasis).

presents itself to him – without wanting it to be different, and without berating himself for not being able to change it – is perhaps *the* essential point of Montaigne's particular form of philosophical training.

Another favorite topic of Montaigne's, sleep, further illustrates his attitude of acceptance in the face of changing circumstances. Even though he is quite particular about his manner of sleeping and the amount of sleep he gets each night (nine hours), he uses the subject of sleep as an opportunity to emphasize his overall adaptability: "Si j'ay quelque curiosité en mon traictement, c'est plustost au coucher qu'à autre chose ; mais je cede et m'accommode en general, autant que tout autre, à la necessité." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1145) The two verbs *céder* and *s'accommoder* capture well the author's relationship to *habitus*: at once relaxed and alert, and flexible according to the circumstances. The act of accommodating himself to "necessity," as he puts it, provides one of the keys to maintaining good health. Because accommodation brings body and mind into harmony with the whole, it removes the illusion of separation or struggle that makes us ill. Although Montaigne admits to having a long list of well-guarded habits and preferences, his most treasured quality is the flexibility that allows his habits and preferences to respond to the changing circumstances of life. In fact, the only quality he heartily *dis*approves of is rigidity: "Il n'y a que la dureté qui generalement me fasche (de toute autre qualité, je suis aussi nonchalant et souffrant qu'homme que j'aye cogneu)…" (III:13, "De l'Experience," pp. 1150-1). This disclosure comes in the middle of a long description of the author's eating habits, just as he divulges his preference for meat that is rare and well-hung, toughness being the only quality he cannot stand. Like so many other moments in "De l'Experience," this particular report of a bodily habit naturally extends

into an observation of philosophical import. Toughness, as a quality, can be taken literally with regard to meat, but by adding that toughness bothers him *generally* ("generalement"), Montaigne implies that this characteristic holds true for all areas of his life. This would make sense given his frequent praise of flexibility, adaptability, and nonchalance as qualities to live by.

Montaigne's remarks on the topics of eating and sleep are often disarmingly frank and deceptively simple. It is not always the case that we find a philosophical apothegm buried between the lines. But, in almost all cases, his bodily (and specifically, eating) habits provide a context in which to express health and wholeness. When he confesses to his reader a rather cumbersome habit he has had since childhood of eating as long as he is seated at the table, he makes an example of himself to show how even a minute change in one's behavior can have significant consequences. "Les longues tables m'ennuyent et me nuisent," he confides. "Car soit pour m'y estre accoustumé enfant, à faute de meilleure contenance, je mange autant que j'y suis. Pourtant chez moy, quoy qu'elle soit des courtes, je m'y mets volontiers un peu après les autres ; sur la forme d'Auguste." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1150) This is one of the rare occasions where Montaigne dwells on a habit in need of correction, reporting that he often eats greedily out of a "faute de meilleure contenance." Citing his lack of better "contenance" places the fault squarely in his body—in habits not just learned through the body as he was growing up, but imprinted on his body in adulthood. The 1606 definition of "contenance" reads, "le geste et maintien rassis de toutes les parties du corps en une personne,"[281] pointing to the way a body settles into a certain appearance and pattern of behaviors over time. And yet,

[281] *Jean Nicot: Le Thresor de la langue francoyse* (1606), accessed December 6, 2014, http://artflsrv02.uchicago.edu/cgi-bin/dicos/pubdico1look.pl?strippedhw=contenance.

Montaigne's response to this unwholesome habit is far from passive. He retrains himself each evening by choosing to seat himself after the others – in the manner of Augustus, he adds – so that he is less likely to overeat. The retraining might seem to be a matter of physical health alone, but its significance goes deeper than that. For one, eating brings to the fore the author's way of handling the passion of desire. In a constructive sense, it reveals to Montaigne his relationship to pleasure, in addition to his capacity to maintain good health: "Je croys qu'il est plus sain, de manger plus bellement et moins : et de manger plus souvent : Mais je veux faire valoir l'appetit et la faim : je n'aurois nul plaisir à trainer à la medecinale, trois ou quatre chefits repas par jour, ainsi contains." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1153) He chooses a way of eating that maximizes pleasure, a crucial ingredient to his philosophy as a way of life. "[J]e veux faire valoir l'appetit et la faim"—this is Montaigne's primary criterion. The fact that eating "plus bellement et moins" produces good health is, in a sense, secondary.

The author's eating habits represent one of the primary means he has of knowing himself and his real needs. This is a nontrivial point if we consider the ultimate imperative of philosophy to be "knowing thyself," following the Socratic injunction. For the philosopher of a way of life, knowing oneself includes knowing all those exiguous details one might prefer to pass over, such as how one eats, sleeps, works, and takes care of one's body. In the following example, Montaigne uses his appetite as proof that he has the capacity to gauge his needs better than any physician: "Qui m'asseureroit, que le goust ouvert, que j'ay ce matin, je le retrouvasse encore à souper ? Prenons, sur tout les vieillards : prenons le premier temps opportun qui nous vient. Laissons aux faiseurs d'almanachs les espérances et les prognostiques. (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1153)

Who, he asks, can assure him that his gaping appetite of the morning will return later in the day? Who can know his appetite – or any of his bodily functions, for that matter – better than himself? With the first-person plural imperative "Prenons," he enjoins us to follow the first sign of hunger that arises, and, following another imperative, to leave diets to the doctors. It all boils down to a couple of key philosophical dicta: "Seize the present," on the one hand, and "Trust your own experience," on the other, the implication being that only we have an intuitive sense of how to treat our bodies.

This may seem like a minor point, and one that has been exhaustively treated in the context of Montaigne's disavowal of medical practice; but the passage above is a key illustration of how Montaigne proceeds along the philosophical path. Even in the context of eating, he has put his core philosophical beliefs to work: the trust that he has in himself regarding his dietary choices is the same trust he has in himself as he prepares for death or relates to the pain of his kidney stones. In the space between his felt sense (gauging his appetite in the morning) and the behavior he chooses to follow, we have all the information we need to know about a healthy relationship to *habitus*. On the one hand, we might concede (with Aristotle) that we are responsible for a particular habit (*hexis*) only at the outset of its development. On the other hand, neither Montaigne nor Pascal would categorically deny our potential to change certain habits of body and mind in adulthood. Judging by the practices of Montaigne, a habit becomes our responsibility the moment we become aware of the behaviors we have unduly inherited, by what Jean Starobinski calls an "exquisite proprioceptive sensation."[282] That is, when we begin to inhabit our inheritance, as Montaigne does in the final chapter of the *Essais*, we actually

[282] Jean Starobinski, *Montaigne in Motion*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 227.

begin to realize the possibility for change, not because of something we *do*, but because of the awareness that reveals the change that is already present. Montaigne is able to practice philosophy in a way that effects concrete change because he is in contact with the changing nature of his mind and body, through the ceaseless flow of his thoughts and sensations.

As a final comment on the significance of bodily habits in philosophical training, we should remember that activities like eating and walking were often seen as inseparable from the integrity of one's moral development. Montaigne reminds us that "[i]l y avoit des hommes à Rome, qui enseignoyent à mascher, comme à marcher, de bonne grace." (III:13, "De l'Experience," pp. 1155-6). The Ancients paid close attention to these behavioral details for reasons of health as well as moral decency. Eating greedily, as Montaigne admits to doing, has harmful consequences for one's physical health, to be sure, but it also plays a large role in social training. It is not only unhealthy, but it is *indecent* to eat greedily: "C'est indecence, outre qu'il nuit à la santé, voire et au plaisir, de manger gouluement, comme je fais : Je mors souvent ma langue, par fois mes doigts, de hastiveté. Diogenes, rencontrant un enfant qui mangeoit ainsin, en donna un soufflet à son precepteur." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1155) The way we eat can have profound consequences on our personal health and enjoyment, and, following the reaction of Diogenes seeing a child eat greedily, it can be a violation of social norms. In the case of a child, the responsibility is fairly clear: to the child's preceptor Diogenes gives a blow. But in the case of Montaigne, there is no preceptor to issue a correction; he has only the proprioceptive sensation of biting his tongue and sometimes his fingers to prevent him from continuing to behave in this way. His is a closed system of checks and balances, and

the trust he has in his body trumps all other dictates of how to behave.[283] He cites the example of Diogenes and the preceptors in Rome only *after* he has told us of the nuisance that the habit causes for his own body. Registering these physical effects becomes an essential part of his philosophical training, and he seems to suggest that if we wish to train ourselves philosophically, then we have to come to terms with the ways we eat, sleep, walk, and take care of ourselves each day.

Although philosophical training may appear to begin with external behaviors, the relationship between behavior and morality, or behavior and health, should not be construed as a unilateral interaction, in which change occurs in only one direction. The task of philosophy as a way of life is precisely to *harmonize* all parts of a person's experience so that he is whole. This is one reason why Montaigne considers hypocrisy such a grave affair. He is especially critical of those who try to hide their moral depravity behind pious behavior such as prayer. In no uncertain terms, he offers the following critique: "Et l'assiette d'un homme meslant à une vie execrable la devotion semble estre aucunement plus condemnable, que celle d'un homme conforme à soi, et dissolu par tout. (…) Nous prions par usage et par coustume : ou pour mieux dire, nous lisons et prononçons noz prieres : ce n'est en fin que mine." (I:56, "Des prieres," p. 337).[284] Citing

[283] Whether this "closed" system of checks and balances always prevents the author from behaving in undesirable ways is up for question: sometimes he continues the same behavior (as in this example) and sometimes he is able to self-correct (as when he seats himself at the table after the others). A passage such as this points to one of the main pitfalls of practicing philosophy without a preceptor or guide. Where there is no Diogenes to strike a blow, there is less likelihood (or so it seems) of reforming one's behavior.

[284] Compare a similar passage, in which Montaigne bemoans the display of religious rituals before a meal by those who behave deplorably at other times: "Et me desplaist de voir faire trois signes de croix au Benedicite, autant à Graces (et plus m'en desplait-il de ce que c'est un signe que j'ay en reverence et continuel usage, mesmement quand je baaille) et cependant toutes les autres heures du jour, les voir occupées à la haine, l'avarice, l'injustice." (I:56, "Des prieres," p. 337) His point is not to condemn the

a common example of hypocrisy, Montaigne observes his fellow countrymen (the "nous" here) using prayer as a mere front (a "mine") to conceal less admirable qualities. He prefers the consistency of outward behavior and inner disposition – even if it reveals a complete lack of moral integrity – to the incoherence of a man who acts admirably before others and wreaks havoc elsewhere. When he concludes that we pray out of habit and custom ("usage" and "coustume"), he uses these terms derogatorily, as if to suggest that the actions themselves are empty if one has unconsciously taken them on. These men are acting on par with the *demi-habiles*, as Pascal will claim a century later, behaving in accord with social conventions while unaware of their true causes.

This is a distinctly different appraisal of custom and habit from what we read about elsewhere in the *Essais*. More frequently, custom has a constructive role to play in social and communal life, as this passage unambiguously puts forth: "La forme de vivre plus usitée et commune, est la plus belle : Toute particularité, m'y semble à éviter : et haïrois autant un Aleman qui mist de l'eau au vin, qu'un François qui le buroit pur. L'usage publiq donne loy à telles choses." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1154) Montaigne is following a typical Pyrrhonian line of argument, according to which custom protects us in a world devoid of moral certainty. Particularity should be avoided precisely because it would require judgment on our part. Public usage should therefore rule our eating and drinking habits, along with most other manners; but the same criterion ceases to apply in the case of prayer. The difference between these two activities, praying and imbibing wine, might seem obvious, but it is interesting to note that the same lexical field of *habitus* governs both activities: "usitée," "commune," and "l'usage publiq" from the

practice of such rituals – for he gladly partakes of them – but to decry the inconsistency of behavior in a single person.

passage on drinking wine belong to the same family as the "usage" and "coustume" most men adhere to when they pray. In the one case, custom ought to be our guide, and in the other case, custom, if followed blindly, may actually mislead a person into thinking he is virtuous. From this, we might conclude that the activity of prayer is fundamentally different from drinking wine and that the former requires the appropriate moral sentiment whereas the latter does not. But from a Pyrrhonian point of view, one's intention does not necessarily redeem an action. The redemptive quality of an action comes, rather, from its durability in the long term. Developing the appropriate bodily habits is the best guarantee for the unity of the self, because eventually all parts of the person will have to follow suit.

The example of prayer is especially relevant because it reveals the degree to which Montaigne prioritizes the coherence of the self in practices aimed at cultivating virtue. Throughout the *Essais*, he insists that to be truly virtuous we need to steep ourselves in virtue over the long term: "La vertu ne veut estre suyvie que pour elle mesme ; et si on emprunte par fois son masque pour autre occasion, elle nous l'arrache aussi tost du visage. C'est une vive et forte teinture, quand l'ame en est une fois abbreuvée, et qui ne s'en va qu'elle n'emporte la piece. Voylà pourquouy pour juger d'un homme, il faut suivre longuement et curieusement sa trace. (II:1, "De l'inconstance de nos actions," p. 356) Because we tend towards hypocrisy and pretense – because "[n]ostre faict ce ne sont que pieces rapportées, et voulons acquerir un honneur à fauces enseignes" (II:1, "De l'inconstance de nos actions," p. 356) – we need a reminder such as the one above to make sure that our actions are not simply an imitation of virtue. We cannot *be* virtuous, says Montaigne, simply by *imitating* a virtuous act. Borrowing and imitating, to return to Hampton's point, can actually create further inconsistency. The

behavior in question needs to be appropriated so thoroughly that it becomes like a dye that has taken to fabric, like a "vive et forte teinture, quand l'ame en est une fois abbreuvée." It is not incidental that the metaphor features a material referent. Habit functions very much on the material plane, for each time a habit is performed it passes into the flesh, literally, through the movements of the body.

The language of dyeing ("teinture") shows up frequently with regard to habit. In another passage, Montaigne distinguishes the erratic impulses of the soul from the habits we develop over the long term, concluding that it would be difficult to imagine the soul so thoroughly "dyed" and "imbued" with virtue as to render it natural and ordinary: "…et est dur à croire, que de ces conditions ainsin eslevées, on en puisse teindre et abbreuver l'ame, en maniere, qu'elles luy deviennent ordinaries, et comme naturelles." (II:29, "De la vertu," p. 741) Again, because we tend towards inconsistency, we must not mistake the *habit* of virtue, like a fabric's dye, for a momentary impulse of the soul. Between a single act and a long-lived habit lies all the difference between an imposture and the philosopher of a way of life. Though truly heroic deeds apparently lie outside of the realm of *habitude*, Montaigne professes confidence that even the most depraved of men can acquire virtue: "Sauf l'ordre, la moderation, et la constance, j'estime que toutes choses soient faisables par un homme bien manque et deffaillant en gros." (II:29, "De la vertu," p. 741) His confidence comes from the fact that acquiring new habits is a gradual process developed through ordinary actions. The bodily component of habit formation is what makes the process so ordinary and accessible in the first place. To judge a man's virtuousness, says Montaigne, we should "principalement contreroller ses actions communes, et le surprendre en son à tous les jours." (II:29, "De la vertu," p. 741) It is in a

man's everyday bodily behaviors that we can discern his character most clearly, for if a virtue has truly passed into habit, it will have permeated a man's life completely, like a dye that has taken to a garment (*habit* in French) or like the admirable *complexion* of Socrates and Cato.

When Montaigne evokes the "habit" of virtue, he speaks of it in precisely this way: "Si c'estoit une *habitude de vertu*, et non une saillie, elle rendroit un homme pareillement resolu à tous accidens : tel seul, qu'en compagnie : tel en camp clos, qu'en une bataille : car quoi qu'on die, il n'y a pas autre vaillance sur le pavé et autre au camp. Aussi courageusement porteroit il une maladie en son lict, qu'une blessure au camp : et ne craindroit non plus la mort en sa maison qu'en un assaut." (II:1, "De l'inconstance de nos actions," pp. 355-6; my emphasis) The "test" of the habit of virtue is the consistency of one's actions in all circumstances. Montaigne cites the suffering body, assailed by a "maladie en son lict" or a "blessure au camp," as one important test for courage. The way we die or fight both reveals our courage and *is* the practice of courage itself, which is nothing other than the continuous embodiment of a noble attitude towards life and death. If courage has truly become a habit, it takes on a sturdy, uniform quality: it endures across time ("il le seroit tousjours") and in differing circumstances ("…et à toutes occasions"). It is the opposite of a sally, or sudden attack, like the sudden impulses of the soul cited earlier. Montaigne sets up a series of comparisons to emphasize this sturdy quality of habit, opposing a man's private demeanor with his military or public display: if virtue is a habit, one will be as courageous alone as in the company of others; as courageous in a closed camp as in battle; in the street as in a military camp; sick in one's bed as injured in camp; and finally, one will fear death no more at home than during a

military attack. In each case, a high value is placed on the virtue that is practiced in private, without the allure of outside approbation. This sort of virtue reflects the mature ideal of philosophy as a way of life, like we saw in Socrates and Cato, whereby virtue has become a way of life for its own sake.

As Montaigne explains with regard to prayer, the act alone does not hold much value. However, action does hold value across time, and all the more if one's intention comes into alignment with the action. Montaigne would rather see a man dissolute throughout than a man who prays once a week while making his life lying and thieving. A certain unity of character is key, and this is what distinguishes Montaigne's philosophical exigencies from other schools of thought. As R. Lanier Anderson and Joshua Landy point out in their reflections on self-fashioning, Montaigne's philosophy hangs together not because of its logical or systematic coherence, but because of the "force of Montaigne's persona" and the "aesthetic unity of character" posited throughout the *Essais*.[285] Indeed, Montaigne cites Cicero saying, "S'il est quelque chose d'honorable en tout point, ce n'est rien assurément plus que la cohérence de toute une vie dans chacune de ses actions. On ne peut l'observer si, imitant la nature d'autrui, on néglige la sienne."[286] We cannot arrive at a coherence of the self, Cicero suggests, by merely imitating another's behavior if we are not already in touch with our own moral disposition. This would support Montaigne's own view that the coherence of one's actions, reinforced through the development of habit, must take priority over the imitation

[285] R. Lanier Anderson and Joshua Landy, "Philosophy as Self-Fashioning: Alexander Nehamas's *Art of Living*," *Diacritics* 31 (2001): 33.

[286] The original Latin in Montaigne's text reads: "*Omnino si quidquam est decorum, nihil est profecto magis quam aequabilitas universae vitae, tum singularum actionum : quam conservare non possis, si aliorum naturam imitans, omittas tuam.*" (II:17, "De la presumption," p. 697)

of virtue in another, even if the other's virtue is somehow superior. Montaigne would rather see a man honestly behaving according to his inner disposition than pretending to be more virtuous than he is. This is not to say that imitation is utterly futile; rather, we should seek to reconcile the imitated quality with our own nature, through rigorous self-study, practice, and appropriation. Because it is so easy to try on different actions, without the corresponding change in one's moral disposition, Montaigne remains ever wary of the *appearance* of virtue. That is why we need to observe a man for a long time before discerning whether or not his actions bespeak a truly virtuous disposition. One of the idiopathic marks of Montaigne's vision of coherence is his insistence that we do not use our bodies to misrepresent our basic moral disposition. For him, virtue can enter a life through bodily action, but to really take up residence in the body, it will need to be practiced over a lifetime, effecting real change in the subject's inner disposition. The aesthetic component of Montaigne's consistency – summed up by his bodily habits and preferences – is more than merely ornamental. It is ethical to the highest degree because it affects his entire person. Therefore, to separate out the aesthetic from the ethical would be erroneous in the case of Montaigne, for, in the ideal case, the aesthetic ought to become an accurate expression of the ethical.

Pascal's version of working on the body to effect internal change is largely compatible with Montaigne's. Like Montaigne, he relies on the example of prayer to elucidate the relationship between action and disposition, and uses outwards habits as a means of discerning and training one's moral disposition. Rather than disapproving of a holy act that may mask a heart of indifference, Pascal actually encourages the act, even if

it appears to be empty. He suggests that the skeptic begin by behaving *as if*, trusting that the coherence of his inner disposition and outer comportment will be a natural consequence of his actions: "C'est en faisant tout comme s'ils croyaient, en prenant de l'eau bénite, en faisant dire des messes, etc. *Naturellement* même cela vous fera croire et vous abêtira." (LG 397; my emphasis) This is a startling moment in the *Pensées*, because it seems to contradict all other exigencies that the apologist puts forth for the development of faith and virtue. Acting *as if*, or miming religious faith, does not seem to go hand-in-hand with deep spiritual conviction. Eventually, as we shall discover, we *do* need to see the truth for ourselves. But that does not prevent the apologist from employing various skillful means along the way to catalyze his interlocutor's internal transformation. His explanation for this strategy is simple: "[c]ar on s'accoutume ainsi aux vertus intérieures par ces habitudes extérieures." (LG 709) Even before we believe, the act of prayer has a power all its own and holds a truth independent of the intention that supports it; and hence it can change a man even despite himself.

For Pascal, the harmonization of action and disposition – or the unity of character we evoked with regard to Montaigne – must certainly occur, but it might very well occur much later in a person's process of transformation. One may begin by performing certain actions and have some idea about what they pertain to (or else they would hold no meaning for the person), and yet not be convinced of the existence of God or the truth of Christianity as a doctrine. Pascal's program of spiritual training does not proceed from conviction alone; it proceeds, rather, from the development of wholesome habits. The first step that he proposes is to forget about proofs and begin acting. As he explains in his theory of the "raisons des effets," we can easily perform a gesture that resembles, for

instance, humility, but at the same time be mistaken about our reasons for behaving in that way; and inversely, we can act humbly with all the same gestures as an ignorant layperson, but know all the while that we are acting humbly out of custom and utility. In prayer, likewise, the interlocutor may begin not knowing why he is praying – it may seem as if his lips are moving mechanically to perform a duty – but the value of this practice rests on the assumption that *something else* will transpire in the act of reciting prayer. The apologist is banking on the fact that the heart's disposition will be changed with the changes in outward behavior. We might recall his explanation to that effect: "Il faut acquérir une créance plus facile, qui est celle de l'habitude, qui sans violence, sans art, sans argument, nous fait croire les choses et incline toutes nos puissances à cette croyance, en sorte que notre âme y tombe naturellement." (LG 671) A clear causal relationship emerges in this passage between the way we speak and act and what we end up believing: habit makes us believe certain things ("nous fait croire les choses") and redirects our capacities to a particular belief ("incline toutes nos puissances à cette croyance"). This cause-and-effect relationship effectively lays the groundwork for conversion, which is expressed here as the moment when "notre âme y tombe naturellement." Pascal leaves this final step open to a certain degree of mystery: the moment that the appropriate practices and beliefs come into alignment, our soul *naturally* follows suit.

Pascal's wish that we develop belief "sans violence, sans art, sans argument" echoes Montaigne's insistence that his pupil's lesson occur "par rencontre," "sans obligation," and "sans se faire sentir."[287] Although Montaigne is referring more to the

[287] "…aussi nostre leçon se passant comme par rencontre, sans obligation de temps et de lieu, et se meslant à toutes noz actions, se coulera sans se faire sentir." (I:25, "De l'institution des enfans," p. 171)

diffuse nature of the ideal learning process, the effortlessness and naturalness he cites are due to the fact that the *body* is doing the learning, without the willful intervention of the reasoning mind. Both authors oppose the harshness of traditional learning (*disciplina* or *doctrina*) to the facility of learning from one's everyday bodily encounters; and both imply that the most important learning (acquiring virtue or developing faith) ought to occur by the easier of the two methods—not because the lessons themselves are easy but because they stipulate complete immersion in the goal, or a lack of separation between the learner and the object of learning. The learning process should permeate one's life so thoroughly that it becomes like a second skin, an *habit* (French) worn at all times without deliberate reflection. This is the productive force of "habitude," which Félix Ravaisson will point out nearly two centuries later, as that aspect of habit that frees us up to learn. Learning by habit, he argues, requires less effort because it contains a momentum all its own, a momentum that works in concert with nature. The central thesis of his 1838 essay "De l'habitude" illuminates how the mechanism of habit can actually facilitate the change that we aim to produce: "…[P]lus l'être vivant a répété ou prolongé un changement qui a son origine en lui, plus encore il le produit et semble tendre à le reproduire. Le changement qui lui est venu du dehors lui devient donc de plus en plus étranger ; le changement qui lui est venu de lui-même lui devient de plus en plus propre. La réceptivité diminue, la spontanéité augmente. Telle est la loi générale de la disposition, de l'habitude que la continuité ou la répétition du changement semble engendrer dans tout être vivant."[288] From this perspective, habit has a distinct advantage in helping us to learn: over time, it facilitates the task of accommodation that is required to translate a

[288] Félix Ravaisson, *De l'habitude* (Paris: H. Fournier, 1838), 9. HathiTrust Digital Library: http://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.hnnnt3.

goal or an idea into a way of being. The seamless quality of learning evoked above by Montaigne and Pascal could not be so without the deeply integrative force of bodily habit.

Because learning is such a delicate task, Pascal tries to avert our habitual tendency to rely on reason alone, for he knows that no measure of logical argumentation will convince his interlocutor to believe. We may receive a sudden flash of truth in the mind, but it is unlikely to effect durable change in our beliefs, because "[l]a raison agit avec lenteur et avec tant de vues sur tant de principes, lesquels il faut qu'ils soient toujours présents, qu'à toute heure elle s'assoupit ou s'égare manque d'avoir tous ses principes présents." (LG 671) Conversion, whether it is mathematical, philosophical, or religious, cannot occur through gathering proofs in the mind. Another faculty is required, that which Pascal refers to as *sentiment*. In the same fragment as above, he goes on to clarify the opposing role of *sentiment*: "Le sentiment n'agit pas ainsi ; il agit en un instant et toujours est prêt à agir. Il faut donc mettre notre foi dans le sentiment…" *Sentiment*, like Ravaisson's *spontanéité*, requires no special effort from the intellect or memory, because the information needed to act is already stored in the body. By drawing on *sentiment*, Pascal is basically implying that we establish the most reliable sorts of truth in our bodies. Even something as intangible as faith, he argues, should originate in *sentiment*, since our capacity to *sentir* a belief or custom – and not just conceptualize it – is what allows our soul to arrive at its natural state ("en sorte que notre âme y tombe naturellement").

But the process of spiritual training is not yet complete. After having practiced certain behaviors, developed the appropriate *sentiment*, and seen the truth for ourselves,

we still need custom to close the circle, for it is custom (i.e. becoming accustomed to) that ensures that newly acquired beliefs and behaviors are fully integrated into our way of being. It is no accident that the same vocabulary of imbuing and dyeing ("abreuver" and "teindre") that Montaigne used to describe the habit of virtue[289] resurfaces in Pascal's description of custom: "Enfin il faut avoir recours à [la coutume] quand une fois l'esprit a vu où est la vérité, afin de nous *abreuver* et nous *teindre* de cette créance qui nous échappe à toute heure ; car d'en avoir toujours les preuves présentes c'est trop d'affaire." (LG 671; my emphasis) By claiming that we need custom in addition to intellectual insight, Pascal differentiates the role of custom from the faculty of mind. Custom has to do with our body's habitual responses to its environment, and it is the body's work to ensure that truth passes from abstraction into reality, through a slow process of "imbuing" and "dyeing," two verbs that have decidedly material referents. Without opposing the two functions of body and mind, Pascal establishes a complementary relationship between them: we need the body's custom to continue the work of the mind. Even after the mind has perceived truth, we need to use our bodies in the appropriate way to reinforce the beliefs that escape us ("qui nous échappe[nt] à toute heure"). Otherwise, the old habit will continue to inform our behavior, notwithstanding the newly acquired belief. Because of its immersive quality (similar to the dyeing process), custom promotes change in the entire person—often without the person even realizing it. This means not only that the body remains instrumental to the entire process of conversion, but that conversion itself is an *activity* that continues for a lifetime, rather than a momentary insight or revelation.

[289] "La vertu ne veut estre suyvie que pour elle mesme ; et si on emprunte par fois son masque pour autre occasion, elle nous l'arrache aussi tost du visage. C'est une vive et forte *teinture*, quand l'ame en est une fois *abbreuvée*, et qui ne s'en va qu'elle n'emporte la piece. Voylà pourquouy pour juger d'un homme, il faut suivre longuement et curieusement sa trace." (II:1, "De l'inconstance de nos actions," p. 356; my emphasis)

Different uses of the body in Montaigne and Pascal.

Although the recommended bodily practices vary according to Montaigne and Pascal, both authors agree that eventually we need to harmonize our actions and our disposition through paying special attention to the body. For Montaigne, this realization came from seeing too many men use noble behaviors to mask a vicious intention (a common lament of many early modern moralists); and for Pascal, from seeing too many men arouse truth within themselves but have no way to integrate it into their daily life. Philosophy as a way of life stipulates both that we use our body to encounter truth and, once encountered, integrate that truth into our very being. Pascal puts this fact keenly: "Il faut que l'extérieur soit joint à l'intérieur pour obtenir de Dieu, c'est-à-dire que l'on se mette à genoux, prie des lèvres, etc., afin que l'homme orgueilleux qui n'a voulu se soumettre à Dieu soit maintenant soumis à la créature. Attendre de cet extérieur le secours est être superstitieux ; ne vouloir pas le joindre à l'intérieur est être superbe." (LG 732) Pascal clearly places emphasis on outward behaviors, but with the proviso that they are joined ("soit joint[s]") with one's inner disposition. He gives the concrete examples of kneeling and moving one's lips to pray, explaining that these actions, by submitting us to our material bodies ("à la creature"), teach us a lesson in humility, a necessary condition for experiencing God. This is important because our habitual stance, pride, is antithetical to Christian humility. Pascal warns, however, that the actions themselves are not all-powerful. Thinking that they will save us is superstition; and neglecting them altogether is vainglory. Either way, we end up mistaken about the power of the action itself. The two faculties of body and mind, of action and intention, need to work in concert in order

to have a firsthand experience of God ("obtenir de Dieu"). Until we understand this fact, we will not know how to properly engage our bodies in service of spiritual truth.

The actions that tend to lead to spiritual health all have to do with the reduction of the passions, because the passions are considered the primary obstruction to faith. Pascal's instructions to the interlocutor are resounding: "…apprenez au moins que votre impuissance à croire vient de vos passions." (LG 397) He then encourages his interlocutor to work on diminishing the passions in order to arrive at real faith. The passions are dangerous precisely because they live in the body and therefore influence our behavior without our knowing it. Attending to the body firsthand will be the only effective strategy against them. Rational arguments will not significantly alter our ability to believe; only the "diminution de [n]os passions" can change such a deep-seated habit. In fact, the causal relationship between diminishing the passions and developing faith is so clear that Pascal warns his interlocutor against believing the opposite to be true. In an imaginary dialogue between the apologist and the skeptic, the latter mistakenly places faith before the reduction of pleasures: "« J'aurais bientôt quitté les plaisirs, disent-ils, si j'avais la foi. »" And it is for Pascal to respond that the skeptic should begin instead by abandoning his pleasures: "Et moi je vous dis : Vous auriez bientôt la foi si vous aviez quitté les plaisirs. Or c'est à vous à commencer. Si je pouvais, je vous donnerais la foi. Je ne puis le faire, ni partant éprouver la vérité de ce que vous dites. Mais vous pouvez bien quitter les plaisirs, et éprouver si ce que je dis est vrai." (LG 669) In both the first and last sentences, Pascal affirms that faith results from leaving pleasures behind ("quitter les plaisirs"). It is therefore up to the interlocutor to begin the process of conversion. The assertion "Or c'est à vous de commencer" contains all the wisdom necessary to Pascal's

philosophy as a way of life: we, the readers, are responsible for the beliefs that inform our lives, and this must begin with our bodily behaviors. Pascal's instructions to the interlocutor reveal a fundamentally inimical attitude towards sensual pleasures. The body, for him, contains considerable power: it can either catalyze a person's religious conversion or lead him further into desire and debauchery. This ambivalence towards the body was fairly typical of Christian thought, wherein the body was considered both the site of concupiscence and the means for reconciliation with God (via the incarnation of Christ). The emphasis on reducing the passions, then, is nothing new; but Pascal's recognition of the productive aspect of bodily habit is quite remarkable. Conversion, for him, begins and ends with the body through the proper use of custom and *sentiment*.

If the proper use of custom is equated with tempering pleasure in Pascal, for Montaigne, it is quite the opposite: following custom is placed on the same pedestal as accepting pleasure. Spiritual training consists for the latter not in avoiding pleasure, but in developing a sound relationship to the passions that are already a part of us. Montaigne's consideration of pleasure in relation to custom and habit is most clearly articulated in his criticism of medical advice, which often deprived the patient of his ordinary pleasures. He explains that maintaining his health has always been a question of following his "custom" and his "pleasure," rather than trying to deny or regulate either of them: "J'ay esté assez souvent malade : j'ay trouvé sans leurs secours, mes maladies aussi douces à supporter (et en ay essayé quasi de toutes les sortes) et aussi courtes, qu'à nul autre : et si n'y ay point meslé l'amertume de leurs ordonnances. La santé, je l'ay libre et entiere, sans regle, et sans autre discipline, que de ma coustume et de mon plaisir." (II:37, "De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres," pp. 804-5) Montaigne's

discipline, whether physical, moral, or spiritual, could be summed up as just that: following his custom and his pleasure. The two terms are linked in this passage through the conjunction "et," which places them on equal ground. Montaigne's custom is moreover *defined by* pleasure, in that it consists mostly in following the natural pleasures of his being, whether for the sake of his health or his happiness. As is often the case, Montaigne's standards for maintaining good physical health apply equally well to his philosophy of life: we could easily replace "[l]a santé" in this passage with "le bonheur" or "la tranquillité de l'âme."

Elaborating, as above, on his aversion to medical restrictions, he recommends erring on the side of pleasure when in distress: "Puis-qu'on est au hazard de se mesconter, hazardons nous plustost à la suitte du plaisir." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1134) His advice stems from his own displeasure at having to abstain from eating oysters while suffering from nephritis ("la colique"), a medical condition of the kidneys. He takes the situation to be "deux maux pour un." Because our habitual reaction to a misfortune such as this is to "se mesconter" (to be disappointed), the antidote that he proposes is to accept pleasure as it comes, and even to pursue it actively. Though his reason for offering the advice is medical, it has philosophical overtones, because it points to our paradoxical tendency to create addition (psychological) suffering when faced with physical pain. The advice is meant to retrain that monstrous capacity we have to prefer malady and misfortune to pleasure and ease. "Quel monstrueux animal," declares Montaigne, "qui se fait horreur à soy-mesme à qui ses plaisirs poisent : qui se tient à mal-heur ?" (III:5, "Sur des vers de Virgile," p. 922) Montaigne explains in the same passage

that to deny pleasure is to effectively "de-nature" ourselves.[290] We might recall that Pascal uses the vocabulary of monstrosity to make just the opposite point: although he reappropriates the notion of monstrosity using the same terms ("dénaturé" and "monstrueux"), the conditions for being considered a "monster" have to do with our denial of salvation, *not* with our denial of pleasure. In fact, once we have seen the vanity of worldly pleasure we cannot possibly justify its pursuit: "Il ne faut pas avoir l'âme fort élevée pour comprendre qu'il n'y a point ici de satisfaction véritable et solide, que tous nos plaisirs ne sont que vanité, que nos maux sont infinis, et qu'enfin la mort, qui nous menace à chaque instant, doit infailliblement nous mettre, dans peu d'années, dans l'horrible nécessité d'être éternellement ou anéantis ou malheureux." (LG 398) Those who continue to pursue pleasure at the expense of investigating salvation are "monsters" for Pascal: "Cette négligence en une affaire où il s'agit d'eux-mêmes, de leur éternité, de leur tout, m'irrite plus qu'elle ne m'attendrit ; elle m'étonne et m'épouvante : c'est un monstre pour moi." (LG 398) In the same fragment, he describes the sentiments of such men as "dénaturés," but further proof of our corruption after the Fall. A life based uniquely on "la suitte du plaisir" (Montaigne) would be a crowning example of monstrosity under the plume of Pascal.

When Montaigne identifies pleasure as a natural part of our being, he includes it in a larger discussion of custom and habit, and it is important to note the distinction that is sometimes made between the two terms in the *Essais*. "Habitude," the closest equivalent of *habitus*, designates a habit that requires conscious reflection on the part of

[290] "Gens fanatiques, qui pensent honnorer leur nature en se desnaturant : qui se prisent de leur mespris, et s'amendent de leur empirement." (III:5, "Sur des vers de Virgile," p. 922)

the practitioner, whereas "coutume" ostensibly refers to the Bourdieusian acceptation of *habitus*, an unconscious way of being dictated by social convention. As Francis Goyet points out, "[l]'habitus lie indissociablement théorie et pratique, parce qu'il lie cas concret et réflexion. Cela le différencie radicalement du sens qu'a pris le concept d'habitus depuis Bourdieu. Ce dernier désigne par là plutôt ce que Montaigne appelle la coutume: une habitude non réfléchie, non explicitée, qui s'impose à vous à votre insu."[291] The sharp distinction that Goyet makes between "habitude" and "coutume" would have us believe that custom is in no way a part of philosophical practice, and that it runs contrary to the change that most philosophies of a way of life are trying to bring about. Because custom functions on an unconscious plane, we are not at liberty to modify it, whereas philosophical practice presupposes the possibility of modifying our habits. But regardless of whether we call something habit or custom, both terms refer to an ingrained, repetitive way of using the body; that is, both are influencing our moral disposition whether or not we are aware of it. Becoming conscious of the customs we have inherited can constitute a philosophical act. As Montaigne is keen to show, by simply naming the customs that inform his life, he is already in a position of power to choose how to relate to them. When Montaigne proclaims custom and pleasure to be the only disciplines necessary to his healing, it is *his* custom he is referring to – "La santé, je l'ay libre et entiere, sans regle, et sans autre discipline, que de *ma* coustume et de mon plaisir." (II:37, "De la ressemblance des enfans aux peres," p. 805; my emphasis) – and not the custom he has been unconsciously molded to. His customary ways of being, based on the principle of following pleasure, may originate in the particular cultural norms of his milieu; however, the fact that he has appropriated them *as his own* accords them an altogether different

[291] Goyet, "La Notion éthique d'*habitude* dans les *Essais*," 1075.

status. By developing a personal relationship with custom, instead of simply accepting the medical dogma of his time, he maintains his agency in relation to the behaviors in question and carves out an opportunity for philosophical practice. When Montaigne refers to *his* custom, he uses the term in much the same way as "habitude," to connote a behavior that has become natural to him and that is susceptible to being reconditioned, even at mature stages of life. Though it is true, in a general way, that we are born into a particular set of customs, and are therefore inculcated to a certain degree from the beginning, Montaigne's use of custom would imply that we can choose how to relate to those customs we have hitherto taken for granted.

Instead of dwelling on the possible distinction between custom and *habitus*, we can use Goyet's definition of *habitus* to more clearly frame the conscious relationship between intention and action. In his definition of *habitus*, as it appears in the *Essais*, conscious reflection is required to develop healthy habits over time. This is an additional criterion Goyet believes to be proper to *habitus*, which otherwise unconscious behaviors (such as custom) do not include. In summing up the distinction between custom and habit, he adds: "Tout au contraire, l'habitus chez Montaigne passe par la réflexion constante, qu'il désigne par le terme récurrent et très important de « discours », mot qui signifie « raisonnements, réflexions qu'on se fait à soi-même ». Se tenir un « discours », c'est au fond se justifier devant son tribunal intérieur."[292] By underscoring the inner discourse that informs Montaigne's use of *habitus*, Goyet points to a more general feature of Montaigne's philosophical attitude: the author's basic intolerance of any form of hypocrisy, whether it is in seeing a man pray and then act maliciously or in following medical advice that goes against his body's own evidence. The internal tribunal that

[292] Ibid, 1075.

Montaigne subjects his habits to is a way of checking the equivalency between his behavior and his inner disposition. Therefore, to call his practices simply "spiritual" would miss the mark, because the material form that his beliefs take *does* matter; and by the same token, to call them "somatic" would neglect the major role that intention or disposition has to play. Both dimensions are necessary, and as it turns out, co-dependent. We cannot hope to become philosophers of a way of life if there is not some essential agreement between our behavior and our conscious reflection.

One of Pascal's most famous critiques of Montaigne has to do precisely with the motivations we assign to following custom. He says quite flatly: "Montaigne a tort. La coutume ne doit être suivie que parce qu'elle est coutume, et non parce qu'elle soit raisonnable ou juste." (LG 469) This assertion would make it seem as though Pascal were less interested than Montaigne in the integrity behind certain commonly accepted behaviors—in other words, that the legitimacy of a particular behavior resides in the customary status society has accorded it. But following custom for custom's sake, an ostensibly unconscious act, conceals the inherent possibility of conscious intention as we perform an act. It may look like we are bowing to someone because that person deserves it; but, in fact, we can still bow to that person and understand that it is custom that dictates our bowing. In such a scenario, we still retain our power as conscious agents because we are aware of the utter arbitrariness of the behavior and yet can choose to do it anyway. So it is not as if conscious intention does not matter; it ultimately *does* matter for Pascal.

Pascal's claim that Montaigne takes most customs to be worth following because they are reasonable or just reveals only part of the story. Montaigne does not simply

submit to custom based on how well it works in society. There is a distinct moment of personal appropriation that occurs whereby he assesses the usefulness of a particular behavior according to his own temperament. Surely, he follows society's custom of paying doctors for their visits, but he more often decides to avoid doctors altogether, deeming them a nuisance to his health. His primary criterion for the behavior in question is his own body and temperament, rather than the preexisting societal norms. For Montaigne, we all begin with a particular temperament and ought to discover what physical and mental habits suit it best. Pascal, on the other hand, begins with the validity of certain behaviors and later invests them with meaning based on the changes they effect. For the latter, we should learn to adapt our inner disposition to the behaviors at hand, because the behaviors he proposes, based on the imitation of Christ, are more trustworthy than our desires or our ability to distinguish wholesome examples. Hence, it is acceptable to begin praying before we have any sentiment of God, because the apologist trusts that our beliefs will progressively come into alignment with the outward act. But for Montaigne, we ought not to use a behavior if it misaligns with our inherent disposition: both the behavior and the disposition need to be working together in order to live virtuously. At the same time, training ourselves in virtue over the long term (as his chapter "De l'institution des enfans" attests to) will allow virtue become a second nature, or *complexion*. Ultimately, both authors land on the ideal of coherence. Their two approaches taken together suggest that the relationship between behavior and inner disposition can evolve in either direction: either one can begin by modifying one's behaviors to effect internal change (Pascal), or one can acknowledge one's basic temperament and practice behaviors that harmonize with it (Montaigne).

Conclusion.

By resituating philosophical practice within the field of *habitus* I hope to have shown that it is difficult to locate such practice in either the body or the mind alone. Even as I have attempted to galvanize interest in bodily habits (in part because both authors call attention to them), we cannot claim once and for all that philosophical practice occurs in just the body, as though the mind's activities were somehow separate and distinct. Philosophy has long grappled with the mind-body problem by partitioning off human experience to the categories of "internal" versus "external." This model, while in use throughout the early modern era, provides a somewhat limited view of the therapeutic function of philosophy. In the twentieth century, Wittgenstein cast suspicion on this long-held model, claiming that to call something "mental" presupposes that we are unable to understand what is going on for another person. In this vein, he famously declared the human body to be "the best picture of the human soul" (*Philosophical Investigations* II, iv), which we must seek to understand before assigning psychological constructs to the other. More recently, it seems that language has become one such "body" that renders accessible another person's so-called interiority. Much more than intention or even behavior itself, the language used by the interlocutor has become the object of philosophical and therapeutic interest. In *Le Mythe de l'intériorité*,[293] Jacques Bouveresse reminds us that philosophers like Wittgenstein set out not to deny that mental processes (the shorthand being interiority) accompany discourse, but to acknowledge that there can exist discourse without such interiority. I take this to mean that the discourse of the body

[293] Jacques Bouveresse, *Le Mythe de l'intériorité : Expérience, signification et langage privé chez Wittgenstein* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1976).

itself merits consideration on its own terms. According to this view, it would be erroneous to presume that we can discern the author's intention, or even a correspondence between his intention and behavior, wherever he describes a personal experience such as pleasure, pain, or any variety of sensation or emotion. Our task, therefore, is not to evaluate the correspondence per se between the two terms (themselves erroneous) of mind and body, or inner and outer, but to *take the author's body at its word*, much like Starobinski suggested doing in the case of Montaigne. The body here cannot be separated from the language that gives it expression and thus we are called to take seriously the language used to describe the author's body, because the language itself – that of mass and density, movement and rest, and, of course, pleasure and pain – is the only real gauge we have to understand these authors' philosophies.

The most pressing question in either author's philosophy is not whether the body or the mind rules in an absolute sense, but whether all parts of the author being represented in his *œuvre* have come into alignment and function as part of the whole (whether nature or God). Framing the question thusly both acknowledges the difficulty of expressing the mind-body relationship in language *and* attempts to circumvent that difficulty – which Wittgenstein would have called a philosophical "embarras" or "maladie" – by taking a more holistic view of philosophical practice. The most patent expression of such difficulty is this passage from Montaigne's chapter on sexuality, in which he reflects on the bodily and the spiritual through one's use of pleasure and pain: "Pouvons nous pas dire, qu'il n'y a rien en nous, pendant cette prison terrestre, purement, ny corporel, ny spirituel : et qu'injurieusement nous desmembrons un homme tout vif : et qu'il semble y avoir raison, que nous nous portions envers l'usage du plaisir, aussi

favorablement aumoins, que nous faisons envers la douleur ?" (III:5, "Sur des vers de Virgile," p. 936) Rather than offering a positive definition of the relationship between mind and body, Montaigne takes a negative approach by explaining that in our human form ("pendant cette prison terrestre") there is nothing we can locate that is either entirely corporal or purely spiritual. Montaigne goes so far as to claim that we do violence to a man whenever we attempt to separate the so-called faculties of body and mind. For him, the fact remains that whenever we work on one part of ourselves, we work on our entire person. To further illustrate the interdependence of the spiritual and the material, Montaigne then turns to the example of spiritual asceticism: "[La douleur] estoit (pour exemple) vehemente, jusques à la perfection, en l'ame des Saincts par la poenitence : Le corps y avoit naturellement part, par le droict de leur colligance, et si pouvoit avoir peu de part à la cause : si ne se sont ils pas contentez qu'il suyvist nuement, et assistast l'ame affligée. Ils l'ont affligé luymesme, de peines atroces et propres : affin qu'à l'envy l'un de l'autre, l'ame et le corps plongeassent l'homme dans la douleur, d'autant plus salutaire, que plus aspre." (III:5, "Sur des vers de Virgile," pp. 936-7) The infliction of pain, explains Montaigne, works in both directions: through penitence the body naturally receives its punishment, because the body is always, already a part of the mind ("[l]e corps y avait naturellement part"). Montaigne describes this belonging as a "colligance" (from the Latin *colligare*), a term that was used in medical contexts as well as figuratively to mean "relation" or "affinité."[294] Medically, it referred to the nerves, veins, sinews, and other connective tissues that linked various parts of the body. To describe the relationship between body and soul as pure "colligance" is at once to affirm the direct

[294] *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français*, Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales, accessed December 11, 2014, http://cnrtl.fr/definition/dmf/COLLIGANCE.

communication between the two and to signal their mutual necessity or codependence. Because of this mutual necessity, the soul also undergoes affliction in the form of atrocious and appropriate torments ("de peines atroces et propres") whenever the body is subjected to ascetic exercise. This circular process of asceticism was meant to prepare the adept for healing ("d'autant plus salutaire, que plus aspre"), although, as we shall see, pain was just one approach to spiritual healing.

The same circular logic also applies to pleasure, which the Epicureans recognized as particularly suitable to spiritual training. "En pareil cas," Montaigne explains, "aux plaisirs corporels, est-ce pas injustice d'en refroidir l'ame, et dire, qu'il l'y faille entrainer, comme à quelque obligation et necessité contreinte et servile ? C'est à elle plustost de les couver et fomenter : de s'y presenter et convier : la charge de regir luy appartenant. Comme c'est aussi à mon advis à elle, aux plaisirs, qui luy sont propres, d'en inspirer et infondre au corps tout le ressentiment que porte sa condition, et de l'estudier qu'ils luy soient doux et salutaires." (III:5, "Sur des vers de Virgile," p. 937) This is quite another approach to healing, with, nevertheless, the same provision that the body and mind take equal responsibility for a person's spiritual development. It is striking, following the rather orthodox reading of saintly asceticism above, that Montaigne should now heartily encourage the proliferation of pleasure in the body and mind. The mind here has a strong part to play, in that it can either shun these pleasures and be dragged reluctantly in their direction, or nurture them ("les couver et fomenter")—because ultimately the mind rules in these matters ("la charge de regir luy appartenant"). But it is also for the mind to arouse pleasures in the body, even if these pleasures do not originate precisely in the body. Pleasures of the mind, in other words, can change one's

bodily experience, and vice versa. The conclusion for Montaigne is fairly clear: we ought to cultivate our experience of pleasure in both directions, whether it originates in what we call the body or the mind: "Car c'est bien raison, comme ils disent, que le corps ne suyve point ses appetits au dommage de l'esprit. Mais pourquoy n'est-ce pas aussi raison, que l'esprit ne suive pas les siens, au dommage du corps ?" (III:5, "Sur des vers de Virgile," p. 937) We should not exclude any part of ourselves in the experience of pleasure if we intend to cultivate our entire being. There are certainly times when the experience of pleasure feels more predominant in one particular part of us, but the effect of pleasure is never contained: body and mind co-create a person's overall experience of pleasure and thus have equally active (though perhaps alternating) roles in spiritual healing. The practices of a philosopher, for instance, who uses pleasure as the primary means of realizing tranquility depend on the body just as much as they depend on the mind—a fact that is easily obscured when we prefer mentalist descriptions of philosophical practice to the detriment of direct bodily experience.

In view of this final reading of Montaigne, we should consider whether "spiritual exercises" capture sufficiently the nature of the progress made in the body and soul of a practitioner. Because each author's vision of philosophical training emphasizes the entire person, the fact of relying on so-called spiritual or bodily exercises should perhaps be considered a temporary measure. Being *habitus*, being vulnerable to and inseparable from the world, grants us the singular insight that change occurs within a field. Healing occurs when the individual realizes his belonging to that field and acknowledges the ever-present possibilities for change, beyond the limits of his own volition. Such is the alchemy of philosophical practice, and if I have laid undue emphasis on the *soma*

throughout this analysis, it is because that seems to be the place of our greatest leverage. Both Montaigne and Pascal insist that we must begin somewhere. If we begin with the mind as the primary site of practice, we are left quite vulnerable in the wake of its unruly machinations. Much easier to shape is the physical mass we call our bodies, and if ever we think we can attain philosophical realization without them, we are gravely mistaken. Such a belief would be on par with "ceste inhumaine sapience" (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1156) that Montaigne so loathes, and which takes the body to be an unworthy candidate for cultivation. The body matters—not only for the changes it effects in the mind, but for the communication it renders possible between all parts of the self.

Conclusion

Living the good life, being well, and feeling whole have to do not only with bodily health per se, but with developing the appropriate relationship to the body and embodiment more generally. This, I hope to have shown, is what allows the philosopher to develop an appropriate relationship to himself, priming the sort of self-knowledge that Socrates considered foundational to the philosophical path. If we take the Socratic injunction to "know thyself" to be the cardinal feature of philosophy as a way of life, philosophy becomes a practice of knowing the body, since the body provides a privileged access point for knowing the self. This is so for two reasons: 1) the body serves as a diagnostic aid to understanding the thoughts, emotions, and moral proclivities of a person; and 2) working on the body, it turns out, is tantamount working on the entire person, a truth most eloquently expressed in Montaigne's description of "l'estroite cousture de l'esprit et du corps s'entre-communiquants leurs fortunes" (I:20, "De la force de l'imagination," p. 107). Although I have tried to provide a clear roadmap to how each author works with the body (as in Chapter 3: Reading, Disciplining, and Forgetting the Body; or Chapter 4: Somatic Apprenticeship and Somatic Training), the results are seldom very neat. Surely, we can find examples of somatic exercises that appear to have a predictable effect on the mind (such as praying to cultivate inner faith), or in the Classical sense, spiritual exercises that yield positive physical results. But the process of effecting change and training for virtue is almost never unidirectional. The constant trafficking[295] between body and mind, evidenced most abundantly by the passions, belies

[295] Stephen Pender similarly describes the relationship between medicine and philosophy in terms of just such "trafficking": "Philosophy and medicine have a long history of mutual influence; not only do they traffic with one another in metaphor, some of the first 'scientific' treatments of epistemology, ontology,

a much less tidy relationship between the two faculties, which should cause us to view the philosophical subject much more holistically. What I hope to have shown in this thesis is not that working on the body leads directly to philosophical realization in either Montaigne or Pascal, but that by paying greater attention to the body – both we as readers and they as authors – one gains access to a much larger and more telling field of information about the whole person, which facilitates the process of healing and becoming whole.

The communication between body and mind, as between body and world, should give us pause, for the very fact of their inextricability implies that we cannot consider a philosopher's integrity based on one or the other term in isolation. Ancient medicine, primarily in its Hippocratic and Galenic guises, was a useful framework for our inquiry because it provided a more holistic view of individual dysfunction, a view that accounted for physical, psychological, and environmental factors contributing to disease. Galenic diagnostics, for example, showed us that a vast array of inner and outer conditions, including the passions of the soul, needed to figure into any reasonable diagnosis of physical illness, thus obscuring the limits between so-called physical, emotional, and mental symptoms. Likewise, Hippocratic medicine's emphasis on dialogue and description revealed a more nuanced view of individual illness, both because it solicited subjective information from the patient and because it attempted to resituate the patient within a larger history of similar cases.

Habitus, in its Bourdieusian acceptation, provided equally valuable, though slightly different, insights about individual illness and what it means to be healthy or

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causality, and the philosophy of language were medical, and semiotics, of course, was developed and refined in classical thought." (Pender, "Between Medicine and Rhetoric" *Early Science and Medicine* 10 (2005): 42-43.)

whole. By placing the philosophical subject in a codependent relationship with the whole, and explaining that relationship in terms of the body, *habitus* offered a more nuanced perspective on the individual's ability to self-heal. Although certain practices can be said to produce certain effects, the relationship between cause and effect is more nebulous in the case of *habitus*. Health or virtue is not seen as the result of any one action; rather, the accumulation of actions based on unconscious imitation is what contributes to the character traits we see as virtuous or vicious. Training for the philosophical life, then, becomes a question of aligning all the parts of oneself with a healthy disposition over time, rather than performing discrete actions to produce the desired results on cue. *Habitus* highlights precisely that aspect of practice that Montaigne and Pascal both liken to the dyeing process, the results of which appear gradually with time and often unbeknownst to the agent. It further highlights the fact that we are educated spiritually through material means; and our ineluctable belonging to the material world, via the body, already points to a certain primordial wellness or well-being. Whereas the field of medicine provided a fruitful model for how to diagnose and treat individual dysfunction, *habitus* helps us to see the other side of the equation, according to which we are always, already well by virtue of our well-adaptedness to the world, or our "being-in-the-world." This seems to apply equally well to Pascal's Christian-mystical vision of belonging to God (even though individuals may suffer from illness due to past sins) and to Montaigne's belief that we belong to nature in a way that largely precludes the need for self-correction. Montaigne's experience of falling from his horse and temporarily losing consciousness was a case in point for how ultimate health and well-being can proceed from a profound process of letting-be.

And that is perhaps the final word of wisdom from either of these two authors. A "letting-go" or a "letting-be" is what ultimately allows each one to harness the health that was already present, albeit undisclosed. These authors show us that illness erupts from our separation from the whole – whether nature or God – and the misidentification that ensues. We either look to physicians to be our guide, although they barely know us, and we then heed their alarmist prognoses, only to find ourselves twice as miserable at the end of the day (a common lament of Montaigne's). Or, we lose ourselves in a world spun of anxiety and empty diversion, choosing to stake ourselves on material pleasures, rather than concerning ourselves with the question of eternal salvation (as we saw in Pascal). The only cure, it seems, is a unanimous return to the self, but not the self that some philosophies have construed as a mind on a stick—the *embodied* self that is capable of feeling its suffering, as well as its primordial belonging to the whole.

Whereas the two above models, medicine and *habitus*, more plainly insist on the centrality of the body, and on the mutuality of mind and body more generally, for some reason philosophy has less often succeeded in resisting the mentalist bias. To be whole (from the Greek *holon*) is intimately linked to being healthy, and I would argue, from the standpoint of our two authors, it is also linked to happiness and peace of mind. The therapeutic function of philosophy is precisely to make the practitioner whole—but even that does not sufficiently capture its therapeutic function. The function is actually to help the practitioner realize the wholeness that was already there, which is why illness (separation) is never really exclusive of health (wholeness). The author must arrive at a shift in perspective that allows him to appreciate anew the wholeness he has already been in the midst of, rather than recover a wholeness that was once lost. Montaigne's perennial

realization that his body, and even his body's ills, belong to nature and that nothing is in need of correction[296] is a case in point. Pascal's recognition that the god he seeks in order to heal already lives inside of each man[297] is but further argument for this primordial belonging. Practice, to some degree, does make perfect in the classic Aristotelian sense, since many of the behaviors we are invested in tend to obscure the view of our belonging (by virtue of the passions). But even Pascal, who recommends specific exercises for his interlocutor to perform, admits that our illness is not a limiting condition to philosophical or religious self-mastery. In fact, he regards his own physical illness as extremely good news, for it signals an opportunity to more genuinely relate to God through the format of the *prière de demande*.

In the preceding chapters I have tried to present a more integrative approach to understanding the causes and conditions of illness in Montaigne and Pascal. In Chapter 1, I explored the intersections of early modern medicine and philosophy, in order to show how, in their therapeutic guises, both disciplines aimed at promoting individual well-being through an appreciation of the whole. In other words, the respective tasks of the physician and the philosopher converged on the same hermeneutic challenge: that of reconciling the authority of learned tradition with the particularities – or idiosyncrasies – of individual experience. We saw how in the case of Montaigne, the individual takes such precedence over the tradition at large that the typical relationship between part and whole is put to the test. We must begin with the individual, in his view, and then find practices or treatments that adapt themselves to that individual's temperament. Pascal's therapeutic

[296] "Je n'ay pas corrigé comme Socrates, par la force de la raison, mes complexions naturelles." (III:12, "De la Physionomie," p. 1106)

[297] "Le royaume de Dieu est en nous. Le bien universel est en nous, est nous-même et n'est pas nous." (LG 485)

advice proceeds on the opposite premise: we need to begin with the truth of Christian doctrine and accommodate *ourselves* to that larger truth (through enacting religious rituals), which requires us initially to take some risk in changing our behavior. Only then does the "cure" of God's grace bear proof of its efficacy and wholesomeness.

In Chapter 2, I moved into an analysis of each author's understanding of spiritual health, observing that both authors frequently refer to the spiritual path in medical or somatic terms, such as *maladie*, *monstrosité*, *plaies*, *santé*, and *salutaire*. I used the term "*dis*-ease" to capture some of the crossover between physical disease and the *un*ease the author (or reader) is made to feel when faced with "spiritual" questions, such as death or the infinite cosmos. Not only does existential dis-ease, or anxiety, show up in the body in key ways; even these figurative or "spiritual" descriptions of disease and health (monstrosity being a prime example in both authors) bleed into the realm of the literal. What makes spiritual dis-ease distinct from physical disease is the secondary, or extraneous, suffering that it lays bare, often in the form of anxiety or despair—Montaigne's "agitation et combat" (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1138) being just one example.

This ushered us into Chapter 3, where I gave literal readings of some of the "figurative" descriptions of health and disease. At some of the most poignant moments in the *Essais* and the *Pensées*, in which the author is grappling with his own anxiety or despair, spiritual suffering is met *not* with a Classically defined spiritual exercise but with the author's own felt sense. Even when the author appropriates a spiritual exercise in the Classical or Christian sense, he remains loyal to bodily sensation (as we saw in Montaigne's fall from his horse) and embodies the teachings contained therein (as

demonstrated by Pascal's call to kneel and pray). This chapter represents a major turning point in the thesis, because it places the metaphorical and literal readings of sickness and health on equal ground, implying that when Montaigne and Pascal make reference to spiritual well-being they neither diminish nor exclude the influence of the physical body.

Finally, in Chapter 4 I stepped back to consider how the literal, or embodied, readings of spiritual exercises might cause us to question the terminology usually reserved for philosophy as a way of life. If "spiritual" exercises are indeed predicated on the use of one's body and on one's relationship to it, then the exercises themselves might need to be reframed with proper emphasis on the body. It is here that I distinguished between emphasizing the body per se and opening the discussion to a wider appreciation of the *processes of embodiment* that seem to earmark philosophy as a way of life. By discussing processes of embodiment, as opposed to the body in isolation, I hope to have laid bare the dual function of spiritual exercises in these two authors: we can read these exercises metaphorically, to be sure, but literally as well. In fact, both interpretations work together, echoing an argument in earlier chapters that the body and mind are bound together in a sort of "colligance" (see *Essais* III:5, "Sur des vers de Virgile," p. 936), implying communication and mutual dependency.

This dual reading of sickness and health tugs on a very old thread of wisdom that, curiously enough, was heeded by philosophers and physicians alike: in order to attain well-being – and recover a sense of wholeness or belonging – one needs to account for all variety of experience, for both the mental and physical aspects of dysfunction. This is true whether we are treating another person: "Ce n'est pas une ame, ce n'est pas un corps qu'on dresse, c'est un homme, il n'en faut pas faire à deux." (I:25, "De l'institution des

enfans," p. 171) Or whether we are practicing ourselves to become whole: "Je m'estudie plus qu'autre subject. C'est ma metaphysique, c'est ma physique." (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1119) Montaigne hardly distinguishes between his "metaphysique" and his "physique," the two terms being equally representative of his philosophical persona; their rapid succession in the statement above would even suggest their non-duality. When Montaigne set out to study himself, he considered no part of the self undeserving of attention. Hence, body and mind, affect and reason, imagination and volition were all part and parcel of the life force he attemped to observe, record, understand, and heal. To reappropriate all parts of ourselves – to re-*member* ourselves, literally and metaphorically – we need, as Montaigne attests, to make ourselves the subject of metaphysical *and* physical investigation.

Pascal often took Montaigne's bold investigation of the self to be an act of vanity and presumption. At one point in his *Entretien avec M. de Sacy* he starkly criticizes the author of the *Essais* for his uncurbed curiosity about the nature of body and mind: "« Il demande si l'âme connaît quelque chose ; si elle se connaît elle-même ; si elle est substance ou accident, corps ou esprit ; ce que c'est que chacune de ces choses, et s'il n'y a rien qui ne soit de l'un de ces ordres ; si elle connaît son propre corps ; ce que c'est que matière, et si elle peut discerner entre l'innombrable variété d'avis qu'on en a produits ; comment elle peut raisonner, si elle est matérielle ; et comment peut-elle être unie à un corps particulier et en ressentir les passions, si elle est spirituelle ? »"[298] Pascal's obvious counter-claim is that to ask such questions is pure folly, for human reason can never hope to access these obscure truths. Better to leave these questions to divine wisdom and

[298] Blaise Pascal, *Œuvres complètes*, t. II, ed. Michel Le Guern (Paris: Gallimard, 2000), 89.

refrain from this "curiosité inquiète des choses qu[e] [l'homme] ne peut savoir" that the apologist touts as "la maladie principale de l'homme" (LG 628).

It is interesting to note, however, that his criticism shows us precisely where Montaigne and the apologist meet with regard to philosophical practice. Pascal later praises Montaigne in the same *Entretien* for his singular ability to confound the reader's reasoning mind and undermine any sense of intellectual presumption. Because Montaigne himself trips over his own reasoning and demonstrates the fallibility of human reason in a more general way ("la superbe raison si invinciblement froissée par ses propres armes"[299]), he serves as a model of humility. Unfortunately for Pascal, this model falls dramatically short, since Montaigne remains a pagan in his eyes ("Mais il agit au contraire en païen…"[300]), forever at odds with his vision of God as the unique "bien." What is ironic is that Montaigne himself recognized the weakness of human reason and did not purport to offer any evidence to the contrary. He too was skeptical of the logic-making mind and preferred to heed the messages of his body. Above all, he was uninterested in dogmatic truth when it came to practices intended to promote individual health and happiness. Thus, like Pascal, who preferred to leave the great metaphysical quandaries to God or scripture, he chose to emphasize practice, rather than superstition or speculation. For both authors it can be said that *skepticism of human knowledge precipitates a return to embodied practice*, one of the central claims of this thesis. So although Montaigne will never be "Christian" enough to be blanketly reappropriated by Pascal, the two *are* in agreement about what is useful for individual transformation: practice in its embodied form.

[299] Ibid, 93.

[300] Ibid, 93.

If we now step back to assess the significance of this conclusion in the current scholarship and in related fields, we see that by considering medicine and philosophy *as practices*, we expose some of the most basic problems inherent to any interpretive discipline. By relating happiness to health, and health to wholeness, I have suggested that the same hermeneutic challenge underlies these three human goals: in all cases, we are called to reconcile the primacy of individual experience with the weight of authority or tradition at large. To understand the problem (or illness) in any of these cases – which invariably comes down to some form of suffering – we need to at once heed the body's own evidence and resituate that evidence within a larger field of data. The same tension seems to be characteristic of rhetorical hermeneutics, since the interpretation of texts relies on many of the same hermeneutical strategies of familiarization, appropriation, and accommodation. I evoked all too briefly the work of Kathy Eden, whose scholarship on rhetorical accommodation[301] might illuminate the methods common to philosophy, medicine, and rhetoric for arriving at proper understanding. What does proper understanding have to do with peace of mind in philosophy (or *ataraxia*, a term especially prevalent in the Hellenistic schools) and health in medicine (particularly in the precarious field of early modern diagnostics)? The intersections, as I have begun to show, are numerous.

The remarkable contribution of scholarship such as Eden's is that it properly frames the art of interpretation as an art of accommodation, wherein the reader's primary task is one of accommodating the foreignness of a text to the familiarity of his present

[301] See especially Kathy Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition: Chapters in the Ancient Legacy and Its Humanist Reception* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

disposition. This could, Eden argues, be called an act of homecoming. We could see homecoming in the sense of coming home to a text through understanding its author's intention (the "spirit" over the "letter"); or as bringing the words themselves home to the reader, who must find equitable replacements to serve his particular situation. As Eden herself elaborates: "The itinerary within the rhetorical tradition from equitable to spiritual and back to equitable interpretation, then, represents, as it were, a returning home; and this metaphor of 'homecoming' (…) proves especially apt for the hermeneutical tradition here considered. For 'accommodation' (Gr. *sunoikeioun*, Lat. *accommodare*), the process so crucial to rhetorical production and interpretation, includes in its radical sense the act of 'making to feel like one of the family.'"[302] Augustine aptly termed the act of reading "a journey" and of reading well "the journey home" (Eden)[303] and provided one model for resolving the contradictions inherent to the spiritual and literal interpretations of a text, particularly scripture. He came up with a "middle way" of reading (Eden)[304] by recommending to his Christian readers that they read "spiritually," that is, for the contextual meaning and not just the word.

In my own readings of Montaigne and Pascal, I have tried to bring the spiritual and literal interpretations of a term (health) into conversation with eachother, in order to show that they need not incite the sort of searing contradiction that has fueled religious and scriptural debates across the centuries. Taking concerns of health and illness literally has its own value because the ailing body and the solutions provided by medicine were themselves topics of inquiry in many early modern authors, even those who were not

[302] Ibid, 3-4.

[303] Ibid, 53.

[304] Ibid, 62.

considered "medical" writers. But these concerns also spark philosophical reflections on the place of trust, faith, the emotions, and empirical certainty in the art of living well. And what is more, the practical exigencies of attending to an ailing body reveal something quite precious about relating to the suffering soul: just as good health is predicated on the harmony of a body's working parts, such as the four humors or the six non-naturals, happiness and peace of mind depend on the harmony of self and whole. The practice of listening to the body gives each author unique access to both of these worlds—the literal foundations of early modern medical therapeutics *and* the spiritual implications of belonging to the universe, to nature, or to God.

To describe philosophical practice in medical terms was not purely a poetic gesture. A soul that was "diseased and covered in ulcers" had, for Pascal, a distinct correlate in his physical condition and was not separate from the aches and pains that fueled his fervent prayer to God. Similarly, Montaigne's reference to "la maladie naturelle de leur esprit"[305] was as much evocative of psychological unease as it was of the living body that gave it its concrete expression. If happiness and psychological well-being are predicated on a certain relationship to the physical body, then speaking of spiritual health and illness, while metaphorical, still has something to do *literally* with the body. What I hope to have advanced above all is just this idea that *the metaphorical is predicated on the literal*, sickness and health being just one compelling example.

Overall, I am struck by the similitude of Eden's description of rhetorical homecoming and the homecoming implicit in the journey of the sick patient or the truth-seeking philosopher. Evoking the journey of the "young reader" who has chosen to tackle

[305] As in: "Les hommes mescognoissent la maladie naturelle de leur esprit. Il ne faict que fureter et quester ; et va sans cesse, tounoyant, bastissant, et s'empestrant, en sa besongne…" (III:13, "De l'Experience," p. 1114)

ancient poetry, she writes: "Thus gently conveyed by fiction, the young reader approaches the end of his educational journey, like Odysseus, in a relation of familiarity and belonging. No longer a stranger to philosophy, he is, like the wanderer returned, a *philos* among *philoi*. And like the individual in a proper relation to commonality or community, he is *oikeios*, a part of the whole: at home."[306] In all three journeys – that of the reader, the patient, and the philosopher – the ideal outcome can be framed as one of coming home. Although in the rhetorical context, the reader is said to come home to the text and to the intention that undergirds it, one could argue that the reader – like the philosopher, like the patient – is also coming home to him- or herself. And since this "self" one is coming home to is ineluctably embodied, we might do well to consider the act of understanding as an act of embodiment itself.

[306] Eden, *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition*, 39.

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