

MICHEL DE MONTAIGNE

ESSAYS



Book 2 · Chapter 8

Translation by John Florio (1603, Public domain) · Last updated on January 5, 2024

HYPERESSAYS is a project to create a modern and accessible online edition of the *Essays* of Michel de Montaigne. More information at www.hyperessays.net

FLORIO-2-8-20250106-191102

Of the affection of fathers to their children

To the Ladie of *Estissac*.

MADAME, if strangenesse doe not save, or novelty shielde mee, which are wont to give things reputation, I shall never, with honestie, quit my selfe of this enterprise; yet is it so fantastically, and beares a shew so different from common custome, that that may haply purchase-it free passage. It is a melancholy humor, and consequently a hatefull enemy to my naturall complexion, bredde by the anxietie, and produced by the anguish of carking care, whereinto some yeares since I cast my selfe, that first put this humorous conceipt of writing into my head. And finding my selfe afterward wholly unprovided of subject, and voyde of other matter; I have presented my selfe unto my selfe for a subject to write, and argument to descant upon. It is the only booke in the world of this kinde, and of a wilde extravagant designe. Moreover, there is nothing in it worthie the marking but this fantasticalnesse. For, to so vaine a ground and base a subject, the worldes best workeman, could never have given a fashion deserving to be accompted-of. Now (woorthy Lady) sithence I must pourtray my selfe to the life, I should have forgotten a part of importance, if therewithall I had not represented the honour I have ever yeilded to your deserts, which I have especially beene willing to declare in the forefront of this Chapter; Forasmuch as amongst your other good partes and commendable qualities, that of loving amitie, which you have shewen to your children, holdeth one of the first rancks. Whosoever shall understand and know the age, wherein your late husband the Lord of *Estissac* left you a widdow, the great and honorable matches have been offered you (as worthy and as many as to any other Lady in *France* of your condition) the constant resolution, and resolute constancy, wherewith so many yeeres you have sustained, and even in spight, or a-thwart so manifold thorny difficulties; the charge and conduct of their affaires, which have tossed, turmoyled and remooved you in all corners of *France*, and still holde you besieged; the happie and successeful forwardnes, which you, only through your wisdom or good fortune have given them, he wil easily say with me, that in our age we have no patterne of motherly affection more exemplare, than yours. I praise God (Madame) it hath beene so well employed: For, the good hopes, which the yoong Lord of *Estissac*, your sonne giveth of himselfe, fore-shew an undoubted

assurance, that when he shall come to yeeres of discretion, you shal reape the obedience of a noble, and find the acknowledgement of a good childe. But because, by reason of his childhood, he could not take notice of the exceeding kindnesse and millefold offices, hee hath received from you, my meaning is, that if ever these my compositions shall happly one day come into his handes (when peradventure I shall neither have mouth nor speach to declare it unto him) he receive this testimony in all veritie from mee; which shall also more lively be testified unto him by the good effects, (whereof, if so it please God, he shall have a sensible feeling) that there is no Gentleman in *France*, more endebted to his mother, then he; and that hereafter he cannot yeeld a more certaine prooffe of his goodnesse, and testimony of his vertue, then in acknowledging and confessing you for such. If there be anie truely-naturall law, that is to say, any instinct, universally and perpetually imprinted, both in beastes and us, (which is not without controversie) I may, according to mine opinion, say, that next to the care, which each living creature hath to his preservation, and to fly what doth hurt him; the affection which the engenderer beareth his ingencie or handie-worke, holdes the second place in this rancke. And forsomuch as nature seemeth to have recommended the same unto-us, ayming to extend, encrease, and advance the successive partes or parcells, of this hir frame. It is no woonder if arsversie it is not so great from children unto fathers. This other Aristotelian consideration remembred: That *hee who dooth benefite another, loveth him better, than he is beloved of him againe*: And he to whom a debt is owing, loveth better, than he that oweth: And every workeman loveth his worke better, than hee should be beloved of it againe, if it had sense or feeling. Forasmuch as we love to be; and beeing consisteth in moving and action. Therfore is every man, in some sort or other in his own workmanship. *Whosoever doth a good deede, exerciseth a faire and honest action: Whosoever receiveth, exerciseth onlie a profitable action*. And profite is nothing so much to bee esteemed or loved as honesty. Honesty is firme and permanent, affording him that did it, a constant gratification. Profite is very slipperie, and easily lost, nor is the memorie of it so sweete or so fresh. Such things are dearest unto us, that have cost us most: And to give, is of more cost then to take. Since it hath pleased God to endowe us with some capacitie of discourse, that as beastes we should not servilie be subjected to common lawes, but rather with judgement and voluntarie libertie apply our selves unto them; we ought somewhat to yeeld unto the simple aucthority of Nature: but not suffer hir tyrannically to carry-us away: only reason ought to have the conduct of our inclinations. As for me, my taste is strangely distasted to it's propensions, which in us are produced without the ordinance and direction of our judgement. As uppon this subject I speake-of, I cannot receive this passion, wherewith some embrace children scarcely borne, having neither motion in the soule, nor forme wel to be distinguished in the body, whereby they might make themselves lovely or amiable. And I could never well endure to have them brought up or nursed neere about me. A true and wel ordred affection, ought to be borne and augmented, with the knowledge they give us of themselves; and then, if they deserve-it (naturall inclination marching hand in hand with reason) to cherish and make much of them, with a perfect fatherly love and loving friendship, and conformable to judge of them if they be otherwise, alwayes yeelding our selves unto reason, notwithstanding naturall power. For the most part, it goeth cleane contrary, and commonly we feelee our selves more mooved with the

sportes, idlenesse, wantonnesse, and infant-trifles of our children, than afterward we doe with all their actions, when they bee men: As if we had loved them for our pastimes, as we doe apes, monkees, or perokitoes, and not as men. And many a father doth very prodigally bestow much upon his childe, that afterward will spare and miche very nigardly for necessary things about him, when he is of riper yeers. Nay, it seemeth that the jelousie wee have to see them appeare into, and injoy the world, when wee are ready to leave them, makes us more sparing and close-handed toward them. It vexeth and grieveth us when wee see them following us at our heeles, supposing they sollicite us to bee gone hence: And if we were to feare that, since the order of things beareth, that they cannot indeede, neither be, nor live, but by our being and life, we should not meddle to be fathers. As for mee, I deeme it a kind of crueltie and injustice, not to receive them into the share and societie of our goods, and to admit them as partners of our domesticall affaires (if they be once capable of it) and not to cut off and shut-up our commodities to provide for theirs, since we have engendred them to that purpose. It is meere injustice to see an old, crazed, sinnowe-shronken, and nigh-dead father sitting alone in a chimnie-corner, to enjoy so many goods as would suffice for the preferment and entertainment of many children, and in the meane while, for want of meanes, to suffer them to loose their best daies and yeares, without thrusting them into publike service and knowledge of men; whereby they are often cast into dispaire, to seeke, by some way how unlawful soever to provide for their necessities. And in my dayes, I have seene divers yong men, of good houses, so given to stealing and filching, that no correction could divert them from-it. I know one very well alied, to whom, at the instance of a brother of his (a most honest, gallant, and vertuous Gentleman) I spake to that purpose, who boldly answered and confessed unto me, that onely by the rigor and covetise of his father he had beene forced and driven to fall into such lewdnes and wickednes. And even at that time he came from stealing certaine jewels from a Ladie, in whose bed-chamber hee fortun'd to come with certaine other Gentlemen when she was rising, and had almost beene taken. He made me remember a tale I had heard of an other Gentleman, from his youth so fashioned and inclined to this goodly trade of pilfering, that comming afterward to be heire and Lord of his owne goods, resolved to give over that manner of life, could notwithstanding (if hee chaunc'd to come neere a shop, where he saw any thing he stoode in neede of) not chuse but steale the same, though afterward he would ever send mony and pay for it. And I have seene diverse so inured to that vice, that amongst their companions, they would ordinarily steale such things, as they would restore againe. I am a Gascoine, and there is no vice wherin I have lesse skill: I hate it somewhat more by complexion, then I accuse it by discourse. I doe not so much as desire another mans goodes.

And although my countrymen be indeede somewhat more taxed with this fault, then other Provinces of *France*, yet have we seene of late dayes, and that sundry times, men well borne and of good parentage in other partes of *France* in the hands of justice, and lawfully convicted of many most horrible robberies. I am of opinion, that in regarde of these debauches and lewde actions, fathers may, in some sort, be blamed, and that it is onely long of them. And if any shall answer me, as did once a gentleman of good worth and understanding, that he thriftily

endeavoured to hoard-up riches, to no other purpose, nor to have any use and commoditie of them, then to be honoured, respected and suingly-sought unto by his friends and kinsfolkes, and that age having bereaved him of all other forces, it was the onely remedy he had left to maintaine himselfe in auctoritie with his houshold, and keepe him from falling into contempt and disdaine of all the world. (And truely according to Aristotle, not onely old-age, but each imbecilitie, is the promoter and motive of covetousnes) That is something, but it is a remedie for an evill, whereof the birth should have beene hindered, and breeding avoyded. That father may truely be said miserable, that holdeth the affection of his children tied unto him by no other meanes, then by the neede they have of his helpe, or want of his assistance, if that may be termed affection: *A man should yeeld himselfe respectable by vertue and sufficiencie, and amiable by his goodnesse, and gentlenesse of maners.* The very cinders of so rich a matter, have their value: so have the bones and reliques of honourable men, whom we hold in respect and reverence. No age can be so crazed and drooping in a man that hath lived honourably, but must needes prove venerable, and especially unto his children, whose minds ought so to be directed by the parents, that reason and wisdom, not necessitie and neede, nor rudenesse and compulsion, may make them know and performe their dutie.

*Errat longè, mea quidem sententia,
Qui imperium credat esse grauius aut stabilius,
Ui quod fit, quàm illud quod amicitia adiungitur.*

*In mine opinion he doth much mistake,
Who, that command may give, more firme doth take,
Which force doth get, then that which friendships make.*

I utterly condemne all maner of violence in the education of a yong spirit, brought up to honour and libertie. There is a kinde of slavishnesse in churlish-rigor, and servilitie in compulsion; and I hold, that *that which can not be compassed by reason, wisdom and discretion, can never be attained by force and constraint.* So was I brought up: they tell me, that in all my youth, I never felt rod but twice, and that very lightly. And what education I have had my selfe, the same have I given my children. But such is my ill hap, that they die all very yong: yet hath *Leonora* my onely daughter escaped this misfortune, and attained to the age of six yeares, and somewhat more: for the conduct of whose youth, and punishment of her childish faults (the indulgence of her mother applying it selfe very mildely unto it) was never other meanes used but gentle words. And were my desire frustrate, there are diverse other causes to take hold-of, without reproving my discipline, which I know to be just and naturall. I would also have beene much more religious in that towards male-children, not borne to serve as women, and of a freer condition. I should have loved to have stored their minde with ingenuitie and libertie. I have seene no other effects in rods, but to make childrens mindes more remisse, or more maliciously head-strong. Desire we to be loved of our children? Will we remove all occasions from them to wish our death? (although no occasion of so horrible and unnaturall wishes, can either be just or excusable) *nullum scelus rationem habet*, no ill deede hath a good reason.

Let us reasonably accommodate their life, with such things as are in our power. And therefore should not we marry so yoong, that our age do in a maner confound it selfe with theirs. For, this inconvenience doth unavoydably cast us into many difficulties, and encombrances. This I speake, chiefly unto Nobilitie, which is of an idle disposition, or loytering condition, and which (as we say) liveth onely by her landes or rents: for else, where life standeth upon gaine; pluralitie and company of children is an easefull furtherance of husbandrie. They are as many new implements to thrive, and instruments to grow rich. I was married at thirty yeers of age, and commend the opinion of thirtie-five, which is said to be *Aristotles*. *Plato* would have no man married before thirtie, and hath good reason to scoffe at them that will deferre it till after fiftie-five, and then marry; and condemneth their breede as unworthy of life and sustenance. *Thales* appoynted the best limites, who by his mother, being instantly urged to marry whilest he was yong, answered that it was not yet time; and when he came to be old, he saide it was no more time. A man must refuse opportunitie to every importunate action. The antient *Gaules* deemed it a shamefull reproach, to have the acquaintance of a woman before the age of twenty yeares; and did especially recommend unto men that sought to be trained up in warres, the carefull preservation of their maidenhead, untill they were of good yeares, forsomuch as by loosing it in youth, courages are thereby much weakened, and greatly empaired, and by copulation with women, diverted from all vertuous action.

*Mahor cogiunto à giovinetta sposa,
Lieto homai de'figli' era invilito
Ne gli affetti di padre & di marito.*

*But now conjoyn'd to a fresh-springing spouse,
Joy'd in his children, he was thought-abased,
In passions twixt a Sire, and husband placed.*

Muleasses King of *Thunes*, hee whom the Emperour *Charles* the fifth restored unto his owne state againe, was wont to upbraide his fathers memorie, for so dissolutely-frequenting of women, terming him a sloven, effeminate, and a lustfull engenderer of children. The Greeke storie doth note *Iecus* the *Tarentine*, *Chryso*, *Astylus*, *Diopompus* and others, who to keepe their bodies tough and strong for the service of the Olympike courses, wrestlings, and such bodily exercises, they did, as long as they were possessed with that care, heedefully abstaine from all venerian actes, and thouching of women. In a certaine country of the Spanish *Indies*, no man was suffered to take a wife, before he were fortie yeares olde, and women might marry at tenne yeares of age. There is no reason, neither is it convenient, that a Gentleman of five and thirtie yeares, should give place to his sonne, that is but twenty: For then is the father as seemely, and may aswell appeare, and set himselfe forward, in all manner of voyages of warres, aswell by land as sea, and doe his Prince as good service, in court, or else-where, as his sonne: He hath neede of all his partes, and ought truly to impart them, but so, that hee forget not himselfe for others: And to such may justly that answere serve, which fathers have commonly in their mouthes: *I will not put off my clothes before I be readie to goe to bed*. But a father over-burthened with yeares, and crazed through sicknesse, and by reason of weakenesse and want of health,

barred from the common societie of men, doth both wrong himselfe, injure his, idely and to no use to hoorde up, and keepe close a great heape of riches, and deale of pelfe. He is in state good enough, if he be wise to have a desire to put off his clothes to goe to bed. I will not say to his shirt, but to a good warme night-gowne: As for other pompe and trash whereof hee hath no longer use or neede; hee ought willingly to distribute and bestow them amongst those, to whome by naturall decree they ought to belong. It is reason he shoulde have the use, and bequeathe the fruition of them, since nature doth also deprive him of them, otherwise without doubt there is both envy and malice stirring. The worthiest action, that ever the Emperour *Charles* the fifth performed was this, in imitation of some ancients of his qualitie, that hee had the discretion to know, that reason commaunded us, to strippe or shift our selves when our cloathes trouble and are too heavie for us, and that it is high time to goe to bed, when our legges faile us. He resigned his meanes, his greatnesse and Kingdome to his Sonne, at what time he found his former undanted resolution to decaie, and force to conduct his affaires, to droope in himselfe, together with the glorie hee had thereby acquired.

*Solue senescentem maturè sanus equum, ne
Peccet ad extremum ridendus, & ilia ducat,*

*If you be wise, the horse growne-old betimes cast-off;
Least he at last falle lame, soultier, and breede a skoffe.*

This fault, for a man not to be able to knowe himselfe betimes, and not to feele the impuissance and extreame alteration, that age doth naturally bring, both to the body and the minde, which in mine opinion is equall, if the minde have but one halfe, hath lost the reputation of the most part of the greatest men in the world. I have in my daies both seene and familiarly knowne some men of great authoritie, whom a man might easily descerne, to be strangely fallen from that ancient sufficiencie, which I knowe by the reputation they had thereby attained-unto in their best yeares. I could willingly for their honors sake have wisht them at-home about their owne busines, discharged from all negotiations of the commonwealth and employments of warre, that were no longer fit for them. I have sometimes beene familiar in a Gentlemans house, who was both an olde man and a widdower, yet lustie of his age. This man had many daughters marriage-able, and a sonne growne to mans state, and readie to appeare in the world; a thing that drew-on, and was the cause of great charges, and many visitations, wherein hee tooke but little pleasure, not onely for the continuall care hee had to save, but more by reason of his age, hee had betaken him-selfe to a manner of life farre different from ours. I chanced one day to tell him somewhat boldly (as my custome is) that it would better beseeme him to give us place, and resigne his chiefe house to his sonne (for he had no other mannor-house conveniently well furnished) and quietly retire himselfe to some farme of his, where no man might trouble him, or incommode his rest, since he could not otherwise avoide our importunitie, seeing the condition of his children; who afterward followed my counsell, and found great ease by it. It is not to be said, that they have any thing given them by such a way of obligation, which a man may not recalle againe: I, that am readie to play such a part, would give over unto them the full possession of my house, and enjoying of my goods, but with such libertie and limited condition,

as if they should give me occasion, I might repent my selfe of my gift, and revoke my deede. I would leave the use and fruition of all unto them, the rather because it were no longer fit for me to weald the same. And touching the disposing of all matters in grosse, I would reserve what I pleased unto my selfe. Having ever judged, that it must be a great contentment to an aged father, himselfe to direct his children in the government of his houshold-affaires, and to be able whilst himselfe liveth, to checke and controule their demeanors: storing them with instruction and advised counsel, according to the experience he hath had of them, and himselfe to addresse the ancient honour and order of his house in the handes of his successours, and that way warrant himselfe of the hopes hee may conceive of their future conduct and after successe. And to this effect, I would not shunne their company. I would not be far from them, but as much as the condition of my age would permit, enjoy and be a partner of their sports, mirths, and feasts. If I did not continually live amongst them (as I could not wel without offending their meetings and hindering their recreations, by reason of the peevish frowardnesse of my age, and the trouble of my infirmities, and also without forcing their rules, and resisting the forme of life, I should then follow) I would at least live neere them, in some corner of my house, not the best and fairest in shew, but the most easefull and commodious. And not as some yeeres since, I saw a Deane of *S. Hillarie* of Poitiers, reduced by reason and the incommoditie of his melancholy to such a continuall solitarinesse, that when I entered into his chamber he had never remooved one steppe out of it in two and twenty yeeres before: yet had all his faculties free and easie, onely a rheume excepted that fell into his stomake. Scarse once a weeke would he suffer any body to come and see him. He would ever be shut up in his chamber all alone, where no man should come, except a boy, who once a day brought him meate, and who might not tarrie there, but as soone as he was in, must goe out againe. All his exercise was sometimes to walke up and downe his chamber, and now and then reade on some booke (for he had some understanding of letters) but obstinately resolved to live and die in that course, as he did shortly after. I would endeavour by a kinde of civill demeanour and milde conversation, to breede and settle in my children a trueharty-loving friendship, and unfained good will towards me. A thing easily obtained amongst well-borne mindes: For, if they proove, or be such surly-furious beastes, or given to churlish disobedience, as our age bringeth forth thousands, they must as beastes be hated, as churls neglected, and as degenerate avoided. I hate this custome, to forbid children to call their fathers father, and to teach them another strange name, as of more reverence: As if nature had not sufficiently provided for our authoritie. We call God-almightie by the name of father, and disdain our children should call us so. I have reformed this fault in mine owne housholde. It is also follie and injustice to deprive children, especially being of competent age, of their fathers familiaritie, and ever to shew them a surly, austere, grim, and disdainefull countenance, hoping thereby to keepe them in awefull feare and duteous obedience. For, it is a very unprofitable proceeding, and which maketh fathers yrkesome unto children; and which is worse, ridiculous. They have youth and strength in their hands, and consequently, the breath and favour of the worlde; and doe with mockerie and contempt receive these churlish fierce, and tyrannicall countenaunces, from a man that hath no lusty bloud left him, neither in his heart, nor in his veines; meere bugge-beares, and scar-crowes, to

scare birdes withall. If it lay in my power to make my selfe feared, I had rather make my selfe beloved. There are so many sortes of defects in age, and so much impuissance: It is so subject to contempt, that the best purchase it can make, is the good will, love and affection of hers. Commandement and feare are no longer her weapons. I have knowne one, whose youth had bin very imperious and rough, but when hee came to mans age, although hee live in as good plight and health as may be, yet he chafeth, he scoldeth, he brawleth, he fighteth, he sweareth, and biteth, as the most boistrous and tempestuous master of *France*, he frets and consumes himselfe with carke and care and vigilancy (all which is but a juglin and ground for his familie to play upon, and cozen him the more) as for his goodes, his garners, his cellers, his coffers, yea his purse, whilst himselfe keepes the keyes of them, close in his bosome and under his boulder, as charily as he doth his eies, other enjoy and commaund the better part of them; whilst he pleaseth and flattereth himselfe, with the niggardly sparing of his table, all goeth to wracke, and is lavishly wasted in diverse corners of his house, in play, in riotous spending, and in soothingly entertaining the accompts or tales of his vaine chafing, foresight and providing. Every man watcheth and keepeth sentinell against him, if any seely or heedlesse servant do by fortune apply himselfe unto it, hee is presently made to suspect him: A qualitie on which age doth immediately bite of it-selfe. How manie times hath he vaunted and applauding himselfe told me of the strict orders of his house, of his good husbandrie, of the awe he kept his houshold-in, and of the exact obedience, and regardfull reverence he received of all his familie, and how cleare-sighted he was in his owne busines:

Ille solus nescit omnia.

*Of all things none but he,
Most ignorant must be.*

I know no man that could produce more parts, both naturall and artificiall, fit to preserve his maisterie, and to maintaine his absolutenesse, than he doth; yet is hee cleane falne from them like a childe. Therefore have I made choice of him, amongst many such conditions that I knowe, as most exemplare. It were a matter beseeming a scholasticall question, whether it be better so, or otherwise. In his presence all things give place unto him. This vaine course is ever left unto his authoritie, that he is never gainesaid. He is had in awe, he is feared, he is beleaved, he is respected his belly-full. Dooth he discharge any boy or servaunt? he presently trusseth up his packe, then is he gone; but whether? onely out of his sight, not out of his house. The steps of age are so slowe, the senses so troubled, the minde so distracted, that hee shall live and do his office, a whole yeere in one same house, and never be perceived. And when fitte time or occasion serveth, Letters are produced from farre places, humbly suing, and pittifully complaining, with promises to doe better, and to amend, by which he is brought into favour and office againe. Doth the maister make any bargaine, or dispatch that pleaseth not? it is immediately smothered and suppressed, soone after forging causes, and devising colourable excuses, to excuse the want of execution or answer. No forraine Letters being first presented unto him, hee seeth but such as are fitte for his knowledge. If peradventure they come unto his handes, as hee that trusteth some one of his men to reade them unto him, hee will presently devise what hee

thinketh good, whereby they often invent, that such a one seemeth to aske him forgiveness, that wrongeth him by his Letter. To conclude, hee never lookes into his owne busines, but by a disposed, designed and as much as may be pleasing image, so contrived by such as are about him, because they will not stirre up his choler, moove his impatience, and exasperate his frowardnes. I have seene under different formes, many long and constant, and of like effect æconomies. It is ever proper unto women, to be readily bent to contradict and crosse their husbands. They will with might and maine hand-over head, take holde of any colour to thwart and withstand them: the first excuse they meete with, serves them as a plenarie justification. I have seene some, that would in grosse steale from their husbands, to the end (as they tolde their Confessors) they might give the greater almes. Trust you to such religious dispensations. They thinke no libertie to have, or managing to possesse sufficient authoritie, if it come from their husbands consent: They must necessarily usurpe it, either by wilie craft or maine force, and ever injuriously, thereby to give it more grace and authoritie. As in my Discourse, when it is against a poore olde man, and for children, then take they holde of this Title, and therewith gloriously serve their turne and passion, and as in a common servitude, easily usurpe and monopolize against his governement and domination. If they be men-children, tall, of good spirit and forward, then they presently suborne, either by threats, force or favour, both Steward, Bailiffe, Clarke, Receiver, and all the Fathers Officers, and Servants. Such as have neither wife nor children, doe more hardly fall into this mischief: but yet more cruelly and unworthily. Olde *Cato* was woont to say, *So many servants, so many enemies*. Note whether according to the distance, that was betweene the puritie of his age, and the corruption of our times, he did not fore-warne us, that *Wives, Children, and Servants are to us so many enemies*. Well fittes-it decrepitude to store us with the sweete benefite of ignorance and unperceiving facilitie wherewith we are deceived.

If we did yeeld unto it, what would become of us? Doe we not see that even then, if we have any sutes in law or matters to be dicided before judges, both Lawyers and Judges, will commonly take part with, and favour our childrens causes? Against us, as men interested in the same? And if I chance not to spie, or plainely perceive how I am cheated, cozoned and beguiled, I must of necessitie discover in the end, how I am subject and may be cheated, beguiled, and cozoned. And shall the tongue of man ever bee able to expresse the unvaluable worth of a friend, in comparison of these civil bondes? The lively image and Idea whereof, which so unspotted I perceive to be amongst beastes. Oh with what religion doe I respect and observe the same! If others deceive me, yet do I not deceive my selfe, to esteeme my selfe capable, and of power to looke unto my selfe, nor to trouble my braines to yeeld my selfe unto it. I doe beware and keepe my selfe from such treasons, and cunny-catching in mine owne bosome, not by an unquiet, and tumultuary curiositie, but rather by a diversion and resolution. When I heare the state of any one reported or discoursed-of, I amuse not my self on him, but presently cast mine eyes on my selfe, and call my wits together, to see in what state I am, and how it goeth with me. Whatsoever concerneth him, the same hath relation to me. His fortunes forewarne me, and summon up my spirites that way. *There is no day nor houre, but we speake that of others, we might properly speake of our selves, could we as well enfolde, as we can unfold our consideration*. And manie Authours doe in this maner wound the

protection of their cause, by over-rashly running against that, which they take hold-of, thirling such dartes at their enemies, that might with much more advantage be cast at them. The Lord of *Monluc*, late one of the Lord Marshals of *France*, having lost his sonne, who dyed in the Iland of *Madera*, a worthy, forward and gallant yong Gentleman, and truly of good hope; amongst other his griefes and regrets, did greatly moove me to condole, the infinite displeasure and hartes-sorrow that he felt, in asmuch as hee had never communicated and opened himselfe unto him: for, with his austere humor, and continuall endeavoring to holde a grimme-sternefatherly gravitie over him, he had lost the meanes, perfectly to find and throughly to know his Sonne, and so to manifest unto him, the extreame affection he bare him, and the worthy judgement he made of his vertue. Alas (was he wont to say) the poore lad, saw never anie thing in me, but a severe-surly-countenance, full of disdaine, and happilie was possessed with this conceit, that I could neither love nor esteeme him according to his merits. Ay-me, to whom did I reserve, to discover that singular and loving affection, which in my soule I bare unto him? Was it not he that should have had all the pleasure and acknowledgement thereof? I have forced and tormented my selfe to maintaine this vaine maske, and have utterly lost the pleasure of his conversation, and therewithall his good will, which surely was but faintly-cold towards me, forsomuch as he never received but rude entertainment of me, and never felt but a tyrannicall proceeding in me towards him. I am of opinion, his complaint was reasonable and well grounded. For, as I know by certaine experience, there is no comfort so sweete in the losse of friends, as that our owne knowledge or conscience tells us, we never omitted to tell them every thing, and expostulate all matters unto them, and to have had a perfect and free communication with them. Tell me my good friend, am I the better or the worse by having a taste of it? Surely I am much the better. His griefe doth both comfort and honour me. Is it not a religious and pleasing office of my life, for ever to make the obsequies thereof? Can there be any pleasure worth this privation? I doe unfold and open my selfe as much as I can to mine owne people, and willingly declare the state of my will and judgement toward them, as commonly I doe towards all men: I make haste to produce and present my selfe, for I would have no man mistake me, in what part soever. Amongst other particular customes, which our ancient Gaules had, (as *Cæsar* affirmeth) this was one, that children never came before their fathers, nor were in any publicke assembly seene in their company, but when they beganne to beare armes; as if they would inferre, that then was the time, fathers should admit them to their acquaintance and familiarity. I have also observed another kinde of indiscretion in some fathers of our times, who during their owne life, would never bee induced to acquaint or impart unto their children, that share or portion, which by the Law of Nature, they were to have in their fortunes: Nay, some there are, who after their death bequeath and commit the same auctoritie, over them and their goods, unto their wives, with full power and law to dispose of them at their pleasure. And my selfe have knowne a Gentleman, a chiefe officer of our crowne, that by right and hope of succession (had he lived unto it) was to inherite above fifty thousand crownes a yeere good land, who at the age of more then fifty yeeres fell into such necessitie and want, and was runne so farre in debt, that he had nothing left him, and as it is supposed dyed for very need; whilst his mother in hir extreame decrepitude, enjoyed all his

lands and possessed all his goods, by vertue of his fathers will and testament, who had lived very neere foure score yeares. A thing (in my conceite) no way to be commended, but rather blamed. Therefore doe I thinke, that a man but little advantaged or bettered in estate, who is able to live of himselfe, and is out of debt, especially if he have children, and goeth about to marry a wife, that must have a great joynter out of his lands, assuredly there is no other debt, that brings more ruine unto houses then that. My predecessours have commonly followed this counsell, and so have I, and all have found good by it. But those that dissuade us from marrying of rich wives, lest they might proove over disdainfull and peevish, or lesse tractable and loving, are also deceived to make us neglect and for-goe a reall commoditie, for so frivolous a conjecture. To an unreasonable woman, it is all one cost to hir, whether they passe under one reason, or under another. *They love to be where they are most wronged.* Injustice doeth allure them; as the honour of their vertuous actions enticeth the good. And by how much richer they are, so much more milde and gentle are they: as more willingly and gloriously chaste, by how much fairer they are. Some colour of reason there is, men should leave the administration of their goods and affaires unto mothers, whilst their children are not of competent age, or fit according to the Lawes to manage the charge of them: And ill hath their father brought them up, if he cannot hope, that comming to years of discretion, they shall have no more wit, reason, and sufficiencie, then his wife, considering the weakenesse of their sexe. Yet truely were it as much against nature, so to order things, that mothers must wholly depend of their childrens discretion. They ought largely and competently to be provided, wherwith to maintaine their estate, according to the qualitie of their house and age: because *neede and want is much more unseemely and hard to be endured in women, than in men:* And children rather then mothers ought to be charged therewith. In generall, my opinion is, that the best distribution of goods, is when we die, to distribute them according to the custome of the country. The Lawes have better thought upon them then we: And better it is to let them erre in their election, then for us rashly to hazard to faile in ours. They are not properly our owne, since without us, and by a civill prescription, they are appoynted to certaine successours. And albeit we have some further liberty, I thinke it should bee a great and most apparant cause to induce us to take from one, and barre him from that, which Fortune hath allotted him, and the common Lawes and Justice hath called him unto: And that against reason wee abuse this liberty, by suting the same unto our private humours and frivolous fantasies. My fortune hath beene good, inasmuch as yet it never presented mee with any occasions, that might tempt or divert my affections from the common and lawfull ordinance. I see some, towards whom it is but labour lost, carefully to endeavour to doe any good offices. *A word ill taken defaceth the merite of tenne yeeres.* Happy he, that at this last passage is readie to sooth and applaud their will. The next action transporteth him; not the best and most frequent offices, but the freshest and present worke the deede. They are people that play with their wils and testaments, as with apples and roddes, to gratifie or chastize everie action of those who pretend any interest thereunto. It is a matter of overlong pursuite, and of exceeding consequence, at everie instance to be thus dilated, and wherein the wiser sort establish themselves once for all, chiefly respecting reason, and publike observance. Wee somewhat over-much take these masculine

substitutions to hart, and propose a ridiculous eternity unto our names. We also over-weight such vaine future conjectures, which infant-spirites give-us. It might peradventure have beene deemed injustice, to displace me from out my ranke, because I was the dullest, the slowest, the unwillingest, and most leadden-pated to learne my lesson or any good, that ever was, not onely of all my brethren, but of all the children in my Countrie; were the lesson concerning any exercise of the minde or body. It is follie to trie anie extraordinarie conclusions upon the trust of their divinations, wherein we are so often deceived. If this rule may be contradicted, and the destinies corrected, in the choise they have made of our heires, with so much more apparance, may it bee done in consideration of some remarkable and enorme corporall deformitie; a constant and incorrigible vice; and according to us great esteemers of beautie; a matter of important prejudice. The pleasant dialogue of *Plato* the lawe-giver, with his cittizens, will much honor this passage. Why then (say they) perceiving their ende to approach, shall wee not dispose of that, which is our owne, to whom and according as we please? Oh Gods what crueltie is this? That it shall not be lawfull for us, to give or bequeathe more or lesse according to our fantasies, to such as have served us, and taken paines with us in our sicknesses, in our age, and in our busines? To whom the law-giver answereth in this manner; my friends (saith he) who doubtles shall shortly die, it is a hard matter for you, both to knowe your selves, and what is yours, according to the *Delphike* inscription: As for me, who am the maker of your lawes, I am of opinion that neither your selves are your owne, nor that which you enjoy. And both you and your goods, past and to come, belong to your familie; and moreover both your families and your goods are the common-wealths: Wherefore, least any flatterer, either in your age, or in time of sickenes, or any other passion, should unadvisedly induce you to make any unlawfull conveyance or unjust will and testament, I will looke to you and keepe you from-it. But having an especiall respect both to the universall interest of your Cittie, and particular state of your houses, I will establish lawes, and by reason make you perceive and confesse, that *a particular commoditie ought to yeelde to a publike benefit*. Followe that course meerely, whereto humaine necessitie doth call you. To me it belongeth, who have no more regarde to one thing, then to another, and who as much as I can, take care for the generall, to have a regardfull respect of that which you leave behind you. But to returne to my former discourse, me thinkes, we seldome see that woman borne, to whom the superioritie or majestie over men is due, except the motherly and naturall; unles it be for the chastisement of such, as by some fond-febricitant humor have voluntarily submitted themselves unto them: But that doth nothing concerne old women, of whom we speake here. It is the apparance of this consideration, hath made us to frame, and willingly to establish this lawe (never seene else where) that barreth women from the succession of this crowne, and there are few principalities in the world, where it is not aleaged, aswel as here, by a likely and apparant reason, which authoriseth the same. But fortune hath given more credit unto-it in some places, then in other some. It is dangerous to leave the dispensation of our succession unto their judgement, according to the choyse they shall make of their children, which is most commonly unjust and fantasticall. For, the same unrulie appetite, and distasted relish, or strange longings, which they have when they are great with child, the same have they at all times in their minds. They are commonly seene to

affect the weakest, the simplest and most abject, or such (if they have any) that had more need to sucke. For, wanting reasonable discourse to chuse, and embrace what they ought, they rather suffer themselves to be directed, where natures impressions are most single, as other creatures, which take no longer knowledge of their yong-ones, then they are sucking. Moreover, experience doth manifestly shew unto us, that the same naturall affection, to which we ascribe so much authoritie, hath but a weake foundation. For a very small gaine, we daily take mothers owne children from them, and induce them to take charge of ours; Doe we not often procure them to bequeathe their children to some fond, filthie, sluttish, and unhealthie nurse, to whom we would be very loth to commit ours, or to some brutish Goate, not onely forbidding them to nurse and feede their owne children (what danger soever may betide them) but also to have any care of them, to the end they may the more diligently follow, and carefully attend the service of ours? Whereby we soone see through custome a certaine kinde of bastard-affection to be engendred in them, more vehement then the naturall, and to be much more tender and carefull for the wellfare and preservation of other mens children, then for their owne. And the reason why I have made mention of Goates, is, because it is an ordinarie thing round about me where I dwell, to see the countrie women, when they have not milke enough to feede their infants with their owne breasts, to call for Goates to helpe them. And my selfe have now two lackeis wating upon me, who except it were eight daies never suck't other milke then Goates; They are presently to come at call, and give yong infants sucke, and become so well acquainted with their voice, that when they heare them crie, they runne forthwith unto them. And if by chance they have any other childe put to their teates, then their nursing, they refuse and reject him, and so doth the childe a strange Goate. My selfe saw that one not long since, from whom the father tooke a Goate, which he had sucked two or three daies, because he had but borrowed it of one his neighbours, who could never be induced to sucke any other, whereby he shortly died; and as I verely thinke, of meere hunger. *Beasts as well as we doe soone alter, and easily bastardize their naturall affection.* I beleieve, that in that, which *Herodotus* reporteth of a certaine province of *Libia*, there often followeth great error and mistaking. He saith, that men doe indifferently use, and as it were in common frequent women; And that the childe as soone as he is able to goe, comming to any solemne meetings and great assemblies, led by a naturall instinct findeth out his owne father: where being turned loose in the midst of the multitude, looke what man the childe doth first addresse his steeps unto, and then goe to him, the same is ever afterward reputed to be his right father. Now if we shall duely consider this simple occasion of loving our children, because we have begotten them, for which we call them our other selves. It seems there is another production comming from us, and which is of no lesse recommendation and consequence. For what we engender by the minde, the fruites of our courage, sufficiencie, or spirit, are brought forth by a farre more noble part, then the corporall, and are more, our owne. We are both father and mother together in this generation: Such fruites cost us much dearer, and bring us more honour, and chiefly if they have any good or rare thing in them. For, the value of our other children, is much more theirs, then ours. The share we have in them is but little; but of these, all the beautie, all the grace, and all the worth is ours. And therefore doe they represent, and resemble us much more lively then others. *Plato* addeth moreover,

that these are immortal issues, and immortalize their fathers, yea and deifie them, as *Licurgus*, *Solon*, and *Minos*. All histories being full of examples of this mutuall friendship of fathers toward their children, I have not thought it amisse to set downe some choyse-one of this kind. *Heliodorus* that good Bishop of *Tricea*, loved rather to loose the dignitie, profit and devotion of so venerable a Prelateship, then to for-goe his daughter, a yong woman to this day commended for hir beautie, but happily somewhat more curiously and wantonly pranked-up then beseemed the daughter of a churchman and a Bishop, and of over-amorous behavior. There was one *Labienus* in *Rome*, a man of great worth and authoritie, and amongst other commendable qualities, most excellent in all maner of learning, who (as I thinke) was the sonne of that great *Labienus*, chiefe of all the captaines that followed and were under *Cæsar* in the warres against the *Gaules*, and who afterward taking great *Pompeys* part, behaved himselfe so valiantly and so constantly, that he never forsooke him untill *Cæsar* defeated him in *Spaine*. This *Labienus* of whom I spake, had many that envied his vertues; But above all (as it is likely) courtiers, and such as in his time were favored of the Emperors, who hated his franknes, his fatherly humors, and distaste he bare still against tyrannie, wherewith it may be supposed he had stuffed his bookes and compositions. His adversaries vehemently pursued him before the Magistrate of *Rome*, and prevailed so farre, that many of his workes which he had published were condemned to be burned. He was the first on whom this new example of punishment was put in practise, which after continued long in *Rome*, and was executed on divers others, to punish learning, studies, and writings with death and consuming fire. There were neither meanes enough, or matter sufficient of crueltie, unlesse we had entermingled amongst them things, which nature hath exempted from all sense and sufferance, as reputation, and the inventions of our minde: and except we communicated corporall mischiefes unto disciplines and monuments of the Muses. Which losse *Labienus* could not endure, nor brooke to survive those his deare, and highly-esteemed issues: And therefore caused himselfe to be carried, and shut up alive within his auncestors monument, where, with a dreadlesse resolution, he at once provided, both to kill himselfe and be buried together. It is hard to shew any more vehement fatherly affection, than that. *Cassius Severus*, a most eloquent man, and his familiar friend, seeing his Bookes burnt, exclaimed, that by the same sentence hee should therewithall be condemned to be burned alive, for hee still bare, and kept in minde, what they contained in them. A like accident happened to *Geruntius Cordus*, who was accused to have commended *Brutus* and *Cassius* in his Bookes. That base, servile, and corrupted Senate, and worthie of a farre worse maister then *Tiberius*, adjudged his writings to be consumed by fire. And he was pleased to accompany them in their death; for, he pined away by abstaining from all manner of meate. That notable man *Lucane*, being adjudged by that lewd varlet *Nero* to death; at the latter end of his life, when al his bloud was well-nigh spent from out the veines of his arme, which by his Phisitian he had caused to be opened, to hasten his death, and that a chilling cold began to seize the uttermost parts of his limbes, and approach his vitale spirits, the last thing he had in memory, was some of his owne verses, written in his booke of the *Pharsalian* warres, which with a distinct voice hee repeated, and so yeelded up the ghost, having those last words in his mouth. What was that, but a kinde, tender, and fatherly farwell which he

tooke of his children? representing the last adewes, and parting imbracements, which at our death we give unto our deerest issues? And an effect of that naturall inclination, which in that last extremitie puts us in minde of those things, which in our life-time we have held dearest and most precious? Shall we imagine that *Epicurus*, who (as himselfe said) dying tormented with the extreame paine of the chollike, had all his comfort in the beautie of the doctrine, which hee left behinde him in the world, would have received as much contentment of a number of well-borne, and betterbred children (if he had had any) as he did of the production of his rich compositions? And if it had beene in his choise, to leave behinde him, either a counterfeite, deformed, or ill-borne childe, or a foolish, triviall, and idle booke, not onely he, but all men in the world besides of like learning and sufficiencie, would much rather have chosen, to incurre the former then the latter mischiefe. It might peradventure be deemed impietie, in Saint *Augustine* (for example-sake) if on the one parte one should propose unto him, to burie all his bookes, whence our religion receiveth so much good, or to interre his children (if in case he had any) that he would not rather chuse to bury his children, or the issue of his loynes, then the fruits of of his minde. And I wot not well, whether my selfe should not much rather desire to beget and produce a perfectly-well-shaped, and excellently-qualited infant, by the acquaintance of the Muses, then by the copulation of my wife. Whatsoever I give to this, let the world allow of it as it please, I give it as purely and irrevocable, as any man can give to his corporall children. That little good which I have done him, is no longer in my disposition. He may know many things, that my selfe know no longer, and hold of me what I could not hold my selfe: and which (if neede should require) I must borrow of him as of a stranger. If I be wiser then he, he is richer then I. There are few men given unto Poesie, that would not esteeme it for a greater honor, to be the fathers of *Virgils Aeneidos*, then of the goodliest boy in *Rome*, and that would not rather endure the losse of the one then the perishing of the other. For, according to *Aristotle*, *Of all workemen, the Poet is principally the most amorous of his productions and conceited of his Labours*. It is not easie to be believed, that *Epaminondas*, who wanted to leave some daughters behinde him, which unto all posteritie, should one day highly honour their father (they were the two famous victories, which he had gained of the Lacedemonians) would ever have given his free consent, to change them, with the best-borne, most gorgeous, and goodliest damsells of all *Greece*: or that *Alexander*, and *Cæsar*, did ever wish to be deprived of the greatnesse of their glorious deedes of warre, for the commoditie to have children and heires of their owne bodies, how absolutely-perfect, and well accomplished soever they might be. Nay, I make a great question, whether *Phidias* or any other excellent statuary, would as highly esteeme, and dearly love the preservation, and successefull continuance of his naturall children, as he would an exquisite and matchlesse-wrought image, that with long studie, and dilligent care he had perfected according unto arte. And as concerning those vicious and furious passions, which sometimes have enflamed some fathers to the love of their daughters, or mothers towards their sonnes; the very same, and more partially-earnest is also found in this other kinde of childe-bearing and aliance. Witnesse that which is reported of *Pigmalion*, who having curiously framed a goodly statue, of a most singularly-beauteous woman, was so strange-fondly, and passionately surprised with the lustfull love of his owne

workemanship, that the Gods through his raging importunitie were
faine in favour of him to give it life.

*Tentatum mollescit ebur, positóque rigore
Subsidit digitis.*

*As he assaid it, th'yvorie softned much,
And (hardnes left) did yeeld to fingers touch.*