

A thick dark blue vertical bar is positioned on the left side of the page. From the bottom of this bar, several thin, curved lines in shades of blue and grey extend upwards and outwards, creating an abstract, organic shape.

The Unknown Life of the Philosopher: The Significance of Biography for the Pursuit of the Good Life

Victoria Buxton | 17069263

This degree is awarded by Oxford Brookes University.

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
the award of MA by Research.

Date: January, 2022

Acknowledgements

I'd like to offer my deepest thanks to my supervisors, Professor Beverley Clack and Stephen Boulter for all the advice and support they have offered me throughout the process of writing this thesis.

Contents

Introduction	4
Ann Hartle and the ‘New Mode’ of Philosophy	9
Montaigne’s Difficulties to Aristotle	10
The Academic Philosopher	13
Montaigne: the accidental philosopher.....	15
Who was Michel de Montaigne?	16
‘The Essays’	18
Writings.....	22
The Influence of Seneca and Marcus Aurelius	22
Attainability of the Good Life	27
The Practice of Philosophy.....	31
Philosophy and Walking	31
Montaigne and the Practice of Solitary Walking.....	32
Communal Practice – School of thought.....	33
The Theme of Friendship	34
The New Mode of Philosophy Integrating the Biographical.....	43
This Sense of Freedom within Philosophy and Life.....	43
Biographical Philosophy	45
Montaigne or Aristotle? The Accidental vs the Academic.	51
Conclusion.....	53
References	54

Abstract

The question asked among many philosophers of ethics – How can one pursue the good and well lived life? A life which is fully satisfying, but not forced and restricting. With many theories and philosophical schools being established all trying to create theories which will guide others on how they can pursue a good life. The problem with many of these schools is the dehumanisation of philosophy, which they create through the lack of knowledge of the philosopher themselves. Separating man from philosophy. Michel de Montaigne is one philosopher who presents us with this 'New Mode' of philosophy, a term used by Ann Hartle.

Through the use of his own self reflections and biographical writing to arise at this question, 'how we can live the good life?'. Montaigne takes his private life and brings it out into the public. He gives his readers the insights into his life, his experiences, his struggles and his sporadic thoughts using his self-reflection. Montaigne humanises philosophy, showing us how he practised philosophy and incorporated it into his everyday life, becoming this 'accidental philosopher'.

This thesis is an investigation into the importance of understanding the life of the philosopher. Michel de Montaigne attempts to offer a way in which humans can attempt to live well through the use of his biographical writing. Throughout this investigation I will be comparing him against the academic philosopher, who's philosophical writing is completely separate from themselves and the people they are. This thesis shows how understanding the life of the philosopher allows for a sense of trust and gives one a more grounded understanding for how we can incorporate their ideas into our own lives. Montaigne presents us with his new way of doing ethics through the use of his philosophy and walking; how he writes, the catalyst for his Essays and his importance on the theme of friendship. And importantly, recognising the human as a diverse individual. Where a theory on how humans can live a good life can't be something which is universal. This research concludes with this 'new mode', of which Ann Hartle discusses how Montaigne created this way of doing philosophy, is more beneficial and practical for a westernised 21st century society, individually searching for a way to live the good life.

The Unknown Life of the Philosopher: The Significance of Biography for the Pursuit of the Good Life

Introduction

One of the most fundamental branches within philosophy and one which we are concerned with within day-to-day life is around the pursuit of the good life. How can we (the 'we' being 21st century individuals living in a western society, who are searching for a way in which we can get the most out of our lives), lead a happier life, to live the good life and feel fulfilled with the lives which we live? As a society, we are always searching for the ways in which we can be happy and how we can make our lives better. Philosophers have been concerned with these ideas for many years. Many theories, ideas and even philosophical schools have been established to answer this question – How can one pursue the good life?

When one concerns themselves with thoughts relating to the good life and how we can pursue it, many scholars have turned to the insights of the ancient philosophers such as Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Epictetus, Cicero and even some of the philosophical schools such as the Stoics, Epicureans and even the Sceptics (Hellenistic Schools) All which have established philosophical ideas and theories relating to how one can act and live their lives in order to pursue the good life. These different schools and teachings essentially provide the groundwork for living the good life. These ancient schools and teachings have become vital within ethics and their ideas and teachings are still prominent today. Let us briefly consider some of these ancient schools and the kind of ideas which they present:

The first of the ancient schools which we will briefly look at is the Stoics. Established in the early third century BC, founded by Zeno of Citium in Athens, "The philosophy asserts that virtue (meaning, chiefly, the four cardinal virtues of self-control, courage, justice, and wisdom) is happiness, and it is our perceptions of things-rather than the things themselves-that cause most of our trouble" (Holiday and Hanselman, 2016:3). "Stoicism teaches that we can't control or rely on anything outside what Epictetus called our 'reasoned choice'- our ability to use our reason to choose how we categorize, respond, and reorient ourselves to external events." (Holiday and Hanselman, 2016:3) These teachings all lead back to how we can put these ideas into practice in order to live the good life: "Stoic ethics indicated that if a perfectly wise, i.e. virtuous, man saw his child in danger of drowning, he would try to save it;

but that if he failed he would accept this without feeling distress or pity, and without his happiness being diminished. Since everything that happened is governed by divine providence, his failure must have been for the best, even if he could not understand why.” (Honderich, 1995:852) The ancient Greeks, “placed considerable emphasis on material achievement... Aristotle had maintained the relevance of bodily and material goods.” (Honderich, 1995:853) The Stoics disagreed: “The Stoics reacted against such views, still within the eudemonistic framework, by insisting that all that matters is our attempts to do what is right; health and wealth are naturally preferable to sickness and poverty, and we should pursue them if we do not wrong others thereby.” (Honderich, 1995:853). But the Stoics understand that achieving these ‘better’ things isn’t always possible therefore, we should accept what happens if we don’t succeed.

Rather than modifying our beliefs as the Stoics suggests, the sceptics challenge the very idea that this will enable us to live well, “Skepticism, as Sextus reports its self-definition, is “an ability [*dunamis*] to set up an opposition of appearance and thoughts, in any way at all, an ability from which welcome, through the equal force [*isostheneia*] of the opposing statements and states of affairs, first into suspension [*epoche*] and after that into freedom from disturbance [*ataraxia*]” (PH 1.8)” (Nussbaum, 2018:285), but this question of what can you learn from scepticism if they hold no beliefs arises, “Sextus’ cogent answer is, one is learning a capability, a know-how; one learns how to do something, namely, to set up oppositions among impressions and beliefs.” (Nussbaum, 2018:286) Scepticism holds that this ability is just an ordinary and natural capability. ““Skepticism is the ability that sets up oppositions of impressions and thoughts” – and it is then added that skepticism, so defined, in fact happens to lead to equipoise, suspension, and ataraxia.” (Nussbaum, 2018:286)

Lastly, there is Epicureanism. Established in 306 BC, Epicurus states that for the good life, the end is happiness, and happiness is defined, as David Konstan points out, in a very specific way: happiness is that which results “from absence of physical pain and mental disturbance”. (Konstan, 2018) Epicurus claimed, “...the unacknowledged fear of death and punishment as the primary cause of anxiety among human beings, and anxiety in turn as the source of extreme and irrational desires”. (Konstan, 2018) and that, “The elimination of the fears and corresponding desires would leave, people free to pursue the pleasures both physical and mental, to which they are naturally drawn, and to enjoy the peace of mind that is consequent upon their regular expected and achieved satisfaction.” (Konstan, 2018)

This is the basic ideas of these three Hellenistic schools. But why is this information relevant for this investigation? Firstly, these are some of the most renowned philosophical schools whose teachings can still be seen within modern day society and are still largely taught within academic philosophy. When thinking about ethics and this pursuit of the good life, these are the kinds of teachings and schools which instantly come to mind or are taught first as they are all linked to this notion of the good life. But how practical are these kinds of teachings for a modern-day society who is searching for a way to pursue the good life? Instead of focusing on philosophical schools which seem to aim at there being a universal standard in which one can follow to achieve this good life, there are others which present their ethics in a different way. A way which may be more practical for a more contemporary

society. When discussing this notion of a modern-day society, I am directing more towards western society in the 21st century who want to look towards philosophy as a way to better their lives or to find guidance on living this good life, a life which feels fulfilling and satisfying.

Michel de Montaigne is one of these philosophers who presents, I shall argue, a better way of doing ethics, namely through his use of his own life as a source for his reflections. Biography becomes vital for the development of an approach to living. Montaigne was a 16th century French philosopher whose writing and his philosophy, centres on himself, and the life which he led, including the ideas which he presents in order to establish a way to live life well. His focus is around this idea of philosophy shaping the good life. This will also be the focus of this thesis.

Who Montaigne was writing to is important to consider, and this is the case for any philosophical theory which aims at discussing ideas on living the good life. Sometimes, this good life isn't achievable for all since the audience may be tailored for a specific group of people. Namely, scholars may be more inclined to aim their ideas and theories towards their students. Therefore, who Montaigne's audience is, is a highlighted importance which I shall be addressing first as his Essays don't come across as a philosophical text which is necessarily aimed at any reader, or specifically a reader at all.

His audience was himself, "You have here, Reader, a book whose faith can be trusted, a book which warns you from the start that I have set myself no other end but a private family one." (Montaigne, 2003:lxiii) But when talking about this Reader he is more than likely directing it towards the 16th century Europeans who would have been able to get hold of his text during this time if his work happened to have been published (although his audience is never clarified within his text)

Unlike these other ethical philosophers concerned with the good life or ethical schools, Montaigne is not mentioned much within academic philosophy. To an extent he could be considered as a lost philosopher due to this lack of consideration. He becomes an unknown philosopher, despite being one of the most renowned writers who talks about himself and presents himself within his writing, "Montaigne has slowly eroded away, blown to dust like any old monument." (Regier, 1994:141) He takes his private life and brings it out into the public domain while establishing a way to live well. He offers us 'the proof' that his ideas and way of life is effective: "Authors communicate themselves to the public by some peculiar mark foreign to themselves; I – the first ever to do so – by my universal being, not as a grammarian, poet or jurisconsult but as Michel de Montaigne. If all complain that I talk too much about myself, I complain that they never even think about their own selves." (Montaigne, 2003:208) However, Montaigne's relationship with his readers is an unusual one. As noted in the preface, he was writing nothing but a portrait of himself, which was private and for family and friends. Although, at times he seems to direct his work to a literary public, "Describing himself as an intellectual half-caste – neither an ignorant peasant nor a learned philosopher – he wonders what kind of reader will accept his essays." (Wadsworth, 1970:21) Later, he seems to be writing for a higher class of people as he writes, "We live and deal with the common people; if their commerce wearies us, if we

disdain to apply ourselves to their humble, common souls – and the humble, common ones are often well-governed as the most refined.” (Montaigne, 2003:924) There is a vagueness in who his audience is. Sometimes he seems to be directing his work towards a specific group, other times it seems to just be a passing thought, open for anyone to read. Throughout his Essays, Montaigne never seems to address who his intended audience is. This may be down to it being for himself, although how he writes sometimes seems to be aimed at a particular group.

It seems that, it isn't until book III where Montaigne addresses his intended audience more, “He tells us that he is suspicious of any widespread popularity... but he is pleased to find favour with a more cultivated public.” (Wadsworth, 1970:25) However, the uncertainty and the wide range of audience he tried to attract with his Essays may be linked to a theme, which will be discussed later. There may have been an “eloquent expression of loneliness, together with his reiterated hope that some reader of his book may be attracted to him and become his friend.” (Wadsworth 1970:25) His original intention was not to publish a book, and that his essays were solely for himself, a diary, a collection of thoughts. But as his essays progressed, an almost imaginary audience was brought through. Later, we will see how Montaigne's original catalyst for his Essays being written was through the death of his best friend, La Boetie, and therefore there seems to be this element of loneliness which triggered Montaigne to use writing as an escape. This might highlight as to what his audience seems to be uncertain and everchanging, “Montaigne was speaking both to himself and to an imaginary audience of kindred souls. He was engaged in an act of friendship.” (Wadsworth, 1970:27) This gives his Essays this element of intimacy, which is projected throughout his essays.

Montaigne offers us, namely 21st century Westerners looking for guidance on how to live this good life, the trust which we need to believe that a particular way of life is achievable. Yet despite all of this, he is rarely taught, or mentioned when concerning the pursuit of the good life. Those who concern themselves with Montaigne tend to be contemporary writers who engage with this biographical writing. Sarah Bakewell and Ann Hartle, for example, do in-depth analysis on his work which will be presented within this research. He isn't a philosopher who one would think to turn to in order to establish a way to live well. He is largely ignored by academic philosophers¹. Hartle and Bakewell are examples of writers who are reclaiming Montaigne. Their concern for his relevance for philosophy is what drives my study. They show that his idea of the good life and how it can be achieved is anchored in the life and body of the philosopher.

What is the good, happy lived life? There are many definitions as we have seen from the Hellenistic school as to what the good life is and what it constitutes to. For Montaigne states that human happiness is living happily but living happily in his own standards since his ethics was for himself. His own ideas as to what constitutes for a good life is different to what others may decide. And for Montaigne, human happiness for him seems to come from

¹ More contemporary writers, such as Michael Ignatieff new book (January 2022) engages with Montaigne and the way he did his philosophy. This suggests that the use of Montaigne and the point being made within this research is starting to gain traction with philosophers.

this notion of tranquillity, but tranquil in his own standards. Since he emphasised on knowing oneself through the art of assessing our own lives. Further he states, “It is my conviction that what makes for human happiness is not, as Antisthenes said, dying happily but living happily.” (Montaigne, 2003:920) As show later, Montaigne projects this notion of naturalness within one’s life in order to achieve and live this good life. That the good life shouldn’t be forced and that we should aim at doing things we’d naturally do while incorporating this element of self-judgement and self-analyse the life we are living. That through trial and error, we will determine what the happy, well lived life is for us. Within reason.² But this concern with the self and the life of the philosopher may seem irrelevant. When looking at philosophy and philosophical theories there is rarely much concern for the actual philosopher and the life in which they lived. But why is this even important? What does it add to a philosophical theory or philosophical knowledge?

Costica Bradatan in his ‘Dying for Ideas’ discusses the relevance to the life of the philosopher and why this is just as important as their theory: “I would say that the locus of philosophy, the place where it dwells, is not the book or the academic paper, but the body of the philosopher.” (Bradatan, 2015:31) He highlights how it’s the philosopher themselves which is the important thing here. A theory wouldn’t have been established without the philosopher. By looking into the life of the philosopher and how they lived gives a more grounded understanding of the work in which they produced. When we turn to Montaigne and investigate his life we can see where his ideas on coping with death, the importance of friendship in order to live well, how one needs to allow time for themselves all originate from. Even by being able to see how his ideas were formed through his practice of philosophy and walking and how he lived out his philosophy gives us a much better understanding to the shaping of his ideas. Montaigne takes this approach one step further by writing about himself for his philosophy, “If a philosophy is validated only to the extent that it is embodied in the philosophers’ life, then that life is intrinsically philosophical, and examining it is not unlike studying a philosophical text.” (Bradatan, 2015:31) The two are linked, philosophy and the life of the philosopher are interwoven and therefore shouldn’t been seen as something separate or irrelevant.

This puts Montaigne in a good position when writing about himself. He shows his readers how he lived through his philosophy, but he also shows us how he too preferred to engage in philosophical reading which too focused on the life of the philosopher, “for I consider the lives and fortunes of the great teachers of mankind no less carefully than their ideas and doctrines.” (Montaigne, 2003:467) This indicates that the ideas he presents are tested by him/are something which he lives by himself, thus making his ideas seem a more trustworthy theory to follow if one is wanting guidance on how to live. It appears that he wouldn’t want to write about something which wasn’t something which one could follow. He wants to avoid giving a false account as to how we can practise philosophy in order to live well: “a flawed biography can do more damage to the philosopher’s reputation than a

² Later in this thesis, this idea of naturally living the good life for ‘us’, one which is tailored for the individual will be analyzed more. As arguments which deal with someone thinking an immoral way of life may determine this as a better, natural way of life for them.

flawed argument; if the philosopher does not practice the philosophy he professes, he invalidates it.” (Bradatan, 2015:31) This is a problem which many philosophers may face which we will investigate within this research.

For these reasons, I will be making Montaigne the focus of this research. My aim is to bring him into the spotlight, and to highlight the significance of biographical writing for the pursuit of the good life. During the research for this thesis, Ann Hartle’s ideas and reading of Montaigne has inspired my own with regards to how Montaigne, in his Essays, seems to show how there is a better way of doing ethical philosophy: there is a new way. Let us begin by discussing Montaigne and his ‘New Mode’ of Philosophy, a term used by Ann Hartle, which he introduces in his essays.

Ann Hartle and the ‘New Mode’ of Philosophy

Montaigne’s Essays are a “form of this new mode of philosophy which separates the man from the philosopher: the man is not essentially but rather only accidentally a philosopher. The separation of the man from the philosopher is actually, then, the humanization of the philosopher through the recovery of a common humanity.” (Hartle, 2013:xiii)

Ann Hartle discusses how Montaigne introduces this ‘New Mode’ of philosophy within his ‘Essays’. He creates this modern philosophy where he goes against the Aristotelian act of contemplation, “In his rejection of Aristotelian metaphysics, Montaigne combats especially the conceit that the philosopher is most fully human and therefore divine through his participation in the divine activity of contemplation.” (Hartle, 2013:xiii) Montaigne brings forth this notion of how there is the physical location of ideas present in one’s life as it is lived. Montaigne focusses on this humanization of philosophy. How they aren’t a separate thing, “Modern philosophy understands itself as a human, not a divine, activity and therefore abandons contemplation as the philosophical act.” (Hartle, 2013:xiii) The Aristotelian notion that the philosophical act is contemplation and that, “Contemplation is regarded as the highest human activity because, through it, the mind escapes the temporal and is united with the divine, eternal, and unchanging: the philosopher becomes divine.” (Hartle, 2012:799) Montaigne understands how seeing the philosopher as someone more divine makes him inhuman which goes against what philosophy is supposed to do, failing to understand how the world and humans work and separates the philosopher from other men: “For Montaigne, however, perfection is the enjoyment of “our own” condition: he considers man as he is in himself, “without striving.” Montaigne replaces contemplation (the divine activity) with judgement (the human activity that is all “one’s own”). “(Hartle, 2013:xiv)

Philosophy and the good life emerge from such reflections as something which is attainable for everyone. Through this act of contemplation which Aristotle discusses he makes it clear how the pursuit of the good life isn’t widely attainable. Immediately we are confronted with the difference between such an approach and the contemplation advocated by Aristotle. The philosopher is separated from other men, but also philosophy is separated from the human. Aristotle presents the problem with the professional philosopher which he is and how his mode of philosophy isn’t one which is practical, but rather for the purpose of

academics - contrasting with Montaigne and this notion of the accidental philosopher which is much more raw and instinctive. Hence why reference will be made in this research to these professional philosophers (especially Aristotle) to show the contrasting differences between the professional philosophers and those which create this new way in order to do philosophy.

Montaigne's Difficulties to Aristotle

Throughout this research, several differences and similarities will be presented between Montaigne and Aristotle. It'll be clear to see the common ideas which are presented within their ethics on how to live well and how they share many common themes and areas of importance. Despite these similarities though, the question of why there is a clear lack of mention of Aristotle within the 'Essays' (which we will discover) is raised. The main differences which are obvious to see between Montaigne and Aristotle don't so much lie within their ethics, rather everything to do with how their ethics came about. Their upbringings, education, the kind of lives they lived, the way they wrote, the way they established their ideas, and the main one being this notion of the academic vs the accidental. It seems like everything but their ideas to an extent is where they are presented as complete opposites. Mainly as they were both concerned with the good life, but they had different ways about achieving it. This is where Montaigne's difficulties may lie. Not within what he was necessarily writing about (although this still plays quite a big part which we will discuss) instead who he was and how he was writing seems to be where the problem is, "The Aristotelian view identifies the philosopher with the act of contemplation: the man is essentially the philosopher." (Hartle, 2013:xiii) This is where Montaigne raises problems with this view, Montaigne didn't agree with this act of contemplation. Rather he describes it as judgement (Hartle, 2013) His work is described, by Ann Hartle, as a 'New Mode' of philosophy, where Montaigne focusses more on this separation and humanization of philosophy. Something which seems much more natural and less forced. Hartle discusses how Montaigne makes the Essays sociable, essentially allowing his philosophy to become sociable, "Traditional philosophy, in contrast dehumanizes the philosopher because it destroys his sympathy with other men." (Hartle, 2013:xvi) Montaigne branched out and did something new, which opens up problems for more traditional philosophers such as Aristotle, "Montaigne overcomes the Aristotelian notion of natural mastery by separating the master from his powers, bringing him down from his lofty throne to "essay" himself with other men." (Hartle, 2013:xiii)

Montaigne's new mode sees humans' pursuit of the good life not as something to be achieved through contemplation, but rather through our own experiences and judgement of everyday life, whether that's our private life or societal life while being surrounded by others, "That then is why, when we make a judgement of any individual action, we must consider a great many circumstances as well as the man as a whole who performed it before we give it a name." (Montaigne, 2003:477) He sees that through the discovery of the social, both man and philosophy become interwoven. But also, how man and philosopher are the same. We are all accidental philosophers.

Montaigne states, “Only after my life was settled in its activity did I learn which philosophy was governing it! A new character: a chance philosopher, not a premeditated one!” (Montaigne, 2003:614) How we live our lives isn’t something which can be written out, we have to let things happen and figure it out as we go along. Other translations explain this better. As Ann Hartle uses within her text: “‘a new figure: an unpremeditated and accidental philosopher’”. (Montaigne quoted by Hartle, 2013:xi) Montaigne states how the way he has chosen to live his life and write his essays has led him to be this ‘accidental philosopher’. It allows for the humanization of philosophy, which the premeditated philosophy seems to remove “The unpremeditated and accidental philosopher, in contrast, is the self-ordered soul who is free on his judgements to go beyond common – or traditional - opinions.” (Hartle, 2013:78) leading to this sense of freedom within philosophy. Anyone can practice philosophy; anyone can pursue the good life.

This new mode of philosophy is one which would flourish within a modern society. By being freer (in the sense that there is no rules or conditions to follow in order to achieve this good life) it allows for this diverse way of living and attempting to pursue the good life which isn’t limiting. Although this suggests some difficulties between the academic and accidental philosopher (such as Montaigne with Aristotle) It can make philosophers such as Aristotle seem outdated and not accepting of the diversity of human life making his theory seem as something that is impractical to live by. Montaigne doesn’t agree with traditional philosophy, as he sees it, “dehumanizes the philosopher because it destroys his sympathy with other men.” (Hartle, 2013:xvi) Montaigne instead sees philosophy as something sociable, something more inclusive.

“The philosopher, in the tradition, believes that he alone bears “the entire form of the human condition.” In accordance with the traditional hierarchy, the philosopher alone is the complete actualization of the human form because he participates in the divine activity of contemplation.” (Hartle, 2013:77) This definition therefore dehumanizes the philosopher, separating him from others. As we will notice later within this research, academic philosophers such as Aristotle show the flaws within their own theories as the Nicomachean Ethics only enables some people to attain the good life. Just as this act of contemplation is only done by ‘the philosopher’ but this isn’t how philosophy should be. But Montaigne is not intending to form a philosophical theory, but rather he presents a collection of essays on a disparate set of themes. His intentions were never to form a philosophical theory. Just a collection of essays, about himself, for himself as a way to analyse himself and gain a better understanding with his own self-knowledge, “That is why philosophy itself must be refounded and reformed, why Montaigne becomes the new figure of the philosopher. To paraphrase Hume: Montaigne is a philosopher but, in the midst of all his philosophy, he is still a man.” (Hartle, 2013:78)

The philosopher shouldn’t be seen as a divine being who is higher than other men. Montaigne writes at the end of his ‘Essays’, “It is an accomplishment, absolute and as it were God-like, to know how to enjoy our being as we ought.” (Montaigne, 2003:1268) this suggests that Montaigne is stating that it is in enjoying our natural lives that we become God-like, rather than through cultivating a more academic form of contemplation. He

further adds, "The most beautiful of lives to my liking are those which conform to the common measure, human and ordinate, without miracles though and without rapture." (Montaigne, 2003:1269) For Montaigne, natural human life is the most beautiful, "The most beautiful motions of our soul are those which are least tense and most natural: and the best of its occupations are the least forced." (Montaigne, 2003:924) That life and attempting to live a better life shouldn't be forced, something which seems to put pressure on one. But rather a life that just is. We should learn and make mistakes within our lives, that we should experience many things and ways in which we can attempt to live life. Our life and how it naturally occurs and progresses over time is the most beautiful and natural. The ways in which academic philosophers attempt to project the pursuit of the good life, in this structured and precise way seems to take away from this naturalness of what life should be. The pursuit of this good life seems to dehumanize life itself. Instead, the focus should lean more towards living our lives in a natural way, not one where we create a set of conditions which should be followed in order to achieve the well lived life. This act of contemplation is the dehumanization of not just philosophy but life itself. It's not natural and therefore isn't something which should be final aim. As Montaigne continuously points out within his 'Essays', life and human emotion are inconsistent and unpredictable. We aren't always going to do good or behave in the best way. But that doesn't necessarily mean we are failing at the pursuit of the good life. It means we are living the most natural human life.

Both Ann Hartle and Costica Bradatan present the importance of biographical writing and the importance of what Montaigne does with his Essays. Throughout this research, we will be able to see elements and parallels between Montaigne's ideas and many other ancient philosophers, and we will be able to see why he deserves this title of the 'accidental philosopher', and why it is most pertinent for how we today might live the good life.

The good life isn't something we can read about, it is something which we have to work on, to live through, something which is personal to us and tailored for our own diverse lives. The sense of the 'universal good' disappears and the diversity and inconsistency of human life is uncovered and brought forward as something that is to be acknowledged and accepted in order to live the good life as a free individual.

The Academic Philosopher

The 'academic philosopher' today is brought about through the contemporary professionalisation of the academy where the philosopher is the one who is employed in a university. This professionalism then goes on to shape how the canon is understood – where abstract ideas, divorced from the life of the philosopher as an ordinary human being, come to be seen as what it is to do philosophy, rather than the way we reflect explicitly on the lives we as individuals are living.

Let's consider the life of Aristotle for example, one of the most well-known philosophers who is someone who conformed to this model of philosophy:

Aristotle was born in Stagira, Greece, in 384BCE. At the age of 17 years, Aristotle was sent to Athens to study at Plato's Academy. This was the beginning for Aristotle and his philosophical journey, this is where the very groundwork for his ideas would have been established. Aristotle was greatly influenced by Plato and by the work of Socrates who was Plato's teacher.

Much of Aristotle's own work is a reflection/response to his predecessors, he was keen to move away from their views and develop his own ideas and create more of a name for himself - especially regarding branches of philosophy including metaphysics, philosophy of mind and natural philosophy (Brown, 2009) Aristotle studied under Plato at his Academy up until Plato's death, which he then left Athens.

A few years later he went on to tutor Philip II son, who later would become known as Alexander the Great. Aristotle liked to build a particular kind of relationship with his student [to be discussed later this importance of friendship], like Plato did for him. Being able to be close to your students would help benefit your thinking and meant that you were able to expand on ideas together. This idea of 'Friendship' was extremely important to Aristotle, to which he formed a strong friendship with Alexander the Great – this may have started when Aristotle tutored him. Aristotle even went on to advise some of Alexander's decisions when he became emperor. Tutoring Alexander may have also influenced him to go on to open his own school as well, after experiencing a close relationship with his own tutor.

Aristotle, after being greatly inspired by Plato, travels back to Athens and opens his own school, the Lyceum, in 335BC. By doing this Aristotle was able to dedicate more time to his philosophical idea, but he also established a new teaching style which goes on to symbolize some of his ideas relating to the good life and how to live well. His Lyceum was a Peripatetic School - which translates into the Greek word 'peripatos', meaning 'stroll' (Amadio, 2020) It got this name as it was believed that Aristotle would stroll the grounds of his school with his students, where they would be establishing his ideas and discussing different philosophical views together. Aristotle's ethics is concerned with living well, and what we can do to live well. This idea of him walking and talking with his students at his Lyceum suggests that there is a form of relationship at the heart of his methods: an idea I will examine in more detail later. His method of teaching suggests that Aristotle was keen to build a relationship with his students,

benefitting the way in which he and his students would think, and how their ideas are being worked out in a relationship.

Little is known about Aristotle's personal life. Diogenes a biographer of ancient Greek Philosophers, briefly comments of Aristotle's life. He reports that Aristotle must have possessed significant personal wealth, "...dressed flashy, wearing a fashionable hairstyle and a number of rings...a furnished house...three female slaves..." (Humphreys, N/A) There wasn't much certainty on how much of what Diogenes said was correct. According to Honderich, "his accounts are unreliable, and sometimes incoherent." (Honderich, 1995:202) This could be largely due to him inferring information from others around that time and in general not having a full insight into Aristotle's personal life. Diogenes lived just after Aristotle's time, therefore would have been getting his information from second hand sources, whether that was hearsay or from people that knew Aristotle or knew of him, as he did not know Aristotle personally. Making the information he was writing about questionable and might not be entirely valid or true as it was essentially information on what people had told him without any real evidence.

We do know that his father, Nicomachus, served as a doctor to the court of Amyntas of Macedon (Brown, 2009). He served Philip II, who was the conqueror of most of Greece. His father was Amyntas III, who died in 370 BCE, was the King of the ancient kingdom of Macedon. From this, you can gather that Aristotle's family would have been wealthy because of his father's profession and who he worked for (Walbank 2020) From this, we can see how what we know about Aristotle's life seems largely irrelevant to how we read his philosophy. This then masks the authenticity of his ideas, as we don't know whether they are attainable for all or just for those who, like him, formed the elite of Athenian society.

Not everyone would have been able to attend one of the philosophical schools such as Aristotle's Lyceum. He would have taught likeminded wealthy men and therefore he would have been able to write a theory which was attainable for them and agreed with their ideals. Affecting how authentic their work actually was. As we will see later, Montaigne too lived this wealthy lifestyle, but within his essays we can see that he was much more attuned to the real world in the fact that we get a sense of how his ideas are located in his experience of life: an experience that isn't defined just by his wealth but by some of the basic experiences of being human.

As we can see, what we know about Aristotle's life is limited. There is a self-understanding that differentiates Montaigne from Aristotle: what we know of Aristotle, the man he was, is from the words of others. For a society like ours, which is focused on the individual, in Montaigne's text we get a much stronger sense of his own life because he writes about it so intimately. The life of Aristotle and other academic philosophers would have been severely detached from the philosophy in which they wrote about. Causing this sense of disingenuous within their work, this is the opposite to what these 'accidental' philosophers have such as Montaigne. When looking into Aristotle's life, we have to turn to other sources and writers who have been able to gather information

about him. This contrasts to how we will be able to get a sense of Montaigne's life as we are able to see this within his own writing since he was the subject of his own work. His life, opinions and the way and which he accidentally incorporates his philosophy into his life is all present within the 'Essays'.

Montaigne: the accidental philosopher.

The discussion of the difference between the academic and accidental philosopher is an important one as these essentially occupy the extremes. The academic philosopher (such as Aristotle) is one who establishes a theory to be taught, who is seen as professional and actively chooses to pursue philosophy consciously in their lives. The accidental philosopher is one who accidentally incorporates philosophy in their lives. The philosophical life naturally gets integrated into their lives, making philosophy more natural and part of one's life.

Everyone has this potential of being this accidental philosopher. They live out philosophy, their mindset is unintentionally a philosophical one; their natural ideas resemble parallels of those of these academic philosophers. This idea of the accidental philosopher is one which should be more present and to an extent should be seen as the real way of doing philosophy

This is where Montaigne can be seen as breaking a philosophical taboo by becoming the subject of his own work. Within philosophy ideas that what is aimed at is generality and universality make the personal and the concrete problematic. Grace Jantzen discusses this notion of the concrete within her feminist philosophy: "Returning to the 'concrete roots of life' through the symbolic of natality mean that our orientation towards becoming will be one where divinity does not require an economy of the same but, can celebrate alterity while still grounded in empathy". (Jantzen, 1998:150) She aims to put the concrete and particular in centre place. Montaigne breaking away from this philosophical discourse puts him in an interesting position and makes him worthy of study. Comparing him with Aristotle allows for this problem between the personal and concrete within philosophy to be opened and investigated.

There is a connection between these two philosophers though, in that it can be seen within Montaigne's writings that he has difficulties with Aristotle due to the lack of use to him within his work, despite obvious similarities, "The frequent disparagement of Aristotle which we find in the *Essais* may momentarily conceal the closeness of agreement that existed between these two minds; the scarcity of direct citations may further mislead us into believing that their differences were too great to admit of more abundant borrowings." (Menut, 1934:242). Part of my investigation will be to establish whether these difficulties in fact belie a common approach. They are both concerned with ethics. Despite this difficulty which Montaigne has with Aristotle – the details of which we will consider later in this study -, there is potential common ground within their ideas on how to live well. Which suggests the possibility of bringing academic and accidental into conversation.

Montaigne allows for this personal side (the domestic and private) to be combined into philosophy, "Montaigne not only reorders philosophy to the domestic and private, he also brings the domestic and private out into the public realm. In so doing, he refuses to

hide out of shame for mere life. This emergence of the private into the public is the bringing into being of modern society.” (Hartle, 2013:18)

Much of this research will be driven by Michel de Montaigne as we are able to get a better understanding of Montaigne and his openness within his work, “For I am not sure that everyone will understand what entitles me to do so: that I must have more freedom in this than others do since I am specifically writing about myself and (as in the case of my other activities) about my writing.” (Montaigne, 2003:1213) The fact that Montaigne allows for the importance of knowing the internal lives of the philosophers and the significance of biographical writing is something which creates this ‘new mode’ discussed previously. Within his writing, Montaigne is open, he exposes himself to a degree, allowing his readers to get a proper understanding as to the kind of man he was, or at least holding out the possibility that we understand the kind of man he was and informs us why he does philosophy the way he does, through making himself his own topic, “All men gaze ahead at what is confronting them: I turn my gaze inwards, planting it there and keeping it there. Everybody looks before himself: I look inside myself; I am concerned with no one but me; without ceasing I reflect on myself, I watch myself, savour myself.” (Montaigne, 2003:747) Yet despite this natural way in which Montaigne writes his philosophy and incorporates it into his life, these academic and professional philosophers seem to be the main ones who we turn to when looking into ethics. So, who was Michel de Montaigne? And how does his life lead us to the idea of the accidental philosopher, a model of philosophy that is, I argue, so relevant for achieving the good life today? – next I will go on to discuss the life of this philosopher and the influence in which he had.

Who was Michel de Montaigne?

Michel Eyquem Seigneur de Montaigne was born in 1533 at Chateau Montaigne, near Bordeaux, France. He was brought up within a very wealthy family, his father being Pierre Eyquem who served as the Mayor of Bordeaux. From a young age Montaigne seemed to have education thrown at him: his first language was Latin and he did not learn French until he was 6 years of age. When he was younger, he was tutored at home in accordance with his father’s ideas of pedagogy. He went on to study Law at the University of Toulouse. In 1554 after he finished his studies, he went on to get his first position in law, working at the Cour des Aides in Perigueux. He was later transferred to the Bordeaux parliament. Unlike many philosophers, Montaigne took the route of Law rather than being a scholar, though we might note the overlap between jurisprudence and philosophy. He delved into the career of Law (although, this could have been largely influenced by his father – following in his footsteps) with no intention, at first, of writing his ‘Essays’, and when he did, they weren’t written with the intension of being taught, rather they were for his own personal use and self-reflection. This could be seen as supporting the idea of accidental philosophy as a model for us all, it suggests the richness of an inner life shaped by the kind of reflection Montaigne models. (this is an idea which will be analysed later).

In 1570, Montaigne sold his seat in parliament and retired. This was possibly due to an accident where he nearly died, although there were other reasons: “he had just been rejected for a post he had applied for in the court’s higher chamber, probably because political enemies had blocked him. It would have been more unusual to appeal against this, or fight it; instead, he bailed out. Perhaps he did so in anger, or disillusionment.” (Bakewell, 2010:23) These events led him to wanting him to live his life differently. This signified his departure from public life, and he devoted the rest of his life to meditating, writing, reading. This is when he started writing his Essays.

Influence of the Renaissance

Montaigne lived through the French Renaissance and witnessed its effects, “The Renaissance was a period of ‘rebirth’ in arts, science and European society. It was a time of transition from the ancient world to the modern.” (Szalay, 2016) With this also came a questioning about the long-term beliefs and old texts of philosophy. Philosophy was bought back into the world, “intense interest in and learning about classical antiquity was ‘reborn’ after the Middle Ages, in which classical philosophy was largely ignored or forgotten.” (Szalay, 2016) There was a reappraisal of ancient texts and a challenge made to some of the ideas that dominated society. “Renaissance thinkers considered the Middle Ages to have been a period of cultural decline. They sought to revitalize their culture through re-emphasizing classic texts and philosophies. They expanded and interpreted them, creating their own style of art, philosophy and scientific inquiry.” (Szalay, 2016) In Montaigne’s text, you are able to see much influence from the Hellenistic schools, although a lot of the time, the ideas in which he presents accidentally and unintentionally resemble those of the great thinkers of the ancient Greek and Roman times.

The French Renaissance had great influence on Montaigne’s writing and life. Montaigne is often described as a Renaissance Humanist, “... Montaigne could have been ranked among the most erudite humanists of the XVIth century” (Foglia *et al*, 2019) Such a position required the scholar to study ancient Greek/Roman texts with the goal of promoting new norms and values in society. However, I don’t believe that this was ever Montaigne’s intention. He was not a scholar as such, he did not write for the purpose of his work to be taught to others or even with the main intention of being a piece of philosophical work, F. P. Bowman suggests that Montaigne’s attitude towards the ancient authors actually sets him apart from the traditional humanists: “his approach to his sources is quite different from that of the High Renaissance; he possesses no adulation for classical authors, does not hesitate to criticise them, does not feel that the antiquity of a source gives it any greater venerability.” (Logan, 1975:618)

Indeed, Montaigne was critical of his time. Due to his career, he was very much involved in the struggles and preoccupations of the Renaissance. He was fully engrossed in what was happening. Sankovitch states that Montaigne wrote about himself: “in order to arrive at certain possible truths concerning man and the human condition, in a period of ideological strife and division when all possibility of truth seemed illusory and treacherous.” (Sankovitch, 2021:N/A)

By understanding Montaigne and the influence of the Renaissance on his life, we can begin to see where some of his ideas would have originated from. How the Renaissance had an impact on his life and philosophical thought. How this flourishing level of thought created uncertainty. Montaigne wanted to know himself, he took this opportunity during this time to learn about himself more and through this wrote his essays as a way to question his self-reflections to establish a way of life.

‘The Essays’

What makes Montaigne become this ‘accidental philosopher’? Montaigne presents us with his thoughts, feelings, historical stories along with his own stories, all compiled together within his text. A text which possesses a vast collection of essays – all with the aim of trying to present a way of life, “All the glory I claim for my life is to have lived a tranquil one – not tranquil according to the standards of Metrodorus or Arcesilas or Aristippus but my own. Since Philosophy has been able to discover no good method leading to tranquillity which is common to all men, let each man seek his own one as an individual.” (Montaigne, 2003:707)

His ‘Essays’ are an attempt to live well, offering the reflections and experiences in which Montaigne had within his life, composed over the space of 20 years, “I myself am the subject of my book.” (Montaigne, 2003:lxiii) He doesn’t offer advice or consider the ways in which humans live or ought to live. The purpose of his essays wasn’t necessarily to teach us something new. Instead, he presents and discusses issues within everyday life in a way to which we can relate. His reflections enable the reader to engage with life on a deeper level. They allow us time to reflect and understand that maybe there isn’t a particular way of life to live as such. There aren’t specific rules of virtue which we should follow. More that we should take life as it comes. He offers himself within his Essays as a way for people to learn from it. Essentially making it so essaying himself, although is a private matter, through the essays it becomes a public one too, “Montaigne desires to know himself, and to cultivate his judgement, and yet at the same time he seeks to offer his way of life as salutary alternatives to those around him.” (Edelman, N/A).

The main aim of his essays is the pursuit of his own self-knowledge. His ‘Essays’ are constructed for his own personal matter as he wanted to spend more time focusing on himself, “We have lived quite long enough for others: let us live at least this tail end of life for ourselves. Let us bring our thoughts and reflections back to ourselves and back to our own well-being.” (Montaigne, 2003:271). By writing the essays he took upon the challenge to “...attempt to understand the human condition in general. This involves reflecting on the belief, values, and behaviours of human beings as represented both in literary, historical, and philosophical texts, and in his own experience.” (Edelman, N/A) His main aim above all is to exercise his judgement, “I am not so much worried about how I am in the minds of other men as how I am to myself. I want to be enriched by me not by my borrowings of others. Those outside us only see events and external appearances: anyone can put on a good outward show while inside he is full of fear and fright. They do not see my mind: they can only see the looks on my face.” (Montaigne,

2003:711) He did not aim at trying to be correct or impose his beliefs on how one ought to live their lives. The Essays were filled with words that, “soften and moderate the rashness of our propositions’, and which embody what the critic Hugo Friedrich has called his philosophy of ‘unassumingness’. They are not extra flourishes; they are Montaigne’s thoughts, at its purest.” (Bakewell, 2011:128) Purely for himself, for his own benefits and to educate himself, “since philosophy had failed to determine a secure path towards happiness.” (Foglia *et al*, 2019) pushing for people to search for their own philosophy, suggesting that each individual is capable of doing so. We are all accidental philosophers.

His work and his ideas demonstrate a mixture of the four dominant schools of the Hellenistic period: Stoicism, Scepticism, Epicureanism and Cynicism. However, a large section is dominated by scepticism – this could possibly be due to the time in which he was writing. The French Renaissance caused much scepticism within society as the long-term beliefs in which many followed were crumbling around them as they were replaced with new ideas and teachings. Hence, there is quite a sceptic tone within Montaigne’s writing, to the point where he seems to found modern scepticism. Foglia discuss how his sceptical nature within the essays isn’t used intentionally for scepticism, “Montaigne’s scepticism is not a desperate one. On the contrary, it offers the reader a sort of jubilation which relies on the modest but effective pleasure of dismissing knowledge, thus making room for the exercise of one’s natural facilities.” (Foglia *et al*, 2019) An example: Montaigne writes his thoughts on humans’ sleeping and what we know, “Our rational souls accept notions and opinions produced during sleep, conferring on activities in our dreams the same approbation and authority as on our waking dreams.” (Montaigne, 2003:674) Descartes, in his Meditations makes a similar argument. Montaigne, further adds, “why should we therefore not doubt whether our thinking and acting are but another dream; our waking, some other species of sleep? (Montaigne, 2003:674) Montaigne, throughout his Essays presents this sceptic tone. Especially since he felt the need to turn to himself and exercise his own judgement to attempt to arise at some human truths.

But why is Montaigne so concerned with directing our attention to ourselves? Due to the French Renaissance and this rise of intellectual thought, any theories which came to light were constantly being replaced by new ones, Montaigne may have not wanted to give into this kind of process and may have seen that the best solution was to base things and our idea on how we experience them as individuals, not create teachings which eventually would go on to be disproved and replaced. We are essentially the catalysis of our experiences; therefore, this would be the best thing to write about, he felt more comfortable with trusting his own experiences and therefore chose to write about them, offering reflection.

Montaigne offers no theory: instead, he offers himself as a companion throughout life. He gives us a collection of essays in which you can read and find yourself. Within his essays, he offers reflection on many different themes: On Friendship, On Fear, On Moderation, On Practice, On Virtue, and many more. Many pieces bare close

resemblance to those of Aristotle, especially with regards to their ideas relating to friendship (which will be discussed later in this thesis) and hence begins this notion of him being this accidental philosopher where parallels to more ancient teaches start to be present, unintentionally.

A fascinating aspect of his freedom of thought is found in his discussion of what we would call today human rights. He addresses the rights of women, stating that the difference between men and women is mostly a product of society (Ben, 2014): "I say that male and female are cast in the same mould: save for education and custom the difference between them is not great." (Montaigne, 2003:1016) Montaigne also acknowledges that many other philosophers saw men and women being more similar than what is led on to be, one of these being Plato. This highlights some of the differences in which Montaigne has with other philosophers such as Aristotle who see women as inferior to men. For Aristotle, women couldn't do philosophy as they lacked the capability to do so. As Mulgan notes, "Aristotle has rejected Plato's path-breaking argument for the intellectual equality of women, arguing that women's natural place is in the home, a realm of inferior material production and reproduction." (Mulgan, 1994:180) Perhaps the accidental philosopher has more freedom to say what they think. They can grapple with issues in a more genuine way.

We find out in his 'Essays' that Montaigne was extremely wealthy, having his father the mayor of Bordeaux, then he went on to take that role, having his own estate etc. Living the wealthy lifestyle, it could be very easy to get caught up in all the luxuries and therefore, when establishing your ideas on how to live well, it might possibly only have the intention of being written and attainable for likewise members of society. Or there would be a lack of consideration and acknowledgement of everyone within society, this does not seem to be the case for Montaigne though as Montaigne doesn't seem to ignore the fact that he is a wealthy man [this idea will be discussed next]

In Montaigne's essay, 'On Experience' he discusses the teachings and upbringing which his father taught and exposed him to. Montaigne's father wanted him to understand and even help people in the lower class who needed him, not wanting him to get too high headed. His father had another goal from this, "... to bring me closer to the common-folk and to the sort of men who needed our help; he reckoned that I should be brought up to look kindly on the man who holds out his hand to me...the reason why he gave me godparents at baptism drawn from people of the most abject poverty was to bind and join me to them". (Montaigne, 2003:1249) It seemed like his father did not want him to become arrogant, like many would have been – this can be reflected in his essays and this idea on how to live. Montaigne is offering a form of philosophy built on his experience of society and with an openness that derives from his education. Anyone could pick up his collection of essays and practice the way of how to live regardless of societal position – he created an ethics that nearly everyone if not everyone would be able to engage in, to see themselves within his words and to reflect on their lives, the way that he did and assess the ways in which we live our lives. Montaigne is aware of the importance and the problems which wealth can create; he has experienced it first-

hand: "Epicurus said that being rich does not alleviate our worries: it changes them. And truly it is not want that produces avarice but plenty. I would like to tell you my experience of this" (Montaigne, 2003:66) Montaigne goes on to present his experiences which happened over the course of three changes of circumstances within his life.

The first period: "I spent with only a sporadic income, being at the orders of other people and dependent upon their help: I had no fixed allowance; nothing was laid down for me". (Montaigne, 2003:66) There was this level of uncertainty which this came with though. Montaigne continues, "And it seems to me that a rich man who is worried, busy and under necessary obligations is more wretched than a man who is simply poor." (Montaigne, 2003:68) Here, Montaigne is expressing his attitude towards the rich man and the stresses which seem to come with it.

Montaigne continues with the second period which he experienced within terms of wealth: "I did have money. Becoming attached to it. I soon set aside savings with were considerable for a man of my station". (Montaigne, 2003:68) From this, Montaigne makes out like this wealth was a good thing, something desirable. He continues to state how he kept his money a secret, "I made a secret of it: I, who dare talk so much about myself, never talked truthfully about my money." (Montaigne, 2003:68) He makes a point here, that despite how open and honest Montaigne is, a discussion on his wealth and money seemed something of issue, "The heavier my money the heavier my worries". (Montaigne, 2003:68) Despite this, Montaigne presents this worry within his essays.

Finally, the third period which was his most recent/current one within the time he was writing. The third, he claims: "is far more enjoyable, certainly, and also more orderly: I make my income and my expenditure run along in tandem." (Montaigne, 2003:70) This is a much better way in which Montaigne believed he could live after experiencing other ways of life which possessed much more wealth, "I live from day to day, pleased to be able to satisfy my present, ordinary needs." (Montaigne, 2003:70) He goes on to congratulate himself for making these adjustments to life, especially at an age where this greed of wealth was more likely to naturally occur. Montaigne, here, shows how he learnt through trial and error that wealth isn't necessarily a good thing. That is comes with negatives such as the stress and worries of it. These are the problems which wealth can create. This aids the way in which Montaigne does his ethics. Here, he has presented more of his life, parts which he would keep secret, to offer advice on how we can live our lives and how wealth isn't everything. Montaigne is potentially suggesting that this good life, which he advises within his Essays doesn't require a level of wealth. Just a matter of judgement of the self and being able to see where your life may need some adjusting. Despite the fact that Montaigne seems to bring forth this somewhat romantic notion of not being rich, he doesn't discuss what kind of affect this would have on the notion of the good/tranquil life. For someone who did not have any kind of wealth, how would the good life look for them? This is where this idea of the good life being down to the individual and their own tailored ideas of the good, well lived life are presented. For the good life for a wealthy man, is more than likely not the same for one

who did not have any kind of wealth. Montaigne seems to not consider how the good life would differ for someone with little to no wealth and that the process in which Montaigne undertook to live well, might not be enough for someone with little wealth to live the well lived life. There is vagueness within Montaigne's writing in areas such as this which can make his essays challenging at times when we want to turn to his ideas in order to establish a way to live well. There seems to be a lack of depth as to when considering the diverse range of people within the world or even within 16th century France and therefore allows critique to be put forward as to how achievable his ethics is for a wider range of individuals.

Writings

Montaigne's writing style is a complete contrast to this regular style. A general philosophical text would generally have an organised structure, where one chapter, paragraph or book, would flow into the next. Beginning with an introduction, what the philosopher was aiming to do within their text, followed by how they were going to do it – the arguments they make, and finishing with a conclusion. This is the general rule for any text or philosophical argument. The texts are generally clear and precise. Carefully written so the reader tends to understand where the text is going next. This is a complete contrast to Montaigne's writing style. His text is presented in a series of essays, not to be read in any particular order. He wrote in a rather rhetorical fashion where you could sometimes see a flow of consciousness within his thoughts, other times his thoughts would be staggered and chaotic: "what are these Essays if not a monstrosities and grotesques botched together from a variety of limbs having no defined shape, with an order sequence and proportion which are purely fortuitous?" (Montaigne, 2003:206).

By comparing Montaigne to Aristotle, we can see the contrasting styles between the general standard of an academic philosopher, and Montaigne, this accidental/ 'new mode' philosopher. Aristotle offers a step-by-step guide in which we can follow, his ethics is based around practical reasoning and what we can do to be a virtuous person and achieve the good life. Montaigne's work does not do this, he doesn't offer any framework for us to follow in order to live the good life, instead he offers the complete opposite. The essays are like a collection of thoughts, life experiences, readings he has engaged in, compiled together, "Colourful, practical and direct, and never intentionally obscure, he sets before us his modestly named Essays, his 'attempts' at sounding himself and the nature and duties of Man so as to discover a sane and humane manner of living." (Screech. M, 2003:vx)

The Influence of Seneca and Marcus Aurelius

Montaigne began composing his essays in 1572 – a couple of years after he retired. He was greatly influenced by Seneca, possibly even to the point where he retired because of Seneca's teachings. Shifting from the political to the philosophical was part of the ancient's advice, "The great Stoic Seneca repeatedly urged his fellow Romans to retire in order to 'find themselves'..." (Bakewell, 2011:29) and this seems to be exactly what

Montaigne went on to do. During this period, he seems to have confronted an existential crisis, one which reflects Seneca's warnings about what happens when you attempt to live the contemplative life (Seneca, 2008) Montaigne had much work which he wanted to do, especially with running his estate. However, it was nothing compared to the amount of work in which he was used to doing, "The inactivity generated strange thoughts and a 'melancholy humour' which was out of character for him." (Bakewell, 2011:30) This is how his essays went on to be born and the style in which he wrote.

There is much use of Seneca within his essays continuously quoting him throughout, for example in his Essay, 'On educating children' Montaigne quotes Seneca, stating, "There is a great difference between not wanting to do evil and not knowing how to." (Montaigne quoting Seneca, 2003:187) Another example, "Virtue is not as you think, Father, fearing life; it is confronting huge evils without turning one's back or retreating...". (Montaigne quoting Seneca, 2003:395) The use of Seneca is continuous. Where Montaigne's use of him becomes a natural part of his Essays, his ideas seem to correlate to Seneca's and much influence is taken. At the beginning of his essays, he reflects a stoic position. Later his essays are formed by a much more personal theory of life which uses much more of his own ideas, experiences and opinions (Clark, 1968)

However, the use of Seneca remains, albeit in a different way: "...many Essays in Book III seem to reject the stoic objectives as simply unattainable by normal human beings, who should therefore limit themselves to trying to make a successful adjustment to life as it is." (Clark, 1968:249) Like Montaigne, Marcus Aurelius was one of the first to write about oneself/his reflections. He too was not a scholar and there seems to be a kind of mirroring between the two, becoming the subjects of their own work. Both of their works, possibly not having the intention to be taught to others, or even to become recognised as great philosophical texts. Writing texts which were for the more private reader. Something you would read in your own time, away from others. A text to read and understand in solitude.

It also claimed that neither Montaigne nor Seneca liked this idea of others reading their ideas, that this wasn't an effective way, "They would like, if that were possible, to transplant their ideas directly into the minds of their readers without the intermediary of words; knowing that this cannot be done, they fear the denaturing of their insights in the process of transfer, and are always strongly doubtful of the value of second-hand information." (Clark, 1968:252-3) This could be part of the reason why Montaigne states how his work is for the private reader.

This use of reflection which Montaigne does throughout his 'Essays' was a Stoic teaching which has been practiced for many years, but for oneself, "...it was for personal clarity and not public benefit." (Holiday and Hanselman, 2016) Montaigne, in his 'Essays' was never trying to give an answer on 'how one should live' like many of these ethical theories did, such as Aristotle's. This was never the purpose of his work. He was not interested in what one ought to do in life, but instead was interested in how to live the good life – a correct, honourable one.

The 'Essays' differ from other philosophical texts as we have seen with regards to how: You could pick up the Nicomachean ethics (Aristotle), read it, and have a decent understanding of how to become a virtuous person and how Aristotle comes to this conclusion of how to flourish and live the good life, for example, Aristotle states how we have to exercise virtues in order to become virtuous, we need to practice at becoming a virtuous person, "For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them, e.g. men become builders by building and lyre players by playing the lyre; so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts." (Aristotle, 2009:23) For Montaigne, this wouldn't necessarily be the case. Every time you pick up his book you learn something new, but not a theory which he is trying to impose on you. Rather, he offers his story, his life, things he has learnt and establishes that we are human. We make mistakes, we learn from them and that we can't really be guided on how to live well. Rather we need to analyse our lives as they go on. And adopt our own tailored way to life, his idea being to, "...understand himself as a particular human being. This involves recording and reflecting upon his own idiosyncratic tastes, habits, and dispositions." (Edelman, N/A)

Many who read Montaigne and have come across his work would agree how upon reading his Essays, they could see themselves in what he was writing, how it would almost reflect their own lives. He is a conversation partner, a friend who accompanies us as we journey through life. Finding him engaging and captivating to read. Writing in the way he did, really broke many boundaries within philosophical writing during this time. Many would have applauded this, but others would have been opposed to it. However, upon my own thinking and analysis of his work I have come to realise that Montaigne may have been writing before his time. In our contemporary society, there are so many different platforms to engage with and post on: social media, newspapers, personal blogs etc. We are a society obsessed with writing and posting about ourselves, whether that is posting what we are doing, voicing our opinions on political matters, or even just talking to people in general. We live in a society where we love to talk about ourselves. A trend which it seems like Montaigne started. Sarah Bakewell makes a similar suggestion: "This idea – writing about oneself to create a mirror in which other people recognise their own humanity – has not existed for ever. It had been invented. And, unlike many cultural inventions, it can be traced to a single person: Michel Eyquem de Montaigne." (Bakewell, 2011:3)

Montaigne's style of writing can sometimes come across as very confusing. He wrote about his experiences, reflections, and much more – he wrote about his thoughts as if he was a river – a stream of consciousness. Where his ideas would be flowing back and forth, changing track but also free flowing (Bakewell, 2011) With no strict rule on himself as to what he was writing. He essentially wrote what was on his mind at the time and what he wanted to write about, with no care as to whether it would entirely make sense, "... Montaigne's book flows as it does: it follows its author's stream of consciousness without attempting to pause or dam it." (Bakewell, 2011:35) His Essays can be challenging to read at times as his thoughts dip in and out of different places, especially with his unsystematic nature and how this can cause quite a bit of

contradiction within his ideas at times. However, Montaigne wrote his essays over the course of 20 years. He is constantly going back to previous parts and adding to them, and not necessarily changing what he had already written (Foglia *et al*, 2019) There was never much connection between one paragraph and the next and the way in which he thought would change all the time so by continuously adding to them he was able to write something which was truer to himself. Again, he is writing something about himself, for himself, “A typical page of the Essays is a sequence of meanders, bends and divergence. You have to let yourself be carried along, hoping not to capsize each time a change of direction throws you off balance.” (Bakewell, 2011:35)

The analogy which Bakewell draws upon with regards to his writing style and how his essays are composed really reflects the type of life Montaigne lived, but also a perfect interpretation of what life itself is like. Being described like a river flowing, but not in the way we would normally think of with rivers. We may have this picture of a calm, running river. However, by emphasising the constant back and forth, divergences etc. he shows and is honest about how life really isn't as simple, and I think during the writing of his essays and the reflection of his life he comes to the realisation the life isn't as simple as he sometimes makes it out to be. This may explain the constant editing to his Essays. In his essay, ‘On the inconstancy of our actions’ Montaigne discusses how inconsistent we are as humans and how this leads to life not being straightforward, “What we decided just now we will change very soon; and soon afterwards we come back to where we were: it is all motion and inconstancy.” (Montaigne, 2003:374) Montaigne continues:

“[We are led like a wooden puppet by wires pulled by others.] We do not go: we are borne along like things afloat, now bobbing now lashing about as the waters are angry or serene.” (Montaigne, 2003:375)

Montaigne uses this analogy to describe human action and the inconsistency of it. Just like how Bakewell uses the analogy of a stream to describe Montaigne's writing and the flow of his essays. He also makes a similar analogy to describe the inconsistency of human action and how we are naturally pulled in many directions. He continues further, “[Surely we see that nobody knows what he wants, that he is always looking for something, always changing his place, as though he could cast off his burden?]” (Montaigne, 2003:375) He finishes, “We float about among diverse counsels: our willing of anything is never free, final or constant.” (Montaigne, 2003:375) He is honest, he is free within his writing and through his own self-reflection. Montaigne is able to make honest judgements of human behaviour and the inconsistency of it, mostly based on his own experience. His accidental way of doing philosophy as a way of writing his essays to discover a way of life is one which seems more realistic and something which readers can engage with on a deeper level.

Here we get a sense of the difference between Montaigne and someone like Aristotle. Aristotle would have been composing his work in order to be taught, it would have had a more professional touch. Whereas Montaigne's work is a lot more personal. There is an intimacy in the relationship Montaigne creates with his reader. This is not about

teaching a student, but about conversing with a fellow traveller. You can connect with Montaigne more than with Aristotle. Within Montaigne's work you can get an idea of who Montaigne was and what he was like. Whereas, within Aristotle's texts you cannot get a full understanding or even connect with him in his texts. His texts were strictly for the purpose of teaching to others. But this lies in the different purposes of their work, not because Aristotle did not allow readers to have this connection with him but rather because he was trying to establish, clearly, a life we ought to live if we want to live well. He would not allow his sporadic thoughts to impose on his texts, he had a specific plan to his work, and an end to which he aimed at reaching.

The purpose of their work will also affect the style in which writers write. If we look more closely at Aristotle, who was a scholar and to this day, still a very popular philosopher, we know that his texts were for educational purposes. Therefore, Aristotle would have carefully planned out his theory. His work would have been taught and discussed with his students [which we will go on to discuss about later] and would have been more professionally presented. His ideas would follow on from one thing to another and established in a way which someone could read and understand. There was a framework where he could discuss the foundations of his ethical theory, we can see this in his 'Nicomachean Ethics' where each book will discuss a particular part of his theory, but will all follow onto the next thing [even though his texts seem to take form of lecture notes]

His 'Essays' were for his own personal use and being the subject of his own text highlights a much more personal and vulnerable piece of work. It can be noted that there is no intentional end to his work, "...fundamental goal of essaying himself is to present his unorthodox way of living and thinking to the reading public of 16th century France." (Edelman, N/A) Aristotle established his ideas for people to read and learn with hope of it being something which many would go on to follow and incorporate into their lives. His work would have been carefully produced – to try and establish the best possible ethical theory on how to live the good life. His philosophy is about the activity of reason, how one must act in order to attempt the good life and through this, Aristotle offers guidance and a way in which this can be achieved. Montaigne's is the complete opposite. There is a level of intimacy within the experience of engaging with Montaigne. Where continuously adding to his work enables ones to experience his raw thoughts and feelings at the exact time, he was writing it, "Montaigne enriched his texts continuously; he preferred to add for the sake of diversity, rather than to correct. The unity of the work and the order of every single chapter remain problematic." (Foglia *et al*, 2019) His work had no purpose for others, it was a way in which Montaigne was able to reflect and assess his life to discuss a way in 'how to live', not how we ought to live. There is no right or wrong way to read and understand his work.

Attainability of the Good Life

The basic idea of any ethical theory and the theory in which drives this thesis is run by this pursuit of happiness, and what are the steps to follow in order to achieve it³. But one thing we fail to consider when understanding these theories are the origins of the ideas for them. It seems easy enough for someone to tell you how to live well, to live a happy life. But there are obvious obstacles which can easily prevent this from happening and affect the accessibility of these ethical theories – especially relating to practical ethics. Therefore, it is important that we get an idea and an understanding of the lives in which the writers of these theories lived. Why it is important that we dig deeper and understand where they are coming from. It's easy to see the theories which we read and learn and completely disconnect them from the philosopher themselves and the life they lived. By getting an understanding, we can see if those suggesting an account for the good life, have been able to live it themselves.

By looking into the life of Montaigne and Aristotle we can see that they were both extremely wealthy men, men who lived the life of luxury. Although, their wealthy lifestyle can seem like something which makes it easier to 'live well' if one has financial resources and status which goes on to question how easily the good life can be attained for all. Looking at Aristotle's theory, we can see how he offers guidance on how one can practice being a virtuous person in order to achieve ultimate happiness. However, being a man of supposed luxury can he be sure that this is the case. He was graced with having material possessions and therefore, adding on to be a virtuous person adds to that in a positive way, to live the good life. For someone who did not have the same kind of lifestyle as Aristotle, would practicing to become a virtuous person be enough or even possible? Was his theory ever practical for someone to achieve or attempt to achieve without his kind of wealth? His wealth seems to challenge the extent to which his ethics can be pursued by everyone. Let us consider the main ideas within his practical theory in order to establish where the problem of attainability may lie.

Aristotle's ethics is focused on this pursuit of the good life and how we can attain it. He begins his ethics by claiming, "All human activities aim at some good: some goods subordinate to others." (Aristotle, 2009:3) That everything we do, whether that is our actions or choices, aim at some good and therefore the good is thought to be the aim at all things we do.

Let's take examples of those within the arts and sciences - the end of the medical sector is health. Aristotle also uses the example of a shipbuilder, for the end of this art is a vessel and there are many more examples that can be used, in everything we do is aimed at some end (Aristotle, 2009) However, the question Aristotle seems concerned

³ 'Happiness' can be defined in many different ways. Whether it's being described in terms of human well-being and flourishing or a psychological term. There has been much discussion around how we can define happiness, whether that is in terms of a life going well for an individual and therefore makes them happy or it can be defined as human flourishing, human well-being (Many arguments have been written regarding happiness. Haybron, 2021 in the Stanford Encyclopaedia discusses the various definitions more.

with is what is the human good and by knowing what the human good is we have better chance at achieving it and pursue the good life and flourish.

There are many things which can be considered to be the good for humans. Having wealth, friends, family, having pleasure. These are all things which we would agree to count as good for humans. But Aristotle claims that there is and must be a good which is more desirable than the rest of these goods, the highest good, the good in which we should aim for "...is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else." (Aristotle, 2009:10) All the other good things are desirable for its sake too – this would be the chief good. He uses the term 'Eudaimonia' which can be translated into happiness, living and faring well and concludes that the highest good is to reach this eudaimonia – ultimate happiness. We all live to aim at trying to pursue this state of ultimate happiness, something that all the other goods aim at and is desirable in itself. Nothing is seen as more desirable than this (Aristotle, 2009).

Aristotle's ethics seeks to establish which goods happiness consists of in order to figure out how we can go on to achieve this happiness. He goes on to discuss the function of a human being, what a human beings ergon is - if we can establish what our function is and we perform our function well then this can lead to us achieving the good life, achieving happiness. His argument follows in the form of a teleological argument – that everything is designed for a purpose and that the good is fulfilled when we achieve this purpose or function. Like Plato, Aristotle claims that for humans, it is our rational mind. How we should use reason in order to steer our emotions, actions and good habits (Evans, 2012) An active life that has the element of reason, where we are obedient to it and the sense of possessing reason and exercising thought (Aristotle, 2009)

He notes how the function of the human being must be specific to them, something which nothing else has. He goes on to list things which our function cannot be, "Life seems to belong even to plants, but we are seeking what is peculiar to man." (Aristotle, 2009:11) He goes on to exclude our function being the life of nutrition and growth, because again plants and animals also do this, "...life of perception, but it also seems to be shared even by the horse, the ox, and every animal." (Aristotle, 2009:11) Through much consideration he concludes that the function of human beings must be linked to our rational soul. Specifically, to the actions or activity of the soul which follows reason, the practice of reason to establish the balanced life. Therefore, we have performed our function well if it's been performed in line with the correct virtue. Therefore, "human good turns out to be activity of the soul exhibiting virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete." (Aristotle, 2009:12)

Aristotle is stating that we must act in the correct way given the particular circumstances through the practise of our reason. We must be virtuous and act virtuously in order to achieve the highest good, happiness. It is important to note that Aristotle claims that we can't just act virtuously a couple of times; rather this is a lifelong procedure. That we must act virtuously, "...in a complete life'. For one swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day; and so too one day, or a short time, does not make a man blessed and happy." (Aristotle, 2009:12)

There are many ways in which this happiness can be acquired. Whether that's through learning, habituation, training, chance or sent by some kind of divine entity. Although this kind of divine way is ruled out, Aristotle does however state, "happiness seems, however, even if it is not god-sent but comes as a result of virtue and some process of learning or training, to be among the most godlike things." (Aristotle, 2009:15) He concludes that part of it must pre-exist as we need the basic starting point in order to know how to act in accordance with virtue, meaning that we acquire happiness through the constant exercise and practice of virtue.

Unlike Montaigne's ethics, Aristotle's follows a format which makes his theory more presentable and an ideal theory for someone to read, understand, learn, and incorporate into their daily practices. To achieve this human good, to reach ultimate happiness, Eudaimonia, we must act in a virtuous way. We must acquire moral virtue which we can attain by the repetition of the corresponding acts. In order to be virtuous we must learn and exercise the virtue, "so too we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts." (Aristotle, 2009:23)

However, by exercising these virtues we can fall into the excesses and defects of these acts, hence why we must practice them in order to reach the mean between the excess and defects. The agent must consider in each particular case what the best and appropriate act would be for the given situation. The mean (the virtuous act) falls where we have the right amount of excess and the right amount of defect.

One of the examples which Aristotle uses is the virtue of courage. Being courageous falls between two vices. A vice of deficiency which would be cowardice and a vice of excess, this being rashness. Therefore, in a given situation we must consider how courageous we need to be. This can only be achieved by constant exercise of the different virtues in a complete life. The virtuous act, also known as the 'Golden Mean' is the right way in which we act in a given situation. The agent must have the knowledge, choose the right act, choose them for their own sake, and his actions must, "...proceed from a firm and unchangeable character." (Aristotle, 2009:27) Therefore, before the agent even attempts to act in the virtuous way there are many other variables which need to be considered. From this, you can see that Aristotle's virtue ethics on how to live the good life is not as straight forward nor attainable for everyone, not to mention that it wouldn't be achievable in your lifetime. His ethics follows the practice of reason to establish a virtuous life, but it is not something which everyone can follow. This can make his ethics questionable if only certain people are able to achieve it. This is a complete contrast to Montaigne's theory and in many ways makes Aristotle's theory look much less attractive to follow when we consider a way in how to live well.

Moreover, no record of women learning at Aristotle's school was ever recorded. It is claimed that not everyone can achieve the good life, "Happiness is available only to those whose age, gender, and civic status allow them to pursue a life of the excellent activities that make it up." (Brown, 2009: xi) Slaves are excluded from living the virtuous life as his practical theory is aimed at those who have been schooled well to have the starting point needed for ethical understanding. We can also infer this is the

case for women as well, as Aristotle saw men as more superior and women being incapable of reasoning and attaining practical wisdom, therefore unable to achieve or pursue the good life, "...racism was one of Aristotle's least attractive features: he argued that some people were naturally slaves, and also seemed to think philosophy was beyond the powers of women and children." (Evans, 2012:211)

For a contemporary society, this poses considerable difficulties and challenges for his ethical theory. In understanding the kind of life in which Aristotle potentially lived, we get an understanding towards the background of his ethics and who can achieve the good life. It seems Aristotle's ethical theory was directed towards the wealthier man, who would go on to be professional works men such as politicians. They were the only ones capable of achieving the virtuous life. Many people living during the same time as Aristotle would not even know about his ethical theory as it would have only been taught to the more privileged men of that time. Not everyone could just learn under Aristotle, so his ethical theory was not designed to show how everyone can live the good life, it was limited to a small number of people, wealthy men like himself.

As we have already discussed, Montaigne too was from a wealthy family however, he doesn't let this influence his ethics and its attainability, he instead states that those relationships of lower rank men seem to be more ordered and: "The morals and the speech of the peasants I find to be more in conformity with the principles of true philosophy than those of the philosopher." (Montaigne, 2003:750) Montaigne's ethics is based around this idea of self-reflection and that it shouldn't be based off of others, "No one but you knows whether you are base and cruel, or loyal and dedicated. Others never see you: they surmise about you from uncertain conjectures; they do not see your nature so much as your artifice. So do not cling to their sentence: cling to your own." (Montaigne, 2003: 911) He claims that we have to focus on our own self judgment, no one can take that away from us, and that is what we should live by. Suggesting that his ethics is attainable for the individual, providing that they establish their own self-reflection – which is possible for all. Montaigne seems to present a more accessible ethics than that which is offered by Aristotle. One which is not limited by your place in society. This practice of thought which he offers to live a well lived life is open to all, regardless of circumstance. Highlight why Montaigne may actually be more favourable than Aristotle.

This might be where the tensions in Montaigne's account of the attainability of the good life arises as Aristotle is perhaps more honest about the reality of being able to attain the good life: namely, to practise philosophy you need the time to do so. You need to be in a position where you are able to make decisions for yourself and aren't limited by anything.

However, through much consideration this could be seen differently. Montaigne's problem with Aristotle could sit in the fact that Aristotle, doesn't consider that the good life is attainable for everyone as these men of luxuries were able to mostly live the life they wanted and weren't limited in the ability to pursue the good life. Montaigne seems to aim at establishing a theory which is attainable for all as he focuses it on the

individual. Although perhaps Montaigne isn't honest about the attainability of the life he presents, and maybe the tensions lie within the fact that Montaigne knows that Aristotle was honest about who could attain the good life. Montaigne perhaps agrees with Aristotle in that not everyone can attain it but is dishonest within his theory in trying to make out like the good life is attainable for all.

The way Aristotle discusses his attainability of the good life and what makes for the good life is organised, professional and easy to follow. He was an academic philosopher; he had the education behind him to write a theory in such a way. Montaigne and his Essays were not like this. Montaigne wasn't an academic, therefore his theory is a lot freer as he didn't write for the purpose of others.

In the next section, I will look briefly into the ways in which philosophical ideas are established. This is a significant section, as looking into how their ideas are established gives insight into how philosophers also incorporated their own methods and teachings into their lives. Philosophy isn't something we just read, but rather something we do.

The Practice of Philosophy

Philosophy and Walking

"... and when I am strolling alone through a beautiful orchard, although part of the time my thoughts are occupied by other things, for part of the time too I bring them back to the walk, to the orchard, to the delight in being alone there, and to me." (Montaigne, 2003:1257)

Despite the fact that the way in which Montaigne writes is unusual, unsystematic and free, the way in which he came to establish some of his ideas and practice philosophy are not uncommon among philosophers, and they are created by doing one of the most natural human things, by walking⁴. Montaigne specifically practised solitary walking – many others agreed this was the right way philosophical thinking should be practised, "Being in company forces one to jostle, hamper, walk at the wrong speed for others. When walking it's essential to find your own basic rhythm, and maintain it." (Gros, 2015:53)

"Every place of retreat needs an ambulatory. My thoughts doze off if I squat them down. My wit will not budge if my legs are not moving – which applies to all who study without books." (Montaigne, 2003:933) [another translation of the Essays writes, "Every place of retirement requires a walk; my thoughts sleep if I sit still; my fancy does not go by itself, my legs must move it; and all those who study without a book are in the same condition." (Montaigne, 1842:382) Montaigne wrote his essays after his retirement, he never set out to write his essays, they more just came to him. This practice of walking was one of the ways in which his thoughts would naturally progress. He allows his readers to have insight into his

⁴ Philosophers such as Socrates, Nietzsche, Rousseau, Thoreau and even some philosophical schools such as the Stoics and Cynics engaged in walking as a philosophical practice. Frederic Gros (2015) discusses some of these examples more.

life and the way he naturally allowed philosophy to be integrated into his life, exercising this 'new mode' and way of doing philosophy.

Walking is something which is done daily throughout one's life. However, many philosophers incorporated thinking and philosophy which became a common practice for the establishment of ideas, "While walking, one is not obliged to think, to think this or that or like this or like that. During that continuous but automatic effort of the body, the mind is placed at one's disposal. It is then that thoughts can arise, surface or take shape." (Gros, 2015:157) Thinking seems to come naturally when walking. Natural thoughts and ideas come in, in a way that just sitting down at a desk does not necessarily allow: "so there's no point in sitting over your desk when reflection is blocked. You need to get up and take a stroll. Walk, to get yourself moving, so that in sympathy with the body's surge the mind too will start moving again." (Gros, 2015:208)

Philosophy and philosophical thought shouldn't be forced, and this is where this idea of everyone being an accidental philosopher comes in. We should naturally let these thoughts come to our head, and thus in walking, philosophy is something which is and should be a part of everyone's day to day lives. This comes back to Bradatan's idea on how the locus of philosophy is within the body of the philosopher (Bradatan, 2015). Montaigne promotes this idea within his 'Essays'. Many philosophers went on to incorporate walking as a way of aiding the establishment of ideas into their schools including Aristotle and David Thoreau, "He objected to the use of corporal punishment on his pupils, and wanted his lessons to alternate with long walks." (Gros on Thoreau, 2015:87) Although, even this way seems slightly forced – the differences within how Montaigne did his practice of philosophy and how the academics did suggest the different purposes within their philosophies. The academics focusing on this communal practice with students to engage with within their thinking. Montaigne instead naturally incorporated it into his everyday life – exercising this unintentional new way of doing philosophy. A more natural, unrestrained way of thinking.

Montaigne and the Practice of Solitary Walking

There are some clear differences between solitary and communal walking and philosophy. Unlike communal thinking, solitary thinking and walking seems to be a much more personal and private practise; the ideas produced are a lot more intimate to the thinker. When communal thinking is done, it tends to take place in more of a conversational style. Where two or more people would talk and engage in discussion of different ideas. Where Montaigne has an interior dialogue, being the object of his thought, Aristotle who practices this communal walking and philosophy conforms to what we would ordinarily think of as a conversation. Solitary thinking on the other hand seems to be a kind of meditation. This is where the differences in Montaigne and Aristotle's methods may arise. They are both concerned with how one can live life well, yet the journey to their ethics and how they came to have their ideas took very different routes and purposes. Indicating that their desired methods or practising philosophy and walking is very much tailored as something that works for them and their ideas.

The essays suggest that Montaigne's mind never stopped, he was continuously adding to his work. It wasn't just his mind that wouldn't stop though, "My walk is quick and steady and I do not know whether I have found it harder to fix my mind in one place or my body." (Montaigne, 2003:1255) He further adds, "so too people have been able to say of me since boyhood that I have 'mad' or 'quicksilver' feet: no matter where I put them, they are restless and never still." (Montaigne, 2003:1255) Through his biographical writing style, Montaigne discusses how he wasn't able to keep still, how he always had to be on the move but also how his mind was always thinking as well. This is how he came about his ideas, how his Essays were formed. They are genuinely a collection of Montaigne's thoughts in the moment. Nothing was forced or necessarily carefully thought about. His work is presented in its rawest form.

Although he may have not always been reflecting on his life or used it to develop his ideas, he always found time to just be with himself, allowing thoughts to come to him and just allowing himself to be in a state of serenity. Montaigne had many thoughts rushing through his head, and this is reflected in the unsystematic structure of his Essays and the way in which his writing was so free flowing, not limited by a particular structure. Being able to stroll while this was happening, "At moments like these, he seems to have achieved an almost Zen-like discipline; an ability to just be." (Bakewell, 2011:38) This was not seen as an easy thing to do⁵. His openness within his Essays gives the reader a sense of authenticity when turning to a text on how we can live well. He enables a sense of trust between himself and readers. Something which may have not been possible without the kind of insight he offers us throughout his text.

Communal Practice - School of thought.

Aristotle's practise of walking suggests a different method for the instigation of thought. He practised communal walking for the establishment of philosophical ideas, especially with his students. One of the main ideas and teachings within his Lyceum was walking the grounds of his school, teaching and discussing with his students where they would be able to establish many different ideas together. Hence how his school and students became known as Peripatetics, "Peripatein is a Greek verb meaning 'to walk', but it also has the meaning 'to converse', 'to engage in dialogue while walking, ". (Gros, 2015:) This shows how his engagements in this style of practice was about community, group discussions and conversation as a way in which he practiced his philosophy. Communal walking and philosophy can produce many different discussions and tends to be a practice which is more sociable.

Investigating the role of friendship in the ideas of these two philosophers emerges out of reflection on their different practices of walking, and it is to this theme that we now turn. By looking into Aristotle's ethical theory it is clear that Aristotle places great emphasis on the importance of friendship (two books within his Nicomachean Ethics being dedicated to this topic) By thinking and walking with his students this would have aided towards creating a

⁵ Bakewell (2015) stated it would take Zen Masters a lifetime to feel this kind of serenity and being able to just 'be'. Montaigne learning this within a short amount of time would be seen as impressive.

strong relationship between himself and his student – which would have supported his ethical theory with regards to friendship, “He must, therefore, perceive the existence of his friend together with his own, and this will be realized in their living together and sharing in discussion and thought.” (Aristotle, 2009:178) By walking side by side with someone, it allows for more free thinking and better flow of conversation (Gros, 2015) It was important for the ideas and theories Aristotle established to be logical and something which people would not find ridiculous to read since he was a scholar and wanted to maintain a professional reputation. By walking with his student, he was able to consider their ideas to form the best possible theories, while focusing on this importance of friendship which he has, living through his own philosophical practice. Showing how his use of communal walking and thinking was more beneficial for the purpose of his work. It agrees with the ideas and beliefs he had with regards to building good friendships with others, including his students all aiding towards the pursuit of the good life and the attempt to achieve eudaimonia.⁶

Aristotle seemed to place an importance of developing a kind of intimacy – you share a space in the world, and you use it to talk about ideas and come to conclusions about themes being discussed. This theme of intimacy and friendship was not strange to Montaigne and he too placed great importance on this idea of friendship. The Essays promotes the importance of friendship, having this kind of intimacy within one’s life aids the good life. But also, with intimacy and friendship comes the significance of the struggle with death and anxiety which Montaigne deals with regarding his experience with a close friendship of his. This thesis will discuss these ideas relating to friendship and it being a driving point for living the good life.

The Theme of Friendship

As humans, the concern for friendship seems to be central within our lives. Whether that’s for companionship; to aid one’s welfare, which creates a degree of intimacy; to provide happiness; even to give a sense of purpose/belonging. Moreover, having friendships tends to develop a concern for those within the friendship. Which goes on to develop our moral concerns but also goes towards fashioning the people we are (Helm, Bennett, 2021)

Both Montaigne and Aristotle are deeply concerned with the idea of friendship. Investigating this aspect of life highlights a similarity as well as a divergence within their ethics. While Aristotle dedicates two chapters to this theme on friendship, we never get a deeper understanding, a more personal understanding as to why he is concerned with this idea. When looking into Montaigne and his ethics we see continuous references to his importance of friendship, and we are introduced to his own examples of friendship with La Boétie. Etienne de la Boetie (1530-1563) was a French politician who worked as a magistrate at the parliament of Bordeaux. He is known for being Montaigne’s closest friend. Montaigne discusses how he came to know of La Boetie in his Essays, “Yet I am particularly indebted to that treatise, because it first brought us together: it was shown to me long before I met him

⁶ Aristotle’s idea of Eudaimonia is presented in his ‘The Nicomachean Ethics’ (2009) Translating into ‘human flourishing’, or ‘happiness’. That to live the good life we should aim at achieving eudaimonia.

and first made me acquainted with his name". (Montaigne, 2003:207) Montaigne further discusses how this friendship became the closest friendship he has formed, one which was extremely important to him, "If you press me to say why I loved him, I feel that it cannot be expressed except by replying: 'Because it was him: because it was me.'" (Montaigne, 2003:212).

When looking into their ideas and beliefs on friendship this mirroring between Aristotle and Montaigne is present throughout, "On the subject of friendship also, the *Essais* and the *Ethics* confirm each other." (Menut, 1934:235) Although, based on the nature of their writings, Montaigne provides a more intimate account of the nature of friendship than Aristotle. Further, Montaigne fails to mention his similar ideas to those presented in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and does not refer to Aristotle. This can be said for much of the essays where his ideas seem to correspond to those of Aristotle's. Yet Montaigne makes continuous reference to Philosophers such as Plato, Seneca, Plutarch etc yet little mention of Aristotle is used. It is claimed that Montaigne did not read the *Nicomachean Ethics* until 1588, however, "For one who was seeing, as was Montaigne, to discover the underlying motives of human conduct and to find a rational justification for moral action, it would be strange indeed had he failed to consult the *Nicomachean Ethics*." (Menut, 1934:226) This reveals this idea on Montaigne having difficulties with Aristotle, but why? With two philosophers so concerned with living the good life and coming to very similar conclusions and ideas on the subject. It leaves room to question as to why Montaigne seemed reluctant to mention Aristotle too much within his 'Essays'.⁷ This is also where the difficulties between the accidental and academic philosophers become present. As this is the main divide between these two.

So why were both philosophers both concerned with this theme? By looking into Aristotle's ideas on friendship we can begin to see how the friendship which he formed with his students seems to fit under a category, a type of friendship which he discusses within his *Nicomachean Ethics*. Explaining how these different kinds of friendships aid us for living the good life and being a virtuous person. Aristotle distinguishes between three different kinds of friendship. Friendship of utility, friendship of pleasure and perfect friendship (or friendship of the good) The most important friendship which Aristotle seems to think we should aim for is this perfect friendship, "...the friendship of men who are good, and alike in virtue; for these wish well alike to each other qua good, and they are good in themselves." (Aristotle, 2009:145) This seems to be the kind of friendship which Aristotle had with Plato but also possibly his students. His students would share similar qualities with him, acquiring the same kind of virtue, although the friendship which he has with his students could also fall under the other types of friendship.

The other two kinds of friendship which Aristotle presents seems necessary for virtue but are not seen as the most important kind of friendship as it is not considered being true friendship. Rather a friendship where it benefits us/get something out of it in one way or another. This could also fall under the category which Aristotle has with his students. The

⁷ Similar situation with Freud and Nietzsche. Both presenting very similar ideas; however, Freud never went on to read any of Nietzsche's work.

other two he discusses are friendship of utility and friendship of pleasure. Friendship of utility, Aristotle says, is a friendship in which the person is useful to you in some way, "...do not love each other for themselves but in virtue of some good which they get from each other." (Aristotle, 2009:144) Friendship of pleasure on the other hand seems to be the one in which most people have in terms of relationships with others, "it is not for their character that men love ready-witted people, but because they find them pleasant." (Aristotle, 2009:144)

These kinds of friendships however are the friendships that come and go. Once they no longer give us any kind of pleasure or good, or once the other person is no longer useful to us, we simply get rid of them, the friendship is easily dissolved. The friendship, Aristotle says, is only incidental (Aristotle, 2009:144) For Montaigne it is the intimacy of the friendship that have value; for Aristotle, it is the end at which friendship is directed. Aristotle seems to aim at acquiring this higher form of friendship and states why he is concerned with the importance of friendship. He claims that friendship is considered as a virtue and necessary with living, "since it is a virtue or implies virtue, and is besides most necessary with a view to living." (Aristotle, 2009:142)

Like Aristotle, Montaigne mentions these different kinds of friendships but in a different way and does not seem keen on this word of friendship as the term for these other kinds. He claims, "all forms of it which are forged or fostered by pleasure or profit or by public or private necessity are so much the less beautiful and noble – and therefore so much the less 'friendship' – in that they bring in some purpose, end or fruition other than the friendship itself." (Montaigne, 2003:207). This is similar to Aristotle's ideas on his friendship of utility or pleasure. You are friends with the other person because you essentially get something out of it. While they both make similar claims on this, Montaigne seems more reluctant to call this a kind of 'friendship' and seems to lean more towards this idea of it being considered as a kind of acquaintance (Montaigne, 2003) The friendship which he places much more importance on is this rare kind of friendship, like the one he had with his friend La Boétie. We should be cautious of other or too many friendships, "keeping the reins in your hand: the bond is not so well tied that there is no reason to doubt it." (Montaigne, 2003:213) He uses this word of 'common friendship' to describe the other kinds of friendships we have with others.

"...even rich men and those in possession of office and of dominating power are thought to need friends most of all." (Aristotle, 2009:142) Aristotle highlights this importance of friendship and goes on to say that without friendship we wouldn't chose to live, possibly linking to this idea of solitude and why he practises more within the company of others. Montaigne takes note on what Aristotle says about friendship, stating in his 'essays', "...Aristotle says that good lawgivers have shown more concern for friendship than for justice." (Montaigne, 2003:207) Even though Montaigne uses Aristotle here, he isn't necessarily agreeing with Aristotle. Montaigne's practice of making an object of himself in his writing makes his discussion of the nature of friendship way more intimate than what Aristotle does. Aristotle discusses this importance of friendship, stating that all the different kinds of friendship aid our potential to live a good life. His idea of friendship seems much

more reserved and something that acts as a condition we need in order to live the good life. Montaigne's discussion on friendship on the other hand presents itself as something much more personal and intimate. The fact that he gives us a name of his close friend and discusses him often, even publishing some of his work into his own Essays proves this.

Montaigne also placed great importance on this theme of friendship within his ethics and it being something which aids us in living well. One of his essays is titled 'On affectionate relationships'. This is dedicated to this idea of friendship and makes constant references to his best friend, La Boétie, we as readers are constantly able to acknowledge the level of importance he attributes to it. Montaigne believed that true friendship was rare to find, believing that he only ever found it once in his life, La Boétie, whose death affected Montaigne massively and was one of the things which drove him to write his 'Essays' in the first place (Bakewell, 2010) Montaigne felt a real connection with La Boétie, a friendship like no other, "In the friendship which I am talking about, souls are mingled and confounded in so universal a blending that they efface the seam which joins them together so that it cannot be found." (Montaigne, 2003:211)

Montaigne wasn't the only one to feel a kind of soul linking connection between himself and his closest friend, for Saint Augustine also writes of this kind of connection with his close friend after his death, "For, I felt that my soul and his soul were but one soul in two bodies; life was appalling to me, since I preferred not to live as a half-being." (Augustine, 1953:82) Montaigne makes himself vulnerable within his text, writing about what the death of his friend did to him. He wasn't afraid of showing his raw emotions, "Since the day I lost him, I merely drag wearily on. The very pleasures which are proffered me do not console me: they redouble my sorrows at his loss. In everything we were halves: I feel I am stealing his share from him". (Montaigne, 2003:217) Montaigne is honest, he presents us with the realities of life, that it is unpredictable and that everyone will experience this kind of grief. He presents us with the significance of the struggles with death and anxiety which is a natural part of human life. It could be viewed that Montaigne is creating a kind of solidarity with the reader who may be experiencing similar forms of grief. He is being honest about the realities of life but trying to show how friendships can help us through the hardships of life, that we don't have to put this Stoic front on when dealing with our emotions and struggles. He is breaking this taboo about discussing the death of a loved one and how it is a natural thing to happen in life and therefore we should feel open to talk about it and the emotions we are feeling, "I was already so used and accustomed to being, in everything, one of two, that I now feel I am no more than a half". (Montaigne, 2003:217)

There is something more intimate about the way in which Montaigne grounds his theme of friendship which contrasts to Aristotle despite him being deeply concerned with it. This could be due to Montaigne naming his friend, focusing on this specific example of friendship which was personal to him. By naming his friend we are able to get an idea of the importance of friendship for Montaigne. His idea of friendship is linked to a specific person unlike Aristotle. Montaigne is allowing the reader to feel more connected to his ideas and life which we don't get a sense of with Aristotle. Montaigne isn't the first one to write about his close friend in such an intense way. Saint Augustine writes about his friendship with his

closest friend in his 'Confessions'. Within his 'Confessions', when discussing the death of his friend it's easy to get this sense of their being a kind erotic love which he felt for his friend, "For, why had that sorrow pierced me so easily and so deeply, unless because I had poured forth my soul upon the sand, in loving a mortal being as if he would not die?" (Augustine, 1953:84) The relationship which Augustine seemed to have with his friend and the way in which he discusses him echoes the way in which Montaigne expresses his feelings on La Boétie's death. Bakewell (2010) cites Montaigne within her text, "As he wrote in one of his dedications to La Boétie's posthumous books: 'he is still lodged in me so entire and so alive that I cannot believe that he is so irrevocably buried or so totally removed from our communication'." (Bakewell, 2010:108)

There has been speculation about the kind of relationship with Montaigne had with La Boétie, very similar to that of Augustine and his friend as having a kind of erotic love nature – however, this is only speculation, "The Renaissance was a period in which, while any hint of real homosexuality was regarded with horror, men routinely wrote to each other like lovestruck teenagers." (Bakewell, 2010:92) Suggesting that the kinds of way in which Montaigne spoke about La Boétie was common within their day, further, "Such a bond between two well-born young men was the pinnacle of philosophy: they studied together, lived under each other's gaze, and helped each other to perfect the art of living. Both Montaigne and La Boetie were fascinated by this model, and were probably on the lookout for it when they met." (Bakewell, 2010:92)

More interestingly, perhaps, Montaigne shows how this kind of friendship contributes and aids the living of the good life. They were living out their philosophical practice of allowing this kind of intimate friendship. Admittedly, the death of his close friend affected Montaigne a lot – causing him to struggle to find happiness yet, "...he used techniques of distraction and diversion to get himself through the immediate shock of loss. Best of all, he discovered the therapeutic benefits of writing." (Bakewell, 2010:108) Through writing he was able to deal with the grief, "Writing about La Boetie eventually led him to write the Essays: the best philosophical trick of all." (Bakewell, 2010:108) to live out his philosophical practice to deal with the loss of his closest friend. There is a kind of foreshadowing within Montaigne's 'Essays'. Montaigne states in his Essay, 'On Vanity', "Anyone can see that I have set out on a road along which I shall travel without toil and without ceasing as long as the world has ink and paper." (Montaigne, 2003:1070) Montaigne is claiming how, as long as he lives and as long as he is able to, he will continue to write. The only thing which stopped his essays from continuing further was his death. Just like how death was the trigger for him to begin writing his essays, it was also the thing which ended his essays, "As Virginia Woolf wrote, the Essays came to a halt because they reached 'not their end, but their suspension in full career'." (Bakewell, 2010:287)

Montaigne was about intimacy, about talking personally of his experiences of friendship, and loss. How he felt, what he went through and how he dealt with such a painful loss. He presents his readers with the raw emotions of losing such a special and rare friendship. Highlighting how this kind of friendship goes beyond the kinds of friendship which we could only imagine, "we embraced each other by repute, and, at our first meeting... we discovered

ourselves to be so seized by each other, so known to each other and so bound together that from then on none was so close as each was to the other.” (Montaigne, 2003:212)

Montaigne shows how the ideas of friendship and intimacy are relevant as it shapes the person and essentially the philosopher. We are concerned with ‘how to live the good life’, friendship makes for the good life and therefore should be seen as a prominent thing to discuss. As we have seen, the death of La Boetie was significant and impacted Montaigne massively and like state, caused him to begin writing his Essays. Montaigne shows us how life is unpredictable and messy (this is almost reflected in the way in which he writes his essays) It comes back to this idea of how we need to live for ourselves. Montaigne brings us back to the truth of human life. He introduces this recovery of common humanity, breaking down this veil that human life is straightforward.

Similarly, Aristotle too finds an importance within true friendship, and like Montaigne suggests that it is not easy to come by: these are the kinds of friendship which adds towards our potential of living a good life. Making a similar statement about this rare kind of friendship, “But it is natural that such friendships should be infrequent; for such men are rare.” (Aristotle, 2009:146) Indicating this clear likeness between Aristotle and Montaigne He goes on to state that friendship is a necessary and noble thing, thought to be a praiseworthy thing to have friends (Aristotle, 2009) This suggests something of why he practised communal walking, as he was forming a friendship with his students, but aiming more at this friendship of the good as they were both helping each other, “for with friends men are more able both to think and to act.” (Aristotle, 2009:142)

But like with any kind of philosophy, his ideas and ethics can be questioned: on whether Montaigne’s ethics is actually as attainably as he makes it out to be. There is no doubt that Montaigne likes this idea of everyone being able to achieve this good life which he discusses. However, by starting how women aren’t capable ‘yet’ of achieving this state which he discusses to be able to form this kind of perfect friendship indicates this lack of attainability for women. Making his ethics not as widely achieved as he makes out and he seems to also exclude women, just like Aristotle. He doesn’t seem to be against the potential of women achieving it. But by what he writes in his essays, he initially excludes women from this state of achieving this rare kind of friendship with aids towards living well. Even though Montaigne is creating this new way in which Philosophy can be done, with free judgment and through incorporating philosophy naturally into your life which essentially goes towards living the good life.

Although, during this time in which Montaigne was writing there were Queens and very wealthy land-owning women who were often socially equal to men within most spheres of life, bar suffrage which was still very much the case that only men were able to vote. So what Montaigne means on women not being capable ‘yet’ becomes unclear. Unless it was Montaigne’s personal opinion that women could not quite reach that state or level of thought required to be able to achieve this good life. Montaigne’s thoughts on women is uncertain. But like discussed priously, he didn’t believe it was impossible for women to achieve this level of thought. It may have largely been due to them not staying in education as long as men did and therefore Montaigne may have seen their intellect not being fully

developed. This too affects the gendered language as to who Montaigne was writing too within his essays and suggests, if it was not for himself, men may have been his only intended audience. Which brings back this notion of women being unable to do Philosophy and continues to be a recurring theme when looking into the attainability of the good life not being possible for women. Despite the fact that during Montaigne's time, women were becoming more socially equal to men, and this continued through history right up to looking within modern day society (21st Century Europeans) where there is pretty much even equality between men and women. Although, even within our 21st century, men and women across the world aren't always deemed as equal and men in many countries are still seem much more superior to women.

Montaigne goes on to make a distinction between friendship and the sexual love that underpins marriage, stating, "To enjoy it is to lose it: its end is in the body and therefore subject to sanity." (Montaigne, 2003:209) He goes on to state how we cannot feel this close kind of friendship within a married relationship, "women are in truth not normally capable of responding to such familiarity and mutual confidence as sustain that holy bond of friendship, nor do their souls seem firm enough to withstand the clasp of a knot so lasting and so tightly drawn." (Montaigne, 2003:210) Although he claims that it would make a good union if this was the case (Montaigne, 2003:210). Within this section of his essays, it reflects this idea previously mentioned about writing before his time,⁸ He writes, "But there is no example yet of women attaining to it and by the common agreement of the Ancient schools of philosophy she is excluded from it." (Montaigne, 2003:210) Montaigne does not comment on whether he agrees with the ancient schools or whether it is just a passing comment which he makes as he refers back to the ancient schools often. Although, his use of 'yet' seems to indicate that the potentiality of women reaching this kind of state is possible – again, indicating how he seems to be writing before his time. When stating 'yet', this may be reference on how women, during the time in which he was writing this hadn't been fully introduced into education, that it is within this sector that women were not fully introduced into. But this does not exclude the fact that this could be something which is achieved in the future. Montaigne claims that the Greeks view is "rightly abhorrent to our manners" (Montaigne, 2003:210) and that it, "did not correspond either to that perfect union and congruity which we are seeking here." (Montaigne, 2003:2010) Therefore, Montaigne seems to be exercising this notion on how in the future this kind of union which he is discussing and looking for can potentially be a woman when they are more able and have the ability to benefit a kind of union which he is looking for.

Montaigne refers to Marie de Gournay, his adoptive daughter stating, "If youth is any omen her soul will be capable of great things one day – among other things of that most perfect hallowed loving-friendship to which her sex has yet been unable to aspire...". (Montaigne, 2003:752) This suggests that it's particular individuals which drive his reflections rather than the generalised view about men and women or indeed human beings. Again, referring back

⁸ Bakewell in 'How to Live' discusses this idea of writing about oneself being traced back to Montaigne. Indicating him writing before his time (p.g.3)

to this idea and importance of intimacy which Montaigne holds but also this individuality of human beings rather than this notion of universality.

Earlier in the *Essays*, Montaigne discussing how finding such friendship with a woman was not possible, or at least he had not found such kind of friendship (Montaigne states this in terms of a sexual relationship, this isn't the case here. Rather a perfect kind of friendship with a woman which he too wasn't able to find back then). Women being incapable of achieving the good life due to not having the capabilities to become virtuous was an idea which had always been around, to the point where even Montaigne supported it as well. However, Montaigne is now claiming that this attainability is possible and since meeting Marie he has been able to see the capabilities within her which could be the case for many other women in society at this time, being more curious and wanting to learn more, "The judgement she made on my original *Essays*, she, a woman, in this century, so young and the only one to do so in her part of the country". (Montaigne, 2003:752) Montaigne was never against the possibility of women achieving the good life and doing philosophy, rather it just seemed like he never came across a case where this kind of knowledge within a woman was present until he met Marie de Gournay. From this point, Montaigne possibly developed a more open mind to women being able to achieve the good life. The fact that Montaigne was happy to put this within his *Essays* as well shows how he wasn't worried about the potential backlash or criticism which he could acquire from writing about women in this kind of way could have been immense. But this also shows how Montaigne was confident in the fact that women have so much more potential. The fact that he wasn't an academic philosopher, meant that he didn't have to necessarily worry about other opinions.

He exercised this free judgement, this new way of doing philosophy. Further, leading back to how his *Essays* were written for himself and not for the purpose of being for academic purposes or to be correct meant that he was able to write what he wanted, what he thought without having to worry about the consequences of his opinions. This aids towards what he wrote was genuine, writing what he wanted to write at the time. He didn't have to mention Marie, yet he did. Being his adoptive daughter, Montaigne also viewed her in this 'loving-friendship' kind of way. By mentioning her within his essays like he did with La Boetie supports his importance on friendship and intimacy within one's life, "as well as the known enthusiasms of her long love for me and her yearning to meet me simply on the strength of the esteem she had for me before she even knew me, are particulars worthy of special consideration." (Montaigne, 2003:752)⁹

"...what we normally call friends and friendships are no more than acquaintances and familiar relationships bound by some chance or some suitability, by means of which our souls support each other." (Montaigne, 2003:211) Montaigne is holding similar beliefs to Aristotle here that there is a lower kind of friendship. Aristotle discusses this in terms of a

⁹ There is speculation as to whether Montaigne actually wrote this in his essays. Originally these statements were only found in Marie de Gournay's edition of the '*Essays*' and not in his original '*Bordeaux Copy*' – this can only be deemed as speculation. Bakewell (2010) discusses this more.

different kind of friendship, like mentioned above, and that we only have these friendships because we get some kind of pleasure or profit from it (Aristotle, 2009)

Many parallels have been presented between Montaigne and Aristotle and despite some of the differences they arrive at similar ideas with regards to living the good life. The lack of mention of Aristotle in the 'Essays' suggests that whatever parallels are present within their ideas, there is something rather different going on in Montaigne's writings. This will be discussed more within the next section.

The New Mode of Philosophy Integrating the Biographical

“The greatest thing in the world is to know how to live to yourself.” (Montaigne, 2003:272) Montaigne worked on making a better life for himself and by writing about it he was able to reflect and analyse situations to determine a way of how to live for himself. Aristotle primarily wrote his text for others, or at least this is the sense which you get. He had an intentional purpose for the reasons for his text, this being for his students. He aimed at teaching others something. To add something to the philosophical world. Something which Montaigne wasn't keen on doing. As mentioned previously, Montaigne didn't necessarily agree with the teaching of philosophy in a scholarly way. Although he does state in his essays, “If I had founded a school of philosophy I would have taken another route – a more natural one, that is to say a true, convenient and inviolate one; and I might have made myself strong enough to know when to stop.” (Montaigne, 2003:226)

Montaigne presents this attitude of seeing philosophical schools as something which stunts the development of philosophical enhancement. Believing that one should make up their own judgement on philosophical thought and not be constrained to agree and learn only what he is taught by his scholars, “Let the tutor pass everything through a filter and never lodge anything in the boy's head simply by authority, at second-hand. Let the principles of Aristotle not be principles for him anymore than those of the Stoics or Epicureans. Let this diversity of judgement be set before him; if he can, he will make a choice: if he cannot then he will remain in doubt.” (Montaigne, 2003:170) Montaigne gives us this sense of freedom. That Philosophy shouldn't be limited and something which we can change our minds about. How we should make judgements on things ourselves and not limit ourselves to what we are taught. Throughout this next section of the research, I will be analysing this importance of biographical writing which Montaigne engages in, the free style of philosophising that Montaigne offers. And why this piece of philosophy is more effective and pragmatic when trying to turn to a theory which we can practise or use when we need to do guide us on a theory on how to live life and how to live our life well.

This Sense of Freedom within Philosophy and Life

Aristotle presents his theory on ethics in a solid way. Determining a way in how one ought to live in order to achieve the good life, and this being a universal thing, everyone must act in this way. But this isn't how humans are or how real life is. Montaigne comments on this solidness of how we should live, “It seems reasonable enough to base our judgement of a man on the more usual features of his life: but given the natural inconsistency of our behaviour and our opinions it has often occurred to me that even sound authors are wrong in stubbornly trying to weave us into one invariable and sold fabric.” (Montaigne, 2003:373) Further he writes, “They select one universal character, then, following that model, they classify and interpret all the actions of a great man; if they cannot twist them the way they want they accuse the man of insincerity.” (Montaigne, 2003:374) To establish a concrete

way in which one should act in order to achieve the good life seems unrealistic and only possible for those who are considered to have the right requirements to do so – such as Aristotle’s theory on eudaimonia. Montaigne has difficulties with this as he understands the inconsistency of one’s life and behaviours. As we have seen, Aristotle’s ethics seems to only be aimed at such men who would learn under him at his Lyceum. Those who are considered to have the correct requirements to live this life of consistency and ‘correct’ judgment of actions in a given situation to achieve the good life, this being our end, which all our actions should aim towards. But to the majority of people, his theory is unpractical and unrealistic for any given person. Montaigne understands the differences within people and their circumstance, hence why he presents us with a better idea on how we can live our lives well, “It is, in fact, a very rare achievement to direct all of one’s actions to a single end. Very few men, perhaps a dozen among the ancients, have actually attained such perfection.” (Hartle, 2015:9) Therefore, “...Aristotle’s account of human action does not capture the lives of most men for it judges by the standard of “what ought to be,” not by what is in its imperfection.” (Hartle, 2015:9) One that isn’t held down by unrealistic certainties and conditions of philosophical contemplation, “The human good is found, not in the escapes to the heavens of philosophical contemplation, but in the experience of everyday life in society with other men. Montaigne turns philosophy on its head.” (Hartle, 2015:xiii) He rejects this idea of there being a ‘common good’.

Within Montaigne’s ‘Essays’ we are introduced to this sense of freedom within our philosophical thought. How human life is inconsistent and unpredictable, therefore indicating how this universal rule of how to live well and achieve the good life isn’t concrete. There can’t be a universal way, as human judgement and behaviour changes all the time. Montaigne points more towards trusting our own judgement and self-knowledge to attain the good life, “Conscience can fill us with fear, but she can also fill us with assurance and confidence. And I can say that I have walked more firmly through some dangers by reflecting on the secret knowledge I had of my own will and the innocence of my designs.” (Montaigne, 2003:413) Montaigne discusses how our own self-knowledge is what we need. That we need to allow ourselves to have this freedom to figure out how to live the good life. He quotes Cicero within his Essays, “The fullest art of all – that of living good lives – they acquired more from life than from books.” (Montaigne, 2003:188) He goes on to agree and writes, “My pupil will not say his lesson: he will do it.” (Montaigne, 2003:188) We have to live our lives in order to determine how to live. The best way is through our own human experience of our lives. It’s the case of learning through trial and error, not by someone telling us or teaching us how we ought to live. We have this freedom in our lives to figure it out.

Montaigne presents us with his ‘Essays’ which shows how he lived by this sense of freedom of discovering how to live a good life as he felt like the other schools of thought let him down. Not only does he allow this freedom, but his essays do as well. The essays don’t have to necessarily be read in order, like a regular philosophical text. He allows his readers to have this sense of freedom when reading his work, by being able to engage in whichever essays they want to and not having to read in order or read the whole text as such to understand how one can pursue this good life and how we can live it. Montaigne sees that

living a life, similar to that which Aristotle describes in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, shouldn't determine and define us or whether we are living life correctly, "My one desire is that each of us should each be judged apart and that conclusions about me should not be drawn from routine *exempla*". (Montaigne, 2003:257) the basis of how one lives the life of happiness shouldn't be universal. It should be tailored to the individual. It comes from this acquirement of our self-knowledge and judgment. Keeping in mind the inconsistency of human life and behaviour and how adaptations will constantly need to be made if we want to aim at this good life, is a realistic manner. Montaigne develops this 'New Mode' of Philosophy, a term used by Ann Hartle. One which seems more practical and realistic for an everchanging society looking for a way to live and pursue their lives to the best of their ability. This new mode where the individual is important. One which by looking into our lives and how we live it, we become the philosopher.

Biographical Philosophy

Throughout this research I have discussed the benefits of this biographical writing in which Montaigne engages in within his 'Essays'. How this form of writing intrigues the readers and involves them within his work. Being able to relate to particular things or even see themselves within the words he writes. This biographical writing has not only helped humanize philosophy, but it allows this sense of philosophy being a natural part of everyone's day to day life. Montaigne aims to exercise his own judgement; this is what he does within his 'Essays'. The way he does this though makes it seem like everyone can exercise their own judgement. He uses his own natural capacities to do so. As he states in his note to the reader, "Here I want to be seen in my simple, natural, everyday fashion, without striving or artifice: for it is my own self that I am painting." (Montaigne, 2003:1xiii) He's not using some divine power. Just his natural self in order to establish a way to live well, "His decision to use only his own judgement in dealing with all sorts of matters, free his resolutely distant attitude towards memory and knowledge, his warning that we should not mix God or transcendent principles with the human world, are some of the key elements that characterize Montaigne's position." (Foglia *et al*, 2019) He writes something that reflects human society and human behaviour and life. Montaigne presents us with this understanding that there isn't necessarily a right or wrong way to live life – especially given the inconsistency of human life. We can't establish and live by a theory which discusses the right and wrong way of life through human contemplation as this will be forever changing. The way he writes the 'Essays' makes these more traditional theories seem outdated. Especially if you are turning to a philosophical theory on how to live as a contemporary society

Montaigne describing himself as an 'accidental philosopher' shows how teachings of the more traditional sense are attainable and something which is possible to follow. Montaigne discusses very similar ideas to some of these more traditional, ancient theories without intentionally doing so. This can be seen a lot within his similar ideas to Aristotle, yet the little mention of the philosopher is ever discussed or presented. He unintentionally acquired similar beliefs, but he acquired many of these similar beliefs through the exercise of his own

judgement and seemed to adapt these ideas to his own beliefs as a Renaissance philosopher.

This idea of freedom of thought is prominent within Montaigne's writing and many other philosophical writers such as Rousseau, Plutarch etc. This idea of freedom of thought and not allowing oneself to be restrained by what they can and can't write. But also having this sense of not having to worry about being politically correct or writing something that would be refuted. These writers who engage in a biographical writing style, where they are mostly the subject of their own work allows this freedom, "Critical judgement is systematically silenced. Montaigne demands a thought process that would not be tied down by any doctrine principle, a thought process that would lead to free enquiry." (Foglia *et al*, 2019) He wasn't trying to prove anything to anyone but himself. This is how philosophy, especially that concerning the good life and how it can be achieved should be. Philosophy is a subject which consists of many different branches and arguments, along with different teachings and schools. All compiled together under this one subject. Just like life being made up of many different components, many different people living all different lives. To have a theory on how to live well which is universal on how people should live their lives seems foolish. Montaigne recognises this. His use of self-reflection and exercise of his own judgement encourages others to do the same. He isn't just giving us his 'essays' as something for us to read and understand. But more that we should try and take something away from his essays, to understand that we are the only ones who are going to enable ourselves to live a good life. That no philosophical theory is going to give us all the answers on how one should live. That comes from us. He offers us guidance through his biographical writing, to enable the reader to see how he lived out his philosophy in his life, to show how his ideas and his self-reflection/ judgement enabled him to live well and therefore others can attempt to do the same.

Potential Criticisms of the Biographical Approach

Just like with any kind of written philosophical theory, criticisms are bound to be present. Despite the fact that Montaigne claims he wasn't trying to add to the growing level of thought and hence his ideas were from his own self-reflection. His method of writing and his focus on the self leaves room for criticism to be made and whether this style of writing is effective and should be recognised as something which should be praised and used.

Questions can start to be asked, does this method of biographical writing make philosophising too focused on the individual, their circumstance and experiences? Does it fragment the possibility of human solidarity because it is so personal, thus running the risk of separating us too much from each other? But wasn't separating the individual, focusing on understanding yourself Montaigne's aim? Montaigne's essays weren't intended for us, the reader primarily. It was mostly for himself, but the way in which he presents himself and his ideas seems to be a piece of philosophy which aids towards promoting this way of life in a new way, in a way which is more relatable to the realities of human life. Montaigne was promoting this individuality of the self and how we need to aim at developing our self-reflection, essaying ourselves to arrive at the truths concerning us as humans and the life we lead. His dealings with death and grief, one of the most personal dealings one has to deal

with, one which we all deal with, yet we all experience it in different way. Our dealings with topics such as those are so individual and personal. Thus, concluding that our experiences within life are widely diverse to others. Yet Montaigne still develops a text which connects the readers to him and his life. He confirms that this sense of individuality is important without separating us too much as we are all human. Montaigne's aim was for the individual to not hid who they are, to be their own natural selves and this is what this kind of philosophy should be able, this promotion of individuality, "...and here he sums up his motivation for the Essays: "it is a cowardly and servile characteristic, to go about in disguise, concealed behind a mask, without the courage to show oneself as one is." (Butler – Bowdon quoting Montaigne, 2019: 211) he further adds: "A generous heart should never disguise its thoughts, but willingly reveal its inmost depths. It is either all good, or all human." (Butler-Bowdon, 2019:211)

Montaigne's use of his biographical writing and the focus on the individuality of humans still promotes this notion of human solidarity, despite our different experiences within life we still experience similar emotions, hence why it is claimed that others could see themselves within Montaigne's essays (Bakewell, 2011) If his essays and use of biographical writing ran the risk of separating humans too much from each other then these kinds of claims wouldn't be present among readers of the 'Essays'. Montaigne acts as a companion, the intimacy with his readers which he prosed and creates, overcomes these difficulties. It strengthens how the freedom of his writing style of philosophising might actually enliven our experiences of life as well as philosophy itself.

Pursuit of the Good Life for a Contemporary Society

"...Montaigne transforms philosophy itself, bringing it down from the heavens and into the streets, markets, and taverns of ordinary men and ordinary life." (Hartle, 2013:xi)

Montaigne attempts to makes philosophy sociable, to make it for everyone and a natural part of life. He breaks himself down, to show that he is a 'common man', allowing this sense of trust for his readers, "Montaigne's self-revelation is the generous gesture that lies at the origin of a free society. Not only does this gesture invite the nobility to imitate him, but it also serves as the act of trust and confidence that invites a reciprocal trust and confidence of the people." (Hartle, 2013:xviii) This should be aimed for within a philosophical theory offering guidance on how to live well and Montaigne unintentionally succeeds in doing this, considering his aim was never to write a piece of philosophy that others would turn to. It's important to remember that his 'Essays' were for his own personal benefit, for his own self-reflection which he would continue to add to till his death, "By putting the minds fantastic productions into writing, he exposes himself to the possibility of shame. Perhaps he is suggesting that the proper place of the mind's activity is the world of human affairs and that he must order his thoughts to that world." (Hartle, 2013:57)

Montaigne transform's philosophy which aids a more contemporary society which allows his ethics and his 'Essays' to be a more effective teaching/following on how we can aim at pursuing this good life. When looking at more traditional teachings, they aim at making and presenting the philosopher divine, which as we have seen, dehumanizes philosophy, but also the philosopher, "Within the tradition, contemplation is regarded as the highest human

activity because, in contemplation, the mind escapes the temporal and is united with the divine, eternal, and unchanging: the human becomes divine. The *Essays*, however, are not directed to the divine, eternal, and unchanging, but to the human, temporal, and changing.” (Hartle, 2015:65) Montaigne brings philosophy down to be natural, something human and not something which is constricted, “The *Essays* are about human beings and human action: in them, Montaigne encounters the human itself and as such. He considers it “purely,” judging it as it is in itself, without relation to anything else.” (Hartle, 2013:65)

Montaigne moves towards this act of judgement¹⁰ but this act of judgement is individual to the person, not as a universal judgement, “Montaigne judges each man as he is in himself, without relation to other”. (Hartle, 2013:72) Further, he doesn’t judge against this standard of perfection of form, “he accepts imperfection and is able to see the good in the imperfect. He sees how men *are*. That is, indeed, our experience of other men. In fact, the social requires the acceptance of imperfection.” (Hartle, 2013:72) Again, leading back to this discussion on how Montaigne understands the inconsistency of life and human behaviour. His ethics is more practical, especially for a modern-day society where the social is a huge aspect of life. He brings philosophy into society, makes it social. He sees man as an individual, and therefore not judging based on a universal standard which the traditional philosophies did, “Montaigne judges each man according to that man’s own consciences, and he ranks men according to the purity of their consciences.” (Hartle, 2013:73)

But the question of who this modern-day society is comes into consideration. Like mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, when on the discussion of a modern-day society we are directing is towards the 21st century Westerners. As when we investigate different global counties and their cultures a theory such as Montaigne’s may not be practical or even possible. This does put difficulty on Montaigne’s ethics being for everyone though as frankly this isn’t the case. Montaigne’s issues with his gendered language also causes difficulties too as he mostly aims his ethics towards a male audience. Like noted throughout this thesis though, Montaigne was essentially writing for himself. Not for anyone else which diminishes this problem of the attainability as his intention wasn’t for others and therefore this is something to consider when engaging with his work. Leading us back to this idea that we need to tailor what we take from his essays ourselves. That this good life is down to the individual and by assaying our lives and through our own self judgement, the achievability of the good life becomes possibly becomes possible as the act of self-judgement isn’t limited to any specific gender and group of people.

“This emergence of the private man into the public is the defining action of the *Essays* for it is the bringing into existence of the new realm of the social.” (Hartle, 2015:88) For a contemporary society, this emergence of the private into the public is an important notion. As a society, we are encouraged to discuss the more diverse private matters. These can be those relating to important issues within society, normalising different things by bringing them out into the public, such as the diverse range of sexuality. This whole idea of normalising things within society is a prominent element of modern society. Montaigne

¹⁰ Ann Hartle (2015) discusses Montaigne’s act of judgement in detail within her ‘Montaigne and the Origins of Modern Philosophy’.

seems to be someone who originally urged for this private into the social. Even within talking about ourselves, this seemed to have originally stemmed from Montaigne (Bakewell, 2011) As a society, as a human in modern society, we are encouraging to see everyone as an individual, to not judge others on a universal standard and understand that everyone is different in their own ways. His rejection stems from him rejecting this notion of there being this one common human form and instead Montaigne claims that we should find in one's own individual particularity, "The individual must be free to pursue the good in his own way. Therefore, any attempt to enforce a standard of the common good would require an illegitimate use of force. The common good justifies coercion and force." (Hartle, 2013:101)

Montaigne aims at breaking down this barrier around the judgement of the private, therefore bringing it into the social allows man to understand how complex and diverse life is. But it also normalises the private and humanizes philosophy. Seeing it as something which is integrated into our lives, not something divine and separate. Although, "Montaigne's refounding carries the greatest risk because it entails the overturning of the most fundamental moral bases of society: the standard of the common good and thus classical virtue." (Hartle, 2013:131) But this wasn't much concern of Montaigne. Like stated throughout this research. Montaigne wasn't trying to prove anything. Therefore, the consequences which might have occurred due to his writing wasn't his main concern. He was stripping himself down to his most natural self, he was being realistic and wasn't trying to attract or gain any kind of public glory. Hence why his ethics comes across as something more effective for a contemporary society since he was trying to establish a way of life achievable for everyone and something which wasn't false. But something natural and true to himself but also true to the nature of man.

"Montaigne identifies the "social bond" as the free communication of our thoughts and wills. This is the bond that unites while at the same time allowing each human being to seek the good in his particularity." (Hartle, 2013:135) Montaigne wants to allow humans to be humans, but unapologetically hence why he attempts to get rid of the shame surrounding bringing the private into the public. Even by discussing his ideas on taboo topics such as sexual desires, he begins to break down this barrier around the judgement of the private, "By going against the instinctual shame associated with sex as the private and hidden, Montaigne is weakening the power of the shame associated with the private, overcoming one of the most deeply ingrained of all customs, or perhaps even nature itself." (Hartle, 2013:144) He pushes and aims to encourage freedom, freedom of the self and who man is as his natural self. That we should be able to let our thoughts be what they are and not feel like we don't have this freedom to be humans, to make mistakes, to have opinions. And that we have to find the good for ourselves.

For Montaigne presenting himself "without striving", in his natural form, he shows how the private and the domestic are natural and therefore shame shouldn't be present when bringing the private into the public, into the social. It is natural and human, "The private realm is where we act without being seen by others, where we are what we truly are. The is "our own being". (Hartle, 2013:136) When out in the social, surrounded by others we have a tendency to act different, to put on a mask around others, to avoid judgement. Montaigne is

trying to show that we shouldn't have to put this mask on, that we should be able to act like our natural selves. For a contemporary society, Montaigne seems to confirm that we can act as our natural selves. Today's society is much different to what it was when Montaigne was writing. As a contemporary society we are much more open to show the public our natural selves. We are encouraged to be who we want to be, living in such a diverse society full of many different genders, sexualities, cultures and religions etc. We are encouraged to see everyone as an individual and accept the person who they are. Montaigne seems to be writing about this diversity before it was public. He confirms that this is the good for humans. That this is the way to develop a society of freedom, "In the whole world there has never been two identical opinions, any more than two identical hairs or seeds. Their most universal characteristic is diversity." (Montaigne, 2003:887) Understanding the inconsistency of life and diversity and accepting the diversity seems to be the steppingstones for one to live this good life. Free from this universal standard on what humans should be like. Montaigne took the challenge to be one of the first ones to bring this private out into the public, which now many of the modern-day society does. His way of life and how we see life progressed more and more into society to which many don't even realise that Michel de Montaigne was one of the first writers/philosophers to accept this diversity of human beings and human life and allow our natural selves to be part of the public life without shame.

When discussing this notion of our 'natural' selves, Montaigne is explicit to what he means by the natural self. What can be inferred is how he adds 'without striving' which indicate that when Montaigne is discussing himself and others acting and living life according to their natural selves and natural human life directs us to understanding that human life being this natural thing, can also be changed as we may want this better life. By achieving this we may try and be this perfect human who doesn't make mistakes, or not admit to them. By making mistakes is natural, and therefore a natural part of human life. Montaigne seems to encourage others, through his own self-analysis of his life, that we should embrace our mistakes and learn from them. That we should let things naturally occur and not always try and control every situation. Referring to Aristotle and his theory on eudaimonia, he seems to create this perfect human notion. That if we follow his ethics thoroughly, then you can become this perfect, virtuous person. But as we have seen, that's not attainable and by trying to be this incredibly virtuous person all the time in order to lead the good life may create a life of constant stress and worrying. Whereas if we aren't always concerned with being a completely virtuous person and we instead turn in towards ourselves and our own self judgement, we lead a much more natural life, learning from mistakes and being able to analyse a situation and ourselves better in the future. Naturally and unforced.

Ann Hartle discusses how Montaigne allows for this sense of strength. Strength with not feeling shame over being our natural selves. But also, this notion of honour as well. He gives us this sense of how we should be proud of who we are and our diversity. That we shouldn't feel the need to put on this social mask and by doing this one will never be truly happy, we would be living a section of our lives as a lie. The Essays, Hartle says, seems to be centred around this overcoming of shame, "Montaigne uncovers himself, revealing the most private aspects of his life. This is the act of generosity that lies at the origin of society. Montaigne

has made the first generous gesture.” (Hartle, 2015:149) It’s this whole idea that it’ll only take one person to start a trend, this one, which Montaigne began is living life as our natural selves as a way to live life well and to be happy. By living this way, we create the free individual which presents this notion of a free society. His ethics is practical, something which everyone can contribute to.

Montaigne has transformed the philosophy of the ancients. He develops this notion of an ‘accidental philosopher’ since he held very similar ideas to the ancient philosophers without realising until he discovered resemblances. He never tried to completely take down this philosophy either, rather he transformed them. He encourages this sense of freedom, not constraining ourselves to one particular teaching but also how we need to be our natural selves. He humanizes philosophy, whereas Aristotle dehumanizes the philosopher by making him the divine. This is where difficulties with Montaigne and Aristotle can be highlighted and where the differences between the accidental and academic philosopher are brought to light. But this might have not necessarily been difficulties which Montaigne has with Aristotle, rather, Montaigne wanted to write something which was going to benefit a more modern society with the growing range of diversity and allowing the private to be shameless and brought into the public to show that this is how human life should be and will enable for the freedom of society, with no one hiding behind this social mask.

Montaigne or Aristotle? The Accidental vs the Academic.

In Montaigne’s hands the good life seems more achievable and therefore a more attractive theory in which one is going to want to engage in. It seems like Montaigne’s theory is more effective and practical than theories such as Aristotle’s. As we have seen from Aristotelian ethics, the achievability of the good life according to his conditions means a limited amount of people are able to achieve this good life. Further, his theory doesn’t seem practical, especially for a more modern society. This universal standard of the ‘common good’ for such a diverse society is impractical. Montaigne, however, understands the diversity of society. Even during the time in which he was writing, he saw the level of diversity that was being covered up within the private. And through his methods of bringing this private out into the public, into everyday society, he uncovers this diversity and allows for this freedom within society and within the individual. This is more favourable and practical.

But this isn’t just an argument for Montaigne or Aristotle. It is centred around this notion of the accidental philosopher and the academic. Where the philosophical life seems to be naturally incorporated into the accidental philosopher’s life. Where the philosopher and his ideas become one with their own personal lives. This idea of the accidental philosopher seems to make philosophy itself a natural part of your life, not something we have to actively go out and do. Philosophy is already naturally imbedded into our lives: the good life isn’t something we merely read about. Rather it is something we practise and go through continuously. The academic philosophers seem to try and create this secure and concrete theory on the good life, something that is less natural and more forced which philosophy shouldn’t be. Montaigne and Aristotle sit at opposite ends here. Montaigne encourages this pursuit of the good life in a natural way which is centred around ourselves and our own

individual lives. Aristotle focuses on the universal and what one ought to do. Despite the fact that this isn't effective or even attainable. His ethics becomes questionable as he doesn't allow for the personal to be brought out. He continues to see the life of the philosopher as irrelevant and therefore doesn't engage with this within his texts.

For that reason, Montaigne's *Essays* can be perceived as a more effective theory. He tackles this problem surrounding how one can live a good life differently. He doesn't lay out set conditions in which one should follow. He turns to himself. To his own capabilities. He shows that the pursuit of the good life begins with yourself, "An important place to begin in philosophy is this: a clear perception of one's own ruling principle." (Holiday quoting Epictetus' *Discourses*, 1.26.15. 2016:71) Ryan Holiday goes on to state, "Perhaps we could say that we begin our journey into philosophy when we become aware of the ability to analyse our own minds." (Holiday and Hanselman, 2016:71)

His style of biographical writing shows the relevance of the life of the philosopher for understanding where their idea come from. But also, how this biographical writing humanizes the philosopher. It presents the philosopher as a natural man, just like us. How they make mistakes, they feel all emotions, it takes away from this sense of divine which originally dehumanizes philosophy and the philosopher. Everyone is unique. No two people are the same. We have all experienced different things. There are many different religions, beliefs and opinions which circulate the world in which we live in. We understand the inconsistency of human behaviour and how unexpectedly life can take a turn. Therefore, when we are looking for a theory which is going to offer us some form of guidance on how we can live well despite all the unpredictability of life, we want a theory which considers the diversity of humans and human life, we also want to turn to a theory in which the person who has written this ethics to understand these inconsistencies. Who's lived this natural human life and will openly talk about it.

This is Michel de Montaigne. He offers us this within his *Essays*. He gives us insight; he enables us to see ourselves in his own writing. He understands the inconsistencies and the importance of self-reflection in order to live well. Philosophers such as Montaigne are the ones in which we should be turning to and therefore his ethics offers a more effective theory. Something which fits with the diversity of human life. We need to live life for ourselves. Which is full and not constrained by supposed universal standards which we should conform to, "Wherever your life ends, there all of it ends. The usefulness of living lies not in the duration but in what you make of it. Some have lived long and lived little. See to it while you are still here. Whether you have lived enough depends not on a count of years but on your will." (Montaigne, 2003:106)

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is never going to be a theory which is going to suit everyone. With the diverse world in which we live, life will always be everchanging. Making a way of life which everyone could practise, and follow would be impossible. With the vast number of different cultures, religions, people identifying as different genders, everyone holding different beliefs, the sense of the universal seems absurd. As Montaigne attempt to get rid of this idea of the 'universal good', it is also the case that his ethics too, is not going to be something which everyone can incorporate into their lives. Although, he makes his ethics practical for many, if not most. Especially since he determines that the good life consists of your own self-knowledge and reflection on your life. Despite Montaigne's gendered language and the potential audience of his Essays, which isn't clear, reflection of your own life and self-knowledge isn't gendered or restricted to certain people. It is your own practise, something that comes from the person themselves, something which everyone has the capabilities of doing regardless of your gender or societal position.

This research has discussed the importance of understanding the life of the philosopher as a way to trust and get a more grounded understand of the theory the philosophers has presented. It demonstrates how the life of the philosopher acts as a catalyst of their theories and ideas. Montaigne presents this 'new mode' of philosophy, which Hartle discusses, a way in which philosophy should be. He offers a way of doing 'accidental' philosophy' that is more open to the democratic and pluralist ideas of today than is, say, Aristotle, and that the role of biography is vital for this kind of approach. That we need to put into action the way to live well, not just studying the ideas, "My philosophy lies in action, in natural and present practice, and but little in ratiocination." (Montaigne, 2003:950)

It isn't just understanding the life of the philosopher to get a better understanding of their ideas, but also understanding your own self. This is the ideas in which Montaigne promotes. That in order to live the good life, we have to understand ourselves and individuals who are diverse from other people. This is the steppingstone which will lead us to analyse the life in which we live and understanding that no two humans are the same. Therefore, the way in which we aim to live the good life isn't going to be the same for someone else. Montaigne understands this, and this is why he established his Essays. Not for the purpose of teaching anyone anything, but as a way in which aided him to live life well. And therefore, his Essays shouldn't necessarily be seen as an ethical theory, but rather a way in which Montaigne was able to analyse and 'assay' himself, "I have dedicated this book to the private benefit of my friends and kinsmen so that, having lost me (as they must do soon) they can find here again some traits of my character and of my humours... If my design had been to seek the favour of the world I would have decked myself out better and presented myself in a studied gait." (Montaigne, 2003:1xiii)

References:

- Amadio, A. H. and Kenny, . Anthony J.P. (2021, March 2). *Aristotle*. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Aristotle>
- Aristotle, Notes by Brown, L (2009) *The Nicomachean Ethics*. United States: Oxford Press University
- Augustine, S (1953), *Confessions*, Catholic University of America Press, Available from: ProQuest Ebook Central. Last Accessed: 28 January 2022. Available at :<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.oxfordbrookes.idm.oclc.org/lib/brookes/reader.action?docID=3134878>
- Bakewell, S (2010) *How to Live*. Great Britain: Vintage
- Ben (2014) *Montaigne was a Feminist*. Available at: <https://tenyearreadinglist.wordpress.com/2014/06/08/montaigne-was-a-feminist/>
- Bradatan, C. (2018) *Dying for Ideas*. Great Britain: Bloomsbury
- Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia (2020). *The Essays of Michel de Montaigne*. Encyclopaedia Britannica. Accessed at: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Michel-de-Montaigne/The-Essays>
- Butler- Bowdon, T. (2019) *50 Philosophy Classics*. Great Britain: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.
- Chandler, C. (no date) *Aristotle's Lyceum*. Available at :<https://www.athensguide.com/aristotle-lyceum/>
- Chroust, A.-H. (1965). A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE « VITA ARISTOTELIS » OF DIOGENES LAERTIUS (DL, V, 1-16). *L'Antiquité Classique*, 34(1), 97–129. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41649132>
- Chroust, Anton-Hermann (1965) "Aristotle and the 'Philosophies of the East.'" *The Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 18, no. 3, 1965, pp. 572–580. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/20124075. Accessed 17 June 2021.
- Clark, C. E. (1968). *SENECA'S LETTERS TO LUCILIUS AS A SOURCE OF SOME OF MONTAIGNE'S IMAGERY*. *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et Renaissance*, 30(2), 249–266. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41430068>
- Edelman, C. (no date) *Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy: Michel de Montaigne*. University of the Incarnate Word: USA. Last Accessed: 28th January 2022. Available at: <https://iep.utm.edu/montaign/#:~:text=The%20stated%20purposes%20of%20Montaigne%E2%80%99s%20essays%20are%20almost,reading%20public%20as%20fundamental%20goals%20of%20his%20project.>
- Evans, J. (2012) *Philosophy for Life And Other Dangerous Situations*. Great Britain: Rider.

Foglia, Marc and Emiliano Ferrari, *Michel de Montaigne*: The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2019 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2019/entries/montaigne/>>.

Frenk, B. W. (1975). Montaigne's ἄριστον μέτρον. *The French Review*, 49(1), 51–58. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/389686>

Gourevitch, V. (2012). *A Provisional Reading of Rousseau's "Reveries of the Solitary Walker."* *The Review of Politics*, 74(3), 489–518. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23263386>

Gros, Frederic (2015) *A Philosophy of Walking*. London: Verso

HARTLE, A. (2012). *THE INVISIBILITY OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE "ESSAYS OF MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE."* *The Review of Metaphysics*, 65(4), 795–812. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41635520>

Hartle, A. (2013). *In Montaigne and the Origins of Modern Philosophy*. Northwestern University Press. Accessed at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv3znz85.4>

Hartle, A. (2019) *'The Bonds of Our Society': Montaigne and the Transformation of Virtue*. ABC Religion and Ethics. Available at :<https://www.abc.net.au/religion/montaigne-and-the-transformation-of-virtue/11240746>

Helm, Bennett, (2021) *Friendship*, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/friendship/>>.

Holiday, R. And Hanselman, S. (2016) *The Daily Stoic*. Great Britain: Profile Books LTD

Honderich. T. (1995) *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*. United States: Oxford University Press

Humphreys, J. (no date), *Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy: Aristotle*. University of Pennsylvania. Last Accessed: 28th January, 2022. Available at: <https://iep.utm.edu/aristotl/>

Jantzen, G., Jantzen, G. M. (1998). *Becoming divine: towards a feminist philosophy of religion*. United Kingdom: Manchester University Press.

Konstan, David, "*Epicurus*", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2018 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/epicurus/>>.

Logan, G. M. (1975). *The Relation of Montaigne to Renaissance Humanism*. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 36(4), 613–632. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2708992>

Menut, Albert. D (1934) *Montaigne and the Nicomachean Ethics*, *Modern Philosophy*, Vol. 31, No. 3, pp.225-242. The University of Chicago Press. Available at:<https://www.jstor.org/stable/434090?read-now=1&seq=1>

Montaigne, M with and introduction by M. A. Screech (2003) *'The Complete Essays'*. London: Penguin Group

- Mulgan, R. (1994). *ARISTOTLE AND THE POLITICAL ROLE OF WOMEN*. *History of Political Thought*, 15(2), 179–202. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26214315>
- Nussbaum, M. C. (2018) *The Therapy of Desire*. Great Britain: Princeton Classics
- Regier, W. G. (1994). *Review of The Complete Essays, by M. de Montaigne & M. A. Screech*. *Prairie Schooner*, 68(3), 141–150. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40636722>
- Sankovitch, T. A. (2021, February 24). *Michel de Montaigne*. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Michel-de-Montaigne>
- Seneca (2008) *Dialogues and Essays*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Szalay, J (2022) *The Renaissance: The 'Rebirth' of science & culture*. *Live Science*. <https://www.livescience.com/55230-renaissance.html?msclkid=5ccce8a6d14811ecb1b219c669d44ba8>
- Wadsworth, P. A. (1970). *Montaigne's Relation to His Readers*. *South Atlantic Bulletin*, 35(2), 20–27. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3197004>
- Walbank, F. W. (2021, May 17). *Alexander the Great*. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Alexander-the-Great>