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THESIS

THE ESSAY IN GREEK LITERATURE

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The Essay in Greek Literature.

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The Essay in Greek Literature.

That the essay is a form of literature created by Montaigne, that it was unknown before him, and is distinctively modern, is a theory generally prevalent among the literary public of our time. But it is altogether contrary to the usual order of things in literature that any of its species should be suddenly created; evolution is a law which applies to other fields of knowledge as well as to science. The drama was a long while in the making, likewise the prose novel, the epic, the critical history. So too it must have been with the essay; it was developed or improved by Montaigne, it could not have been created by him; to assert this is to ascribe a genius to him which he never possessed. Montaigne might however have revived or developed a literary form existing before his time, which then appears in the essay form, and is given the name "essay".

There is nothing in the mediaeval or early Renaissance literature immediately preceding him which he could have used, nothing at all resembling the essay. So we must go to antiquity. Indeed it was classical literature, not mediaeval, that the men of the Renaissance loved and studied and imitated. This was particularly true of Montaigne. His pages are sprinkled with citations from the classics. Plutarch in particular was his dearest friend, his very life. He tells us as much himself. So if we wish to discover literary influence upon Montaigne or the sources of the form in which he cast his thoughts,
the classics should be searched, and Plutarch first of all.

A working definition of "essay" is requisite before any investigation can be begun. First as to the etymology. The word of course comes from the Old French 'essai' meaning a trial. This is in turn from Latin 'exagium' a weighing or a kind of weight. 'Exagium does not occur before the time of Constantine. In Greek we find έξαγείον and ἔξαγας from which the Latin word might be derived, if it were not for the fact that the Greek word is not found before the ninth century A.D. The borrowing was in fact the other way. 'Exagium' means a weighing literally, 'essai' is used more in the figurative sense. Hence when it was applied to a particular species of literature in the Renaissance, it implied a consideration of some subject.

To get a good definition it will be well to discuss in detail three or four representative essays of the great artists in this field. Montaigne may well be chosen first, as he is the prince of essayists. We take his 'Par divers moyens on arrive a pareille fin'. The title is vague and conveys hardly any suggestion of what the subject matter will be. "La plus commune est, on", he says, "d'amollir les coeurs de ceux qui on a offensez, lors qui ayant la vengeance en main, ils nous tiennent a leur mercy, est de les esmouvoir par soummision a commiseration et a pitié: toutesfois la bravere, la constance, et la resolution, moyens tout contraires ou quel-quesfois servy à ce mesme effect". He then proceeds to cite examples of these "moyens tout contraires" wherein

(1) Essais: Livre I, Chapitre I.
(3).

bravery rather than submission has mollified the conqueror. In a genial, chatty way he goes on to make a few remarks about the two means. Either would easily influence a man of his own nature. Although the Stoics held pity to be a vice unbecoming a strong mind, a strong man may yield to the sacred image of Valor, but not to mere tears and groans. This reminds our author that surprise at the action of a subdued enemy may produce a like effect and in his customary story-telling manner he cites instances. From this he is reminded what a marvelous, vain, fickle, and unstable subject is man, and he gives examples of unexpected and almost freakish conduct on the part of conquerors. Pompey spared a city merely because of the virtue and magnanimity of one Xen, a citizen. Alexander caused a brave enemy to be disgraced, mangled, and dismembered.

He closes with asking several questions relative to such unaccountable behavior, and abruptly finishes with another example.

This essay is really about different attitudes of different generals towards a foe who is brave and heroic despite his defeat. The title is merely a peg on which the author hangs his discourse. The author in an irresponsible and unconcerned fashion drifts from one idea to another. We might conceive ourselves as sitting at the fire-side, and Montaigne, a chatty, genial companion well versed in life, as talking in a rambling way of the conduct of victorious generals, interspersing remarks on compassion, pity, and magnanimity.

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Take the essay 'De Menteurs', one of Montaigne's \(\)}

\(\)Essais: Livre I Chapitre IX.\(\)
best. It is a fine representative of the rambling type, where, like a bee, the author flits from sweet to sweet. The subject is "Liars" but the essay opens with an apology for the writer's poor memory. "J'ay toutes mes aultres parties viles et tresrare et digne estre singulier et estre digne, mais, en cette la, ie pense de gaigner nom et reputation". To make matters worse, in his country, men of poor judgment are thought to be of mean intelligence. "Mais ils me font tort; car il se veoid par experience, plutost au rebours, que les memoires excellentes se joignent volontiers aux jugements debiles". And so he goes on deprecating any reproaches that might be made to him on the score of his forgetfulness.

This thought brings to his mind the comforts he may derive from his infirmity. A forgetful man need not trouble himself with political aspirations, for memory is necessary to the ambitious; nature has strengthened his other faculties in proportion as she has left him unfurnished in this. As memory furnishes a man with much matter of invention, he is precluded from being talkative and boresome; then, too, he will the less remember the injuries he has received. Lastly"les lieux it les livres que je reveoy, me rient tousjours d'une fresche nouvelleté".

He now finally comes or rather drifts to the subject of lying. "Ce n'est pas sans raison qu'on dicit, que qui ne se sent point assez ferme de memoire, ne se doit pas mesler d'estre menteur". The truth of a matter makes such a strong impression on the mind that it crowds out of consciousness the false inventions made by the liar, who also

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confuses the lies he has told and at length loses all reputation.

This last point naturally suggests a paragraph on the wicked habit of lying. It is a vice to which men otherwise perfectly honest and upright are enslaved. He closes with several instances of liars completely nonplussed and humiliated. There is no formal conclusion in any sense.

This essay, just as the other, is very subjective and conversational in tone. The first half is almost wholly about Montaigne himself, and in the remainder we have the man himself speaking and not an impersonal tractate on the vice of lying.

Such are these two essays, both eminently representative of the author. They are types of what is commonly considered the cream of modern essay writing. They are undoubtedly the culmination, the high water mark of this form of literature. Addison, Steele, and most particularly, Charles Lamb handle the essay in a manner similar to Montaigne's treatment. They are all conversational in style and avoid rather than seek logical formality and method in thought. An appeal is made to the emotions and fancy rather than to the intellect and reason. The author seeks primarily to went a mood or to amuse the reader, although his ultimate purpose may be to instruct him or set him to thinking.

Montaigne represents the conversational, digressive, extremely personal type of essayist, Bacon the more formal and less subjective type. There is personality indeed in his essays, but he seems to hold himself more aloof than Montaigne. His essays are the journal of a scholar and philosopher rather than the conversation of a friend.
Take the essay "On Envy". In the very opening paragraph we note a greater degree of objectivity. There is also an indefinable formality, but this formality is Bacon himself. It is his personal touch. The tone is altogether different from that of the treatise. After a few words on the "curiosities" of envy Bacon divides his subject into three heads, "what persons are apt to envy others," "what persons are most subject to be envied themselves," and "what is the difference between public and private envy". This intentionally formal division of the subject is something we rarely find in Montaigne. The author now proceeds to discuss the different types of men likely to be envious, devoting a few sentences to each. Then he takes up the second heading and treats it in the same manner, and the same with the third. He closes with some general remarks on the subject of envy.

Bacon's essays are all very short, but they may be regarded as the prototype of the formal, lengthy essay of modern times, or more strictly speaking of the last century. Macaulay and Emerson are examples of this type. Their characteristics are the same as those of Bacon, excepting that their essays are longer and even more objective and methodical.

We have gone over these essays of Montaigne and Bacon to discover what they actually are, to have a first-hand acquaintance. The first thing noticeable is that the essay is very difficult to summarize or analyze. It is too airy and elusive. Its charm can be felt; but any attempt at analysis is almost hopeless. Indeed the very attempt might seem a sign of a lack of genuine appreciation.

(1) Bacon's Essays, p. 52, Putman's School and College Classics.
However we have been able to determine some of the characteristics of the essay. As to Montaigne we find that his essays are conversational, digressive, full of himself, mostly without form. He himself thus speaks in the De l'Amitié: "Que sont ce icy aussi, à la verité, que crotoses et corps monstrueux, rappiecez de divers membres, sans certaine figure, n'ayant ordre, suite, ny proportion que fortuite?" and again in his preface: "Sic'eust esté pour rechercher la favëau du monde, ie me fëusse paré de beautez empruntées: iemulx qu'on m'y veoye en ma façon simple, naturelle et ordinaire, sans estude et artifice; car c'est moy que ie peinde. Mes deffauts s'y livront au vif, mes imperfections et ma forme naïve , autant que la reverence publique me l'a permis."

According to his idea incoherence in an essay is not a fault at all; coherence is not a law which applies to that form of composition. The essay should be a delineation or record of the author. It need not be serious in purpose. Such stated in brief and in crude fashion is the essay, as one would judge from reading Montaigne; and such is the prevalent conception. But on reading Bacon and Macaulay we find that their idea of the essay is somewhat different. Bacon favors brevity; but neither of them stands for incoherent thoughts merely pieced together. Yet their thoughts follow one another in associative or meditative sequence rather than logical. The tone is noticeably less subjective than in Montaigne. Bacon approves of a readily perceptible unity and so keeps pretty well to his subject. What has been said of Bacon applies in still greater degree to Macaulay,

Emerson, Birrell, and Sainte-Beuve. In the last century the essay has become largely objective and didactic. With this has come a necessary formal structure, a logical development of the thought. Essay on some literary topic or personage are after this manner as a rule. Sometimes they are avowedly didactic and objective, yet we cannot refuse them the term "essay". There is no ocassion for restricting this term to a very narrow meaning. If we do we are at a loss for a word to apply to the critical works of modern authors, for they are more than bare treatises and discussions.

Before bringing to a close this discussion we cannot refrain from giving a few extracts from critics on the essay. They represent several different points of view. We need not agree with all, unless we so choose. Richard Burton in "The Essay as Mood and Form" characterizes the essay as follows: "Slight, casual, rambling, confidential in tone, the manner much, the theme unimportant in itself, a mood to be vented rather than a thought to be added to the sum of human knowledge, the frank revelation of a personality-such have been and are the head-marks of the essay down to the present day".

A writer in the "Academy" expresses our opinion exactly: "Outside fiction, it (the essay) represents the most humane, the least formal, the most friendly, personal, and artlessly artistic mode of expression between writer and reader. Yet withal elastic, adjusting itself to the needs of individuality, so that in given hands it attains

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(1) Forum, Vol. 32, p. 120.
(2) Academy, Vol. 64, p. 611.
something of the grand style, and a more set structure: you have the négligé of Leigh Hunt and the brilliantly elaborated balance of Macaulay, where the whole edifice is carefully proportioned and nothing 'wanders at its own sweet will'.

Hamilton W. Mabie defines the term thus:

"The essayist appears late in the field, because his function is to meditate upon what men have accomplished, endured, suffered, and become in order to frame an informal philosophy, to announce a body of precepts, to bring out curious or significant traits of character, to set in humorous light the incongruities, the surprises, and paradoxes of human destiny—The essayist cannot distill the wisdom of life until he has a considerable accumulation of the material of experience to work upon. He presupposes a certain fulness of development, a certain growth of culture. He need not be less original than his fellow craftsmen, but the form he uses appears later in literary development".

"The essay is short—because the function of the essay is to bring into clear light a single truth, or a group of closely related truths, a single character, or a set of kindred characters, a single aspect or phase of a great movement".

After this examination of several representative essays by recognized masters in this field of literature we have gotten some workable ideas on the subject. A hard and fast definition of the essay it is impossible to make. One cannot draw any lines; the essay of Montaigne is one thing,
that of Bacon another, that of Sainte-Beuve still different. We shall have to be content with a classification broad enough and general enough to include all the various phases of the modern essay.

We have now to inquire whether that species of literature represented by Plutarch's "Moralia" and similar writings from antiquity are to be classified under this general head or not. Plutarch, be it remembered, was Montaigne's favorite author. These "Moralia" consist of brief, expository treatment of such subjects as "How a man may be Benefited by his Enemies" (Ποιος ὁ ἄνθρωπος δει εὑρεῖται ὑπὸ ἐχθρῶν ὑπερθέλεσθαι), "On Abundance of Friends" (Περὶ πολύ φιλίας ὑπὲρθέλεσθαι), "The Virtues of Women" (Περὶ γυναῖκῶν ἠθετὴται) etc. These subjects remind us of Bacon rather than Montaigne. They are serious and didactic. Hence Bacon and Plutarch will serve as a basis of comparison between the modern and ancient essay (if there is such), rather than Montaigne and Plutarch, although the former imitated the latter to a considerable degree. We take Bacon's "On Superstition", and the Περὶ διασταύρωσις 

Atheism and superstition. Atheism is merely unbelief. All false belief is distressing, superstition is contumely that accompanied with passion of the Deity. especially so.

(1) Bacon, Essays, p. 104.
Illustrations. Atheism brings the soul to a state of insensibility; superstition is an opinion involving passion and so humiliates and crushes a man. Fear is the worst of the passion, the most helpless. It springs from superstition. Illustrations. This fear, ever present, impels us to do puerile and unseemly acts of worship. The sanctuary is the most fearful place to the superstitious man. He creates worse fears and horrors to come after death. Atheism is free from these evils, but dangerous to the soul. Passion and abjectness do not accompany it. Cases analogous to that of the atheist and superstitious man. Comparison between the atheists and superstitious. Former insensible to benefits, received from Providence, the latter filled with alarm at them. In misfortune the atheist supplies himself with consolations and remedies, the superstitious builds

Superstition is more dangerous towards men than atheism. Atheism furnishes guides to outward moral virtue; superstition gets absolute control of man and dethrones reason and good sense. Amplification of this comparison of atheism and superstition. Arguments are made to justify superstition. Examples. Causes of superstition. Superstition deformed religion. A little superstition can corrupt the good forms and orders of religion.
upon his troubles yet further calamities. Further comparison. In avoiding superstition Superstition the mother of go not to the opposite atheism. To avoid superstition extreme of atheism. Do we should flee to true religion, not take the good away not atheism. from the bad.

This similarity of Bacon to Plutarch is nowhere closer than in these two discussions, but they are very much alike in other, "On Fortune and " is among the numerous examples.

Before drawing any conclusions from the above comparison it may be well to see what Bacon thought of his essays himself. Following is a draft of the dedication of the Essays. It was never printed by Bacon. (1)

To the Most High and Excellent Prince Henry, Prince of Wales, Duke of Cornwall, and Earle of Chester.

Having divided my life into the active and contemplative part; I am desirous to give his Majesty and your Highness of the fruits of both, simple though they be. To write just treatises requireth leisure in the writer and leisure in the reader, and therefore are not so fit, neither in regard of your Highness's princely affairs, nor in regard of my continual services; which is the cause that hath made me to choose to write certain brief notes, set down rather significantly than curiously, which I have called Essays. The word is late but the thing is ancient. For Seneca's epistles to Lucilius, if one mark them well, are but essays,—that is dispersed meditations, though

(1) Arber's English Reprint Vol. XIII, p. 158.
conveyed in the form of epistles. These labors of mine I know cannot be worthy of your Highness— for what can be worthy of you? But my hope is, they may be as grains of salt, that will rather give you an appetite, than offend you with satiety. And although they handle those things wherein both men's lives and their pens are most conversant, yet what I have attained I know not, but I have endeavored to make them not vulgar, but of a nature where-of a man shall find much experience, little in books. So as they are neither repetitions nor fancies etc." The rest does not concern us. The important thing is that Bacon is conscious of and acknowledges a similarity between his own work and the "Epistles" of Seneca.

To return to the comparison made above between the most noticeable thing Bacon and Plutarch, is that the modern writer has plainly borrowed many of his ideas from the ancient. Not only that but Bacon has modelled his discourse on Plutarch's. The latter's treatment is fuller than the former's, but it must be remembered that Bacon's essays are unusually short. This discussion or treatise, or whatever we choose to call it is no longer than an essay of Lamb, Addison, or Macaulay. As far as length is concerned, the Τεταύονον is an essay. Both writers discuss at first the difference between atheism and superstition. Then after some remarks (very brief in Bacon) they pass on to the respective effects of these beliefs on men. On this theme is built up the main structure of the two discussions. Plutarch dwells on the fact that the superstitious man encumbers himself with enervating fears
and apprehensions and degrades himself. Bacon emphasizes the fact that superstition dethrones reason. He is much more curt; but this is only an individual characteristic. After a few sentences on the causes of superstition and its relation to religion Bacon closes with the thought that religion and not atheism is the refuge from superstition. Toward the close of his discussion Plutarch says practically the same thing as Bacon.

As far as subject-matter alone is concerned we see no reason why this piece of Plutarch's has not as much right to the name of "essay" as Bacon's. The development of thought is almost the same in both. Plutarch's treatment of the theme is not more treatise-like than Bacon's. Both differ from Montaigne in that they knit their thoughts well together. Bacon is severe and methodical, while Plutarch has a noticeable tendency to digress. To me the Boeotian seems less formal and didactic than the Englishman and more "friendly". Other than this there is no apparent reason why the same term should not define both discussions. Essays, therefore, similar to those of Bacon existed in Greek literature.
In Plutarch the essay appears in three forms: The most common is that of the one we considered in the comparison with Bacon, the "Peri Diadromonias". The form is the same as that of the modern essay. The author addresses the reader directly and naturally. He feels that he has a few thoughts which may interest and better his fellows, and he cannot refrain from speaking them. He writes in a natural, straightforward manner simply telling what he thinks. The tone varies between the two opposites of didactic objectivity and a subjectivity relatively great for an ancient writer. The shortest essays are four or five "chapters" in length, the longest twenty-four or five. Almost all the discussions in the "Moralia" belong to this class.

In the second class the essay is addressed to a friend. For instance, in the Peri Diadromonias the opening sentence is: "Τις τῶν λέγων, ἵπποισκε ἐνελθούσον, σώσε τὴν εὐαριθμοῦν πρὸς ὑμᾶς εἰρήνον συναίσθησιν." After this address to Sossius Senecio we hear nothing further of him, nor does the essay seem to be written to him personally. It is the general reader who is addressed, and with the exception of these few words at the beginning, the discussion in no way differs from those of the first class. The initiatory address would seem to have not closer connection with the essay proper than the dedication of a modern book with the book itself.

In the essay "Πῶς οὐ τίς ἠπέρων ἐπιλεῖτο"

Plutarch writes to Cornelius Pulcher. Let me quote the first paragraph:-

"Ὅρω μὲν ὧτε τὸν προστάτα τοῦ, ὡς Μορφίλε
Πολυχρ. πολιτείας ἵππησε πρόπον, ἐν ὧῳ μάλιστα
τοῖς μονοῖς ὅπλοις μὲν ἀλλοπότατον ἕδη τοῖς
ἐκτούχαισθαι παράξεις σε αὐτὸν. Εἰπεῖ δὲ Χωραν
μὲν ἔθερον ἐσπέρ ἐποροῦσι τῷν Κρήτῃν
ἐξέπειν ἑστε, πολιτεία δὲ μὴν φθόνον ἐννοοῦντα
μὴ τε εἶλον ἡ φιλονεικία, ἡθᾶτο γονεῖμιματα πά−
θη, μὴρε χάνον ὅπου γέγονεν ἄλλοι εἰ μὴ δὲν κλάο,
τοῖς ἡθαῖσιν αἱ φιλιὰς συμπλεκόσσων ἑσμεῖν.
Εἰ μεῖν τέλος ὁ σοφὸς νοῦς καὶ τὸν εἰπόντα μη−
δέναι ἡθαῖσιν ἑθαν ἡθῶν ἑρῶται τοίς μὴ δὲν φίλον
ἡθοδ, δοκεῖ μοι τὰ τῆς πρὸς ἡθαν τῷ
πολιτείᾳ διεκεκρήθαν προσφυγεῖν καὶ τοῖς
ἔσοφαττον ἀκμοῦντι μὲ παρὰργως εἰπόν−
τος ὧτε τοὺς νοῦς ἑθανοὶ ἐστὶ καὶ ἀπὸ
tῶν ἡθῶν ὑφελθοῖσι. Ἐπερότο ὡς τῶν τοῦτο
πρὸς ταῖς εἰπόν τοῖς παράστη, συναγαγών ὅμως
tοῖς αὐτῶν ὑπομονὴν ἀπεταχθή σοι ἀνθρο−
σμοις ὡς ἐνιὸς μάλιστα τῶν ἐν τοῖς Πο−
λυτίκους Παραγγέλματα γραμμένων, ἐπεὶ
κάθεν ὑπὲρ τὸ βιβλίον ὁ δὲ σε πρὸς εἰρον
ἑχόντα πολλάκις.
With this reference to Cornelius Pulcher ceases. The rest of the essay is similar to those of the first class. There are a few more essays of this kind. The address is merely a dedication for there is no epistolary touch at all. The essays can in no sense be termed literary epistles.

Slightly different from these essays is the Consolatory Letter to his Wife. It is a letter, but so is Montaigne's "D l'Institution des Enfants, à Madame Diane de Foix, Comtesse de Gurson", and both are essays. As the title would indicate, Plutarch does keep in mind throughout the piece his wife's grief over the loss of her daughter, but he intended the epistle for an essay to the public. A real letter of consolation would have been quite different. This one is not distant and cold, for the kind-hearted Plutarch could not write in such a fashion; yet the wife would look in vain for the comfort of a husband. After the first three chapters the author digresses frequently to speak of useless emblems of grief, of simplicity in dress, and of the soul. After the third chapter this is really an essay containing a plea for saneness and simplicity in grief.

The essay \( \pi \epsilon \varphi \Theta \nu \iota \alpha \varsigma \) (1) is also formally an epistle. Plutarch begins by saying that he had not been able to comply with the request of Pacius for some remarks on contentedness of mind. There are a couple of sentences which remind us of Bacon's words in the dedication to Henry VII. "Which (lack of leisure) is the cause that hath made me choose to write certain brief

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(1) *Essais*, Livre I, Chapitre 25.
notes, set down rather significantly than curiously, which I have called 'Essays'. The passage in Plutarch is:

Μάλη δὲ χρόνον ἔχων, ὡς ὄρθος μοι ὑπομείνων κενας παντά-
παντα τὸν ἄκρα ξεροῖν ἀφῆναι τοι παρ' Ἰμέλτην ἀφιγῆνον, ἀνθεῖςέμην περὶ τεθυμείας ἐκ τῶν ὑπομητῶν ὡς ἐμαυτῷ πτασαξόμενος ἐν Ἱ-
χανον ἄγομενος μαί οἳ τὸν λόγον τούτον σὸν ἀρξάσεως ἑπακα ἑπωμένης ἀλλεγραφέαν ἀλλὰ Χρίας βιοτικῆς ἑπεφυτεῖν.

He goes on to congratulate Faccius because he knows that riches, fame and power cannot help us to ease of mind as to a calm life. After this introduction he begins his discourse, but several times addresses his friend in a direct personal manner, although the "you" is to be taken generally as any reader, whoever he may be. This essay, because all the features of the formal discussion are banished, is one of the most pleasing in the "Moralia". All these essays of the second class are the same as those of the first, with the exception that they are dedicated to somebody. The Moralia which have such a dedication we must therefore understand to be essays.

written with particular intent of pleasing some friend, but for the general public.

The third type to be considered in the "Moralia" is the dialogue. Here belong the Ἕρωτικός, the Παρ' ἁγγείας, the Παρ' τοῦ μὴ ἔρημον εὐμεταρχεὶν. In the Ἕρωτικός (1) after a page of introductory dialogue a discussion begins which has been held in the past and is now narrated by one of the speakers, as in the Platonic dialogue. The remarks, etc., of the participants are quoted in extenso but are not headed by names. Autobulus recounts the conversation just as a modern novelist would tell a story. The dialogue is hardly the form which one would expect an essay to be cast and on the score of form alone one may refuse to consider the Ἕρωτικός an essay. Of course Plutarch is speaking all the while, but so is Plato in his dialogues and they are not essays. The dialogue is one form of literature, the essay another. Yet the Ἕρωτικός is certainly an essay in spirit, especially in the latter part, where the conversation is given over entirely to the father of Autobulus.

The Παρ' ἁγγείας also opens with a page of conversation between two men, Sylla and Fundanus, as an introductory to the subject. Then Fundanus monopolizes the speaking for the remainder of the work. He does not narrate another conversation, but himself discusses the subject with us. The Παρ' τοῦ μὴ ἔρημον εὐμεταρχεὶν ὑπὲρ τὴν πυθεῖν

is only the order of the Ἐρωτικός, a bit of dialogue, then a narration of a discussion which took place, finally one individual monopolizes the διαλεκτίκη. The fact that the piece began with a dialogue is forgotten.

We can see that the dialogue is a cumbrous mode of expression to the author. As he warms to his subject he shakes off his shackles and speaks his own thoughts directly. In the Πρὸς Ἀροματικὸς the dialogue is a mere husk, a mere preface, and is dropped after a paragraph or two. Plutarch seems to have employed the form only because it was a conventional and traditional method of discussion. Judging from Plutarch's writings we may consider the form dead in his time; for he makes but sparing use of it.

Technically the dialogue, whether it be as we find it in Plato, or lifeless and atrophied as it is in Plutarch, cannot be called an essay. But if we disregard the bit of dialogue found at the beginning and consider only the remainder, excepting the Ἐρωτικός, we may regard such discussions as essays. They are so in spirit, if not in form.

One more word about the personal and emotional touch in Plutarch. If one seeks for the friendly and intimate personality of Montaigne, Addison, or Lamb, one will be disappointed. Theirs is indeed the essay "per excellence". This revelation of the inner self is not found in the same degree in ancient literature as in modern. Hence we must not expect it to be the all important factor in Plutarch's essays. Didacticism is apparent in all the "Moralia", but the treatment is always Plutarch's.
We feel him everywhere. To use a phrase I have used too often, he seems to talk to us himself, but it is frequently hard to decide whether the tone is objective or subjective.

Going backward to trace the development of the essay, the next writer who will serve our purpose is Seneca. What may have been the development in Greek literature just at this time cannot be determined; and, because of the interrelation of Greek and Latin literature, it is of minor importance whether our writers are of the one nationality or the other.

Can the Dialogorum Libri XII, the Minor Dialogues, be considered essays? They are all ethical in character and on ethical themes, De Providentia, De Constantia Sapientis, De Ira, De Tranquillitate Animis, and similar subjects. It follows naturally that the tone is didactic. The discourses are meant to be fairly complete in treatment. Nevertheless sermons (for so we would call them now-a-days) on Providence or Contentedness, if not too thorough, and if not ultra-didactic might be classed as essays.

Do the dialogues confine themselves to one aspect of a theme? Take the one on Providence, or to its fuller title, "Quaer Aligita Incommoda Bonis Viris Accident, Cum Providentia Sit". The contents of the six "chapters" is as follows:

1. Providence rules the universe.
2. Evil cannot befall a good man.
4. Only the great endure adversity.

(1) L. Annaeae Senecae Prsas, vol. 1. p. 3
5. Misfortunes must be beneficial if God bestows them only on good men.

6. God takes away from good men all real evils.

From the bare synopsis one might think that dialogue limited in scope, but after reading the discussion I think one will find the field suggested by the title pretty thoroughly covered.

The style of these compositions is quite argumentative. Seneca seems to be preaching a philosophy rather than writing from impulse. The tone, too, is very formal; in the Letters to Lucilius he is a very different man. The stoic gloom that pervades the Dialogues of course would not prevent their being essays. One need not refuse to consider them essays, but the word must be used in its broadest sense.

Seneca calls his discussions "Dialogi". There are no interlocutors at all. He speaks directly, just as Plutarch in his essays of the first class. The word seems to have acquired the general meaning we attach to "discourse". There was no word for "essay" in Latin. "Dialogus" and "oratio" were understood in this sense when necessary.

Yet dialogue in its true sense is not entirely absent from these discourses. The author argues without the medium of interlocutors, but has not entirely gotten over the idea that some exchange of thought between two persons is well. So he now and then creates an opponent to ask questions or to give the other side. In the "De Providentia" the onward flow of the discussion is several times broken by the questions or remarks of
Lucilius, to whom the dialogue is dedicated. "Quaesisti me Lucili", sae Seneca, "quid ita, si providentia mundus agetier, multa bonis viris mala accidere". He proceeds to show how this universe could not exist without a ruling Deity. Later we have the question apparently asked by Lucilius, "Quare multa bonis viris adversa eventunt?" followed by a reply. Again "Pro ipsis est in exilium proici, in egestatem deduci liberos, conjugem ecferre, ignomina adfici, debilitari?" also followed by an argument. Similarly we have in the fifth chapter the remark, "At iniquum est virum bonum debilitari aut constans aut adligari, mala integris corporibus solutos as delicatos incedere," and further on "Quare tamen deus tam iniquis in distributione fati fuit, ut bonis viris paupertatem et volvema et acerba funera describeret?" Other instances are, "Quare tamen bonis viris patitur aliquid male fieri?" and "At multa incidunt tristia, horrenda, Dana toleratu". These questions and remarks followed by an argument in reply form a dialogue as truly as if the respective parts were headed by the names of Lucilius and Seneca. This atrophied sort of interlocution occurs in all the dialogues.

The Letters to Lucilius are much better examples of the true essay than the Dialogues. The full title is "De Prov. T. 1. (De Prov. II. 1. (De Prov. III. 2. (De Prov. IV. 3. (De Prov. V. 9. (De Prov. VI. 1. (De Prov. V. 6."

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Lucilius, they do not deal with the usual commonplace topics of the ordinary letter of friendship; they consist of observations on man, life, philosophy, books. What Bacon said may well be again quoted here: "Seneca's Epistles to Lucilius, if one mark them well, are but essays—that is dispersed meditations, though conveyed in the form of epistles".

That these are letters is no reason why they may not be essays. An examination of one or two of the Epistles will clearly show their character. Take Epistula 2. A good title would be "On Proper Reading". The letter begins by complimenting Lucilius on the fact that, "non discurris nec locorum mutationibus Ingeniaris". This suggests the theme of the essay, "Vide ne ista lectio generis voluminum habeat aliquid vacum et instabile?" Some authors furnish no nourishment at all. Those who travel widely have much to say of hospitality but little of friendship. It is the same with those "qui nullius se ingenio familiariter adipicant, sed omnia cursim et properantes transmittunt?" Rich food does not help the body, nor frequent changes of remedies heal a wound, nor does a plant flourish when moved from place to place. "Distingit librorum multitudo?" Read and re-read only the best. Prepare for poverty, death, and other evils. "Cum multa percurreris, unum egressus, quod illo die concoquas" To-day I found this in Epicurus, "Honesta res est laeta paupertas". He is rich who does not mind his poverty. He is poor who desires more. Moderate wealth consists in having what is necessary, or secondly, what is sufficient.

What could be more like an essay? In these few lines we find the personal touch, the digressiveness, the
lack of set structure, that characterize the best of essays. One need not hesitate to class this letter with the compositions of Montaigne and his school.

Epistula 29 is another excellent example. It shows human nature well. Lucilius had asked what had become of their friend Marcellinus. Seneca replies that Marcellinus rarely visits them because he disliked to hear unpleasant truths. This leads to some remarks on the advisability of telling the truth promiscuously. "Diogenes and the Cynics never hesitated to speak freely. Why spare words? Some one may be helped by hearing it. A great man cannot do this; it weakens his authority. Wisdom will seek those who will succeed and leave those of whom it despairs; yet even in extreme cases it may try remedies. I do not despair of Marcellinus. He is strong in character but leans toward vice; he will joke in his usual way about frivolous and dissipated philosophers". A digression on Aristo follows. "I will endure his jesting. He will soon get over his laughing mood and may then be approached. He should be taught gradually to forsake his vices. Meanwhile do you see that you keep good habits. Take a firm stand against whatever frightens you.

"I do not desire the money you owe me, I am no vulgar person, one of the crowd. A wise man and the crowd never agree. To gain popular favor one must come down to the level of the crowd".

Almost all the Epistles are like these two just considered. They are such themes as lend themselves readily to treatment in an essay, waste of time, desultory reading, preparation for death, true friendship, proper dress,
exercise, etc. Seneca amply fulfills the function.

Nabie gives the essayist: "To meditate upon what men
have accomplished, endured, suffered, and become in order
to frame an informal philosophy, to announce a body of
precepts". The letters are a distillation of the author's
wisdom. The style is graceful, informal, familiar. In
length they are about the same as Bacon's essays. Without
qualification they may be pronounced essays of the best
type, and the best examples of this form of literature
in antiquity.

The "De Amicitia" and the "De Senectute" of
Cicero may aptly be termed essays, although they are not
in modern dress. Indeed the further back we go, the less
does the classical essay resemble its modern descendant.
This is to be expected. It is an exemplification of the
fact that they essay, as it is now, is the result of an
evolutionary process, and did not spring into existence
fully complete from Montaigne.

The "De Senectute" and "De Amicitia" represent
a still earlier stage in the development of the essay than
what we have found in Plutarch and Seneca. They are both
on the same plan, so an examination of the one will suffice
for the other. The "De Amicitia" begins with Cicero
speaking of his acquaintance with the Scavolus and how
Scavola was led to repeat a conversation which Lawlius
had held with him and Hannibals. Cicero has written this
"disputatio" according to his own fancy and "quasi" enim
ipsum induxit loquentes, ne 'inquam' et 'inquit' saepius
interponeretur atque ut tamquam a praestebus coram haberi
sermo videretur". Hence the main body of the work is cast
in the form of a dialogue. It is done at the request of Atticus and is dedicated to him. In a brief prelude Scaevola and Fannius compliment Laelius on his stoicism in bearing up against the death of his friend Scipio. This leads to the disputation on friendship by Laelius. The discussion is almost entirely in his mouth; he is interrupted only at rare intervals, when passing from one phase of the subject to another. The interruption is used as a means for this transition. In closing Laelius gives a short epilogue.

Only three interruptions occur in the body of the work. If we disregard them we have a fine essay on friendship. It is of the formal kind and is methodical in thought. As to subjectivity Mabie's words on the classical essayists may be quoted: "In the masters of the classical essay—Plutarch, Cicero—the element of personality is distinct and organic, but it is subordinate to the material. Emphasis rests on the truth rather than on the presentation of the truth; so, as far as he can, the writer conceals himself behind his art; for the classical method was as consistently objective as the nature of the artist, always craving expression, permitted... There is no license of individuality among the classical essayists; they are weighty, serious, dignified. They have no desire to be other than they are or to do other than they do; but we feel as if we were getting the most out of their subjects, but not out of them".

We said that in the dialogue Laelius usually speaks at some length, and that the other persons are comparatively unimportant. This is characteristic of the
Aristotelian dialogue; Cicero generally used it in his philosophical works. The dialogues of Aristotle are now lost but their nature and character are known. As distinguished from the Platonic they had more of exposition and less of discussion. One person rendered a "disputatio" on a subject, the other only made occasional remarks, without attempting to debate the question. In Plato one person, Socrates, always leads the discussion and is quite prominent, but he leads rather than lectures, he endeavors to bring out the other persons. Properly to compose a Platonic dialogue with its quick interchange of question and answer requires not only supreme artistic ability but also keen dramatic insight. Plato's dialogues are quite dramatic in that each person has a distinct character and speaks accordingly. Hence a skillful and telling arrangement of the give and take is far from being an easy task.

For this reason the Aristotelian dialogue to the Platonic. Artistic as in Plato's form, it is really a detriment to straight-forward discussion or analysis both on the part of the writer and reader. For the latter it necessitates a very close and active attention; as to the former, it may be said that the philosophic mind does not move in a dialogue fashion, however keenly logical the Socratic method may be and however well adapted as a means for arriving at the truth. The Greek philosophers doubtless found the Platonic dialogue irksome and felt more and more the ease of Aristotle's form.

It is less easy to trace the development of the

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essay of the forms met with bear a resemblance to the essay. Though we may find no real essay, we can ferret out the history of its evolution.

The best means is to take the sources of the essays of Cicero just considered. Theophrastus, Aulus Gellius tells us, had a treatise Φιλοσοφίας and this was imitated by Cicero. Theophrastus wrote a formal treatise for philosophers while Cicero put his statements in the mouth of a Roman general and so could not go too deeply into the subject. He attempts to write in an interesting way. The Φιλοσοφίας was probably a dialogue or else on the order of the chapters in Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics". It need not be called an essay. Cicero also imitated the "Nicomachean Ethics" 8 and 9; for many verbal resemblances may be noticed. Heybut in his monograph "De Theophrasti libris Φιλοσοφίας" seeks to show that Theophrastus drew from these places in Aristotle and that Cicero imitated Theophrastus. Plutarch, he says, in his writing on friendship, also drew from Theophrastus. This is enough to show us that Theophrastus had something to do with the making of the essay.

In the De Senectute just before the dialogue commences Cicero says: "Omnem autem sermonem tribuimus non Tithono, ut Aristo Cius, parum enim esset auctoritatis in fabula, sed M. Catoni, quo majorem auctoritatem haberet oratio". Therefore the work of Aristo Cius was a dialogue

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(1) Noctes Atticae 1, 3, 10.
(3) Vid. (1).
the same in plan and form as Cicero's "De Senectute".

Looking over the list of works mentioned by Diogenes Laërtius in his life of Aristo one may infer that some of them could have been essays or essay-like. The six books of Conversations, Conversation on Love, Commentaries on Vain-glory, the Books of Reminiscences, the Letters to Cleanthes, all suggest writings whose loss is the regret of the essay-lover. Of their form, method, length, and characteristics hardly anything is known. Cicerotells us that Aristo was a man of taste and elegance, but was deficient in gravity and energy. The first two qualities go very far in the making of the essayist. Diogenes Laërtius says he disliked physics and dialectic reasonings and was a man of persuasive eloquence. From these bits of information we may infer that those of his works that were not out and out didactic rose above the formality and dull objectivity of the bare treatise. The Hellenistic Greeks were subjective in their writings to a considerable degree, and so must have been this Aristo.

Aristo lived in 220 B.C. and was head of the Peripatetic school after Strato. His works are presumably representative of philosophical writings of the Hellenistic age. What may be said of him would therefore equally well to others of this period. It is in the decaying dialogue-form and the impersonal literary epistle of this time that the beginnings of the essay are to be found. Hence Seneca must have taken the models for his Epistles to Lucilius.

(1) Diog. Laer. VII. Life of Aristo 7.
(2) De Finibus V.S.
(3) Diog. Laer. VII. Life of Aristo 2, 3.
(4) Smith, Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology
Vide Aristo.
As Cicero translated freely from his Greek sources, it may be said that by the time of Aristo the essay had come into existence, although yet incomplete. As tragedy never rid itself of the chorus, so the classic essay, putting aside a few exceptions, never shook off the marks of its origin—the dialogue and the epistle. Neither in Latin nor in Greek did it acquire a name all its own.

We sometimes hear the Χαρακτήρες of Theophrastus spoken of as essays. They do indeed deal with a favorite theme of essayists—the manner of men—but let us call them Character-Sketches and be content with that name. Where call them essays?

As we trace backward the evolution of the essay we come finally to Aristotle. Those who will have it that the Χαρακτήρες are essays look upon the "Nicomachean Ethics" in the same light. Why may not the chapters, especially of the third and fourth books of be considered essays? Because the "Nicomachean Ethics" form a connected whole. The first book has to do with Happiness, the last chapters with man's Excellences. The second book taken up these Excellences and is a discussion of virtue. This naturally suggests an examination into voluntary and involuntary action and the moral virtues. This concludes the fourth book. The chapters are generally interrelated and the remainder of the work is similar in treatment to the part just discussed. The direct treatment in the "Nicomachean Ethics", i.e. the absence of all dialogue, without doubt had its influence upon subsequent writers in directing them towards the essay-treatment and away from the dialogue-form.
The "Hipparchicus", "Horsemanship", and
"Cynegiticus" of Xenophon are treatises too technical
to come under the head of essays. It is true they possess
literary finish and a "personal equation"—Xenophon's piety,
pedagogic propensity, and shrewd practicality, but any
tract may have these factors.

One other possible source for the development
of the essay remains to be considered. The Menippean
Satires of Varro are termed essays by Mommsen. Such small
fragments as have come down to us are in prose with an
intermixture of verse. The form is not a Latin development,
for Varro ignored the models of Ennius and Lucilius and
imitated the Greek Cynic Menippus of Gadara. Varro says
he adopted this method so as to interest the unlearned.

From the titles one can see that he put the satires in the
dress or framework that would appeal to the popular
fancy—

*Menippus* πρὸ τὸν θρόνον φιλόσοφος,
*Cyanus* πρὸ τα Φίλος, *Endymiones*, *Prometheus*, *Liber*,
*Sesquieulixes*, etc. The fragments are so small that we
ourselves have no sure ground on which to base an opinion
of the merit of this dress.

The satires deal with many phases of human life.

In *'Αρχιμάκης* man's foibles are ridiculed; the *Μᾶκρος*
presents preaches the simple life; the *Ἀνθρώποι* reviles the mad pursuit of wealth; the *Γραμμοτος* contrasts the simplicity of the old times with the
expensive luxury of the present; the *Meleagri* satirizes
hunting. Philosophers frequently are the objects of ridicule.
These satires had the same purpose as Addison's essays--to effect a reform in manners and life. Whether they are essays or not is doubtful. I myself would hardly give them that name. A complete Menippean satire is still extant in the "Apocolocyntosis" of Seneca. There seems no reason for disputing this view. Varro's satires may have been a different length and dealt rather with "good-natured, humorous exhibitions of homely philosophy meant to be popular and helpful, very different from this direct and bitter portrayal of the ridiculous side of a dead, incompetent potentate against whom the writer had a grudge". The "Apocolocyntosis" is not an essay any more than the satires of Horace and Juvenal.

Varro's Satires undoubtedly encroached, in subject, upon the essay, dealing with public manners. But they form one link in the gradual and consistent development of the satire itself and could have exerted no influence in establishing the essay as a separate literary type.

In conclusion we may state by way of summary that we have found an essay to exist in classical literature. It is found in its regular modern form in Plutarch. In earlier writers it is not yet free from the marks of its beginnings. It took its origins in the dialogue and literary epistle. In Cicero we find the best example of the dialogue-essay, in Seneca of the letter-essay.

(1) Satire of Seneca, A.D. Ball, p. 61.
This thesis is never to leave this room. Neither is it to be checked out overnight.