

## **Francis Bacon: Essays, J.M. Dent and Sons, London, 1972 (Introduction by Michael Hawkins)**

*In Francis Bacon, we see great brilliance of intellect wedded with the dual taints of misanthropy and misogyny. Even before the proclamations of Descartes, Bacon viewed others and the world as mere objects, and his own being as sovereign. He viewed love as both burden and liability to those real men of history who flexed muscle.*

*Bacon was a man most knowledgeable in the arts of human power. He consorted with kings and queens and saw all of life as falling within his field of endeavor. At the age of 46, he was granted the mantle of Solicitor-General by King James I. Ten years later, he had become Attorney-General.*

*As an active member of Parliament he was fully immersed in the power politics of his day. He was among those who urged the execution of Mary Queen of Scots in 1586.*

*Francis Bacon was one of the first political strategists to clearly articulate the principles of Balance of Power politics. He was a strong proponent of pre-emptive war and viewed the exercise of military might through warfare as a means of maintaining the supremacy of powerful states. And all this long before the rise of the American Imperium.*

*Bacon was the ultimate pragmatist and opportunist. Like Macchiavelli, whom he greatly admired, Bacon was a master of knowing how best to manage a state and to preserve the power of its rulers, but remained cynically dismissive of the stirrings of the human heart. He placed a high value on cunning, and viewed love as a form of human weakness. He unquestionably had a rare knowledge regarding ways of exercising power in the world.*

*He also possessed an astute knowledge of human nature, and understood how best to employ both the nobler and the baser instincts in others to achieve his purposes.*

*Bacon attained his insights through both intimate familiarity with political process and intrigue, and through an early and careful study of historical precedents. He had a deep knowledge of Roman history, and repeatedly used that knowledge to illuminate his subject matter. Bacon also kept abreast of the intellectual and political movements that coursed through his own times, both in England and in continental Europe.*

*This extraordinary collection of essays offers a portrait of early seventeenth century political reality in Europe and the world view of a remarkable man who, according to William Blake, offered "Good advice from Satan's kingdom."*

VDS  
Belgrave, 2007

### **Biographical Note**

In 1606, at the age of forty-five he married Alice Barnham, the daughter of a London merchant, and in 1607 was made Solicitor-General. The following year he entered upon the Clerkship of the Star Chamber, and was in the enjoyment of a large income; but old

debts and present extravagance kept him embarrassed. In 1613 he became Attorney-General, in 1616 a Privy Councillor and in 1617 Lord keeper. In 1618 he was given the more honorific title of Lord Chancellor. He was knighted in 1603, and created Lord Verulam in 1618 and Viscount St Albans in 1621.

Hardly had he reached this final peak when he was charged in parliament with receiving bribes, an accusation which might be faced by any office-holder in the early seventeenth century, since official salaries were inadequate and dependence on fees and gratuities paid by suitors was widespread. He was sentenced to a fine of 40,000 [pounds] which was remitted by the king.

He died [at the age of 65 years] leaving debts to the amount of 22,000 pounds. p. viii

The intellect of Bacon was one of the most powerful and searching ever possessed by man, and he is claimed by some scientists as the originator of the modern school of experimental research. . . . His moral character was extremely mixed and complex, and bears no comparison with his intellect. p. ix

## Introduction

As an adolescent he had condemned the prevailing philosophical methods and, as a young man, had taken “all knowledge to be [his] province”, but he had published only a pamphlet attacking the Earl of Essex's treason, some religious meditations and the first edition of the *Essays* (1597), consisting of ten brief sketches, mere “fragments of my conceits.” . . .

Bacon's reputation in politics, literature and philosophy rests on the achievements of his mature middle age. p. xi

Philosophically Bacon was perhaps more successful and less original in attacking existing ways of thinking than in establishing new ones. p. xii

Men's senses and understanding were beset by four sorts of Idol: the Idols of the Tribe arose from erroneous methods of thinking common to humanity as a whole; the Idols of the Cave from those of the individual; Idols of the Market Place from popular language and communication; and Idols of the Theatre from erroneous philosophies.

To Bacon learning ought to be profitable in the sense of enlarging man's control over his environment; knowledge was for the “relief of man's estate.” A new scheme was proposed in Bacon's *Instauratio Magna. The Advancement of Learning* outlined existing knowledge, pinpointing its deficiencies. *The Novum Organum* propounded by Bacon's new epistemology (science of the method or grounds of knowledge). By observation of, or preferably experiment with, the ‘instances’ of natural phenomena, and careful distinction of positive and negative examples, the ‘forms’ of nature were ultimately to be

discovered. Axioms of greater and greater generality could be established and applied to other situations. Science was thus to become inductive, inferring general laws or principles from the observation of particular instances, although the application of the axioms left room for the exercise of a rational deductive, as opposed to inductive, faculty.  
pp. xii-xiii

The *Essays* were intended to supply many of the deficiencies in the “moral and civil knowledge” of men as individuals or in society which Bacon indicated in the second book of *The Advancement of Learning*, especially in the most neglected part of civil knowledge, that concerning negotiation or business.  
p. xiv

Modern liberal opinion has been less certain of the positive moral value of man’s control over man than of his control over his physical environment. The Machiavellian overtones of much of Bacon’s advice have been stressed and the *Essays* condemned as immoral or at least amoral; “Good advice from Satan’s kingdom” in Blake’s words. Bacon approved of Machiavelli (1469-1527) for studying “what men do, and not what they ought to do.” This is another example of Bacon’s protest against contemporary thinking, which proceeded, in moral as in natural philosophy, deductively and syllogistically, and concentrated on the ideal.  
pp. xiv-xv

The *Essays* presuppose that the public or political life is valuable, and so too is advancement within it. But equally conformity to the established religious and political order is essential. This order might be imperfect, and Bacon was intent on practical reforms to secure it, but the consequences of “Seditious and Troubles,” “Atheism” or of breaking “Unity in Religion” were incalculable. Bacon was in the mainstream of European opinion which stressed the value of strong executive power and tended to regard independent centres of authority, whether ecclesiastic, aristocratic or parliamentary, as old-fashioned and disruptive.  
p. xvi

If there was greater ethical concern in Bacon than in Machiavelli, Bacon was Machiavellian in basing morality upon secular and civic rather than religious considerations. Whatever he intended, by asserting that the study of God’s works (man and natural) was hardly, if at all, less pious than the study of God’s Word as revealed in Scripture, he made possible the attempt to establish human ends in both politics and science. Except insofar as it was a useful social cement, religion might be divorced from politics, as it equally might from natural philosophy in Bacon’s scheme. pp. xvi-xvii

The works of Machiavelli, Comines (1445-1500) and Sarpi (1552-1623) may be traced in the *Essays*, but perhaps Guicciardini (1483-1540) was the modern historian whose influence on Bacon was most potent. Among the ancient authors on whom Bacon relied, the Stoics of the Latin Silver Age (A.D. 17-130), notably Seneca and Tacitus, were particularly important.  
p. xvii

To Bacon rhetoric was the “art of applying reason to imagination for the better moving of the will”; that is, its purpose is to induce man to act rationally rather than emotionally.

Purely sensuous word schemes designed to give pleasure were adequate if abstract literary eloquence was all that was needed, but for the practical business of life a plainer style which reflected the dispassionate processes of the rational mind was preferable. . . . although the Royal Society's "mathematical plainness" of language owed much to Bacon, Bacon's style was far from unadorned. The Senecans stressed "figures of wit and thought", metaphors, epigrams, aphorisms, antitheses and paradoxes, or, more generally, "pointed sentences." Bacon was suspicious of Seneca's verbal ingenuity and preferred Tacitus as a model both for his style and for his 'prudential' political wisdom. p. xviii

In neither style nor content did Bacon owe much to Montaigne, the other great contemporary originator of the Essay, whose collection first appeared in 1580. Both were anti-Ciceronians, but Montaigne's diffuse and leisurely style and intimate approach differ greatly from Bacon's terseness and objectivity. It has been suggested that Bacon used Montaigne as a stylistic model more closely in his later essays, but in fact Bacon was capable of writing in a flowing manner from the beginning of his literary career. The style and systematic plan of Bacon's *Essays* were intended to fulfil a specific didactic purpose for which the more reflective mood which later dominated the essay as a genre was inappropriate. Montaigne's scepticism must be contrasted with Bacon's confidence in man's ability to counter the defects of his understanding, and Montaigne's unwillingness to be involved in politics distinguishes him further from Bacon. Bacon did use a few of Montaigne's ideas, but generally the mere fact that they both called their collections *Essays* has been responsible for the drawing of invidious comparisons between the two when really their aims differed totally. p. xix

Michael J. Hawkins  
University of Sussex, 1972

## **THE TEXT**

### **Of Truth**

The inquiry of truth - which is the love-making or wooing of it, the knowledge of truth - which is the presence of it, and the belief of truth - which is the enjoying of it, is the sovereign good of human nature. The first creature of God, in the works of the days, was the light of the sense; the last was the light of reason; and his sabbath work, ever since, is the illumination of his Spirit. p. 4

### **Of Death**

He that dies in the earnest pursuit is like one that is wounded in hot blood; who, for the time, scarce feels the hurt; and therefore a mind fixed and bent upon somewhat that is good doth avert the dolours of death. p. 7

## Of Unity in Religion

The quarrels and divisions about religions were evils unknown to the heathen. The reason was, because the religion of the heathen consisted rather in rites and ceremonies, than in any constant belief. For you may imagine what kind of faith theirs was, when the chief doctors and fathers of their church were the poets. But the true God hath this attribute, that he is a *jealous God*; and therefore his worship and religion will endure no mixture nor partner.

p. 8

Concerning the means of procuring unity; men must beware, that in the procuring or muniting of religious unity, they do not dissolve and deface the laws of charity and of human society. There are two swords amongst Christians, the spiritual and temporal; and both have their due office and place in the maintenance of religion., But we may not take up the third sword, which is Mahomet's sword, or like unto it; that is, to propagate religion by wars, or by sanguinary persecutions to force consciences; except it be in the cases of overt scandal, blasphemy, or intermixture of practice against the state; much less to nourish seditions; to authorize conspiracies and rebellions; to put the sword into the people's hands; and the like; tending to the subversion of all government, which is the ordinance of God.

pp. 10-11

For as the temporal sword is to be drawn with great circumspection in case of religion; so it is a thing monstrous to put it into the hands of the common people. Let that be left unto the Anabaptists and other furies. It was great blasphemy when the devil said, *I will ascend and be like the Highest*; but it is greater blasphemy to personate God, and bring him in saying, *I will descend and be like the prince of darkness*: and what is it better, to make the cause of religion to descend to the cruel and execrable actions of murdering princes, butchery of people, and subversion of states and governments? Surely this is to bring down the Holy Ghost, in stead of the likeness of a dove, in the shape of a vulture or raven; and to set out of the bark of a Christian church a flag of a bark of pirates and assassins. Therefore it is most necessary that the church by doctrine and decree, princes by their sword, and all learnings, both Christian and moral, as by their Mercury rod, do damn and send to hell for ever those facts and opinions tending to the support of the same.

pp. 11-12

## On Revenge

Revenge is a kind of wild justice; which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out. For as for the first wrong, it doth but offend the law; but the revenge of that wrong putteth the law out of office. Certainly, in taking revenge, a man is but even with his enemy; but in passing it over, he is superior; for it is a prince's part to pardon. . .

There is no man doth a wrong for the wrong's sake; but thereby to purchase himself profit, or pleasure, or honour, or the like. Therefore why should I be angry with a man for loving himself better than me? And if any man should do wrong merely out of ill nature,

why, yet it is but like thy thorn or briar, which prick and scratch, because they can do no other. . . .

Cosmus, duke of Florence, had a desperate saying against perfidious or neglecting friends, as if those wrongs were unpardonable: *You shall read (saith he) that we are commanded to forgive our enemies; but you never read that we are commanded to forgive our friends.* But yet the spirit of Job was in a better tune: *Shall we (saith he) take good at God's hands, and not be content to take evil also?* And so of friends in proportion. This is certain, that a man that studieth revenge keeps his own wounds green, which otherwise would heal and do well. pp. 13-14

### **Of Adversity**

The virtue of prosperity is temperance; the virtue of adversity is fortitude; which in morals is the more heroical virtue. Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament; adversity is the blessing of the New; which carrieth the greater benediction, and the clearer revelation of God's favour. Yet even in the Old Testament, if you listen to David's harp, you shall hear as many hearse-like airs as carols; and the pencil of the Holy Ghost hath laboured more in describing the afflictions of Job than the felicities of Saloman. Prosperity is not without many fears and distastes; and adversity is not without comforts and hopes. . . . Certainly virtue is like precious odours, most fragrant when they are incensed or crushed: for prosperity doth best discover vice; but adversity doth best discover virtue.

pp. 15-16

### **Of Simulation and Dissimulation**

If a man have that penetration of judgement as he can discern what things are to be laid open, and what to be secreted, and what to be shewed at half lights, and to whom, and when (which indeed are arts of state and arts of life, as Tacitus well calleth them), to him a habit of dissimulation is a hinderance and a poorness. But if a man cannot obtain to that judgement, then it is left to him, generally, to be close, and a dissembler. For where a man cannot choose or vary in particulars, there it is good to take the safest and wariest way in general; like the going softly by one that cannot well see. Certainly the ablest men that ever were have had all an openness and frankness of dealing, and a name of certainty and veracity; but then they were like horses well managed; for they could tell passing well when to stop or turn; and at such times when they thought the case indeed required dissimulation, if they then used it, it came to pass that the former opinion spread abroad of their good faith and clearness of dealing made them almost invisible. p. 17

The great advantages of simulation and dissimulation are three. First, to lay asleep opposition, and to surprise. For where a man's intentions are published, it is an alarm to call up all that are against them. The second is, to reserve to a man's self a fair retreat. For if a man engage himself by a manifest declaration, he must go through, or take a fall. The third is, the better to discover the mind of another. For to him that opens himself men

will hardly shew themselves adverse; but will (fair) let him go on, and turn their freedom of speech to freedom of thought. And therefore it is a good shrewd proverb of the Spaniard, *Tell a lie and find a troth*; as if there were no way of discovery but by simulation.

There be also three disadvantages, to set it even. The first, that simulation and dissimulation commonly carry with them a shew of fearfulness, which in any business doth spoil the feathers of round flying up to the mark. The second, that it puzzleth and perplexeth the conceits of many that perhaps would otherwise co-operate with him, and makes a man walk almost alone to his own ends. The third and greatest is, that it depriveth a man of one of the most principal instruments for action, which is trust and belief. The best composition and temperature is to have openness in fame and opinion; secrecy in habit; dissimulation in seasonable use; and a power to feign, if there be no remedy. p. 19

### **Of Parents and Children**

Surely a man shall see the noblest works and foundations have proceeded from childless men, which have sought to express the images of their minds, where those of their bodies have failed: so the care of posterity is most in them that have no posterity. p. 20

The illiberality of parents in allowance toward their children is an harmful error; makes them base; acquaints them with shifts; makes them sort with mean company; and makes them surfeit more when they come to plenty: and therefore the proof is best, when men keep their authority towards their children, but not their purse. p. 20

### **Of Marriage and Single Life**

He that hath wife and children hath given hostages to fortune; for they are impediments to great enterprises, either of virtue or mischief. Certainly, the best works, and of greatest merit for the public, have proceeded from the unmarried or childless men, which both in affection and means have married and endowed the public. Yet it were great reason that those that have children should have greatest care of future times; unto which they know they must transmit their dearest pledges. p. 22

The most ordinary cause of a single life is liberty; especially in certain self-pleasing and humorous minds, which are so sensible of every restraint, as they will go near to think their girdles and garter to be bonds and shackles. Unmarried men are best friends, best masters, best servants; but not always best subjects; for they are light to run away; and almost all fugitives are of that condition. A single life doth well with churchmen; for charity will hardly water the ground where it must first fill a pool. p. 22

Wife and children are a kind of discipline of humanity; and single men, though they may be many times more charitable, because their means are less exhaust, yet, on the other

side, they are more cruel and hard-hearted (good to make severe inquisitors), because their tenderness is not so oft called upon. p. 23

Wives are young men's mistresses; companions for middle age; and old men's nurses. p. 23

### **Of Envy**

There be none of the affections which have been noted to fascinate or bewitch, but love and envy. They both have vehement wishes; they frame themselves readily into imaginations and suggestions; and they come easily into the eye, especially upon the presence of the objects. p. 24

Envy is ever joined with the comparing of a man's self; and where there is no comparison, no envy; and therefore kings are not envied but by kings. Nevertheless it is to be noted that unworthy persons are most envied at their first coming in, and afterwards overcome it better; whereas, contrariwise, persons of worth and merit are most envied when their fortune continueth long. For by that time, though their virtue be the same, yet it hath not the same lustre; for fresh men grow up that darken it. p. 26

We will add this, in general, touching the affection of envy, that of all other affections it is the most importune and continual. For of other affections there is occasion given but now and then. And therefore it was well said, *Invidia festos dies non agit* [envy keeps no holidays]. For it is ever working upon some or other. And it is also noted that love and envy do make a man pine, which other affections do not, because they are not so continual. It is also the vilest affection, and the most depraved; for which cause it is the proper attribute of the devil, who is called *The envious man, that soweth tares amongst the wheat by night*. p. 28

### **Of Love**

Amongst all the great and worthy persons (whereof the memory remaineth, either ancient or recent), there is not one that hath been transported to the mad degree of love; which shows that great spirits and great business do keep out this weak passion. p. 29

They do best, who, if they cannot but admit love, yet make it keep quarter, and sever it wholly from their serious affairs and actions of life; for if it check once with business, it troubleth men's fortunes, and maketh men that they can no ways be true to their own ends. . . .

There is in man's nature a secret inclination and motion towards love of others, which, if it be not spent upon some one or a few, doth naturally spread itself towards many, and maketh men become humane and charitable; as it is seen sometimes in friars. p. 30



## **Of Great Place**

Men in great places are thrice servants: servants of the sovereign or state; servants of fame; and servants of business. So as they have no freedom, neither in their persons, nor in their actions, nor in their times. It is a strange desire, to seek power and to lose liberty; or to seek power over others and to lose power over a man's self. p. 31

Power to do good is the true and lawful end of aspiring. For good thoughts (though God accept them) yet towards men are little better than good dreams, except they be put in act; and that cannot be without power and place, as the vantage and commanding ground. Merit and good works is the end of man's motion; and conscience of the same is the accomplishment of man's rest. For if a man can be partaker of God's theatre, he shall likewise be partaker of God's rest. pp. 31-32

If thou have colleagues, respect them, and rather call them when they look not for it, than exclude them when they have reason to look to be called. Be not too sensible or too remembering of thy place in conversation and private answers to suitors; but let it rather be said, *When he sits in place he is another man.* pp. 33-34

## **Of Boldness**

Question was asked of Demosthenes, *what was the chief part of an orator?* He answered, *action: what next? action: what next again? action:* He said it that knew it best, and had by nature himself no advantage in that he commended. p. 35

You shall see a bold fellow many times do Mahomet's miracle. Mahomet made the people believe that he would call an hill to him, and from the top of it offer up his prayers for the observers of his law. The people assembled; Mahomet called the hill to come to him, again and again; and when the hill stood still, he was never a whit abashed, but said, *If the hill will not come to Mahomet, Mahomet will go to the hill.* So these men, when they have promised great matters and failed most shamefully, yet (if they have the perfection of boldness) they will but slight it over, and make a turn, and no more ado. Certainly, to men of great judgement, bold persons are a sport to behold. pp. 35-36

This is well to be weighed, that boldness is ever blind; for it seeth not dangers and inconveniences. Therefore it is ill in counsel, good in execution; so that the right use of bold persons is, that they never command in chief, but be seconds, and under the direction of others. For in counsel it is good to see dangers; and in execution not to see them, except they be very great. p. 36

## **Of Goodness, and Goodness of Nature**

Goodness answers to the theological virtue charity, and admits no excess, but error. The desire of power in excess caused the angels to fall; the desire of knowledge in excess caused man to fall; but in charity there is no excess. p. 37

The example of God teacheth the lesson truly: *He sendeth his rain, and maketh his sun to shine, upon the just and the unjust*; but he doth not rain wealth, nor shine honour and virtues, upon men equally. Common benefits are to be communicate with all, but peculiar benefits with choice. p. 38

### **Of Nobility**

It is a reverend thing to see an ancient castle or building not in decay, or to see a fair timber-tree sound and perfect: how much more to behold an ancient noble family, which hath stood against the waves and weathers of time. For new nobility is but the act of power; but ancient nobility is the act of time. Those that are first raised to nobility are commonly more virtuous, but less innocent, than their descendants; for there is rarely any rising but by a commixture of good and evil arts. But it is reason the memory of their virtues remain to their posterity, and their faults die with themselves. p. 41

### **Of Seditions and Troubles**

The causes and motives of seditions are: innovation in religions; taxes; alteration of laws and customs; breaking of privileges; general oppression; advancement of unworthy persons; strangers; dearths; disbanded soldiers; factions grown desperate; and whatsoever, in offending people, joineth and knitteth them in a common cause. . . .

The first remedy of prevention is to remove by all means possible that material cause of sedition whereof we spake; which is want and poverty in the estate. To which purpose serveth the opening and well-balancing of trade; the cherishing of manufactures; the banishment of idleness; the repressing of waste and excess by sumptuary laws; the improvement and husbanding of the soil; the regulating of prices of things vendible; the moderating of taxes and tributes; and the like. Generally, it is to be foreseen that the population of a kingdom (especially if it be not mown down by wars) do not exceed the stock of the kingdom which should maintain them. Neither is the population to be reckoned only by number; for a smaller number, that spend more and earn less, do wear out an estate sooner than a greater number, that live lower and gather more. Therefore the multiplying nobility and other degrees of quality, in an over-proportion to the common people, doth speedily bring a state to necessity; and so doth likewise an overgrown clergy, for they bring nothing to the stock; and in the manner, when more are bred scholars than preferments can take off. p. 45

Also, the foresight and prevention, that there be no likely or fit head whereunto discontented persons may resort, and under whom they may join, is a known but an excellent point of caution. I understand a fit head to be one that hath greatness and reputation; that hath confidence with the discontented party, and upon whom they turn their eyes; and that is thought discontented in his own particular: which kind of persons are either to be won and reconciled to the state, and that in a fast and true manner; or to be fronted with some other of the same party, that may oppose them, and so divide the reputation. Generally, the dividing and breaking of all factions and combinations that are

adverse to the state, and setting them at distance or at least distrust amongst themselves, is not one of the worst remedies. For it is a desperate case, if those that hold with the proceeding of the state be full of discord and faction, and those that are against it be entire and united. p. 47

Lastly, let princes, against all events, not be without some great person, one or rather more, of military valour, near unto them, for the repressing of seditions in their beginnings. . . . But let such military persons be assured, and well reputed of, rather than factious and popular; holding also good correspondence with the other great men in the state; or else the remedy is worse than the disease. p. 48

### **Of Atheism**

God never wrought miracle to convince atheism, because his ordinary works convince it. It is true, that a little philosophy inclineth a man's mind to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion. . . .

It is a thousand times more credible that four mutable elements and one immutable fifth essence, duly and eternally placed, need no God, than that an army of infinite small portions or seeds unplaced should have produced this order and beauty without a divine marshall. p. 49

They that deny a God destroy man's nobility; for certainly man is of kin to the beasts by his body; and if he be not of kin to God by his spirit, he is a base and ignoble creature. It destroys likewise magnanimity, and the raising of human nature; for take an example of a dog, and mark what a generosity and courage he will put on when he finds himself maintained by a man, who to him is in stead of a god, a *melior natura* [better nature], which courage is manifestly such as that creature, without that confidence of a better nature than his own, could never attain. So man, when he resteth and assureth himself upon divine protection and favour, gathereth a force and faith which human nature in itself could not obtain. pp. 50-51

### **Of Superstition**

Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation; all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not; but superstition dismounts all these, and erecteth an absolute monarchy in the minds of men. therefore atheism did never perturb states; for it makes men wary of themselves, as looking no further; and we see the times inclined to atheism (as the time of Augustus Caesar) were civil times. p. 52

### **Of Empire**

Kings have to deal with their neighbours, their wives, their children, their prelates or clergy, their nobles, their second-nobles or gentlemen, their merchants, their commons, and their men of war; and from all these arise dangers, if care and circumspection be not used.

First for their neighbours; there can no general rule be given (the occasions are so variable), save one, which ever holdeth; which is, that princes do keep due sentinel, that none of their neighbours do overgrow so (by increase of territory, by embracing of trade, by approaches, or the like) as they become more able to annoy them than they were. And this is generally the work of standing councils to foresee and to hinder it. During that triumvirate of kings, King Henry VIII of England, Francis I, King of France, and Charles V, Emperor, there was such a watch kept, that none of the three could win a palm of ground, but the other two would straightways balance it, either by confederation or, if need were, of a war; and would not in any wise take up peace at interest. And the like was done by that league (which Guiccardini saith was the security of Italy) made between Ferdinando, King of Naples, Lorenzious Medices, and Ludovicus Sforza, potentates, the one of Florence, the other of Milan. Neither is the opinion of some of the schoolmen to be received, *that a war cannot justly be made but upon a precedent injury or provocation*. For there is no question but a just fear of an imminent danger, though there be no blow given, is a lawful cause of a war. pp. 58-59

Princes are like to heavenly bodies, which cause good or evil times; and which have much veneration, but no rest. All precepts concerning kings are in effect comprehended in those two remembrances: *Memento quod es homo* (remember that thou art man), and *Memento quod es Deus* (remember that thou art a God), or *vice Dei* (or God's vicegerent); the one bridleth their power, and the other their will. p. 61

### **Of Counsel**

Let us now speak of the inconveniences of counsel, and of the remedies. The inconveniences that have been noted in calling and using counsel are three. First, the revealing of affairs, whereby they become less secret. Secondly, the weakening of the authority of princes, as if they were less of themselves. Thirdly, the danger of being unfaithfully counselled, and more for the good of them that counsel than of him that is counselled. . . .

As to secrecy; princes are not bound to communicate all matters with all counsellors, but may extract and select. Neither is it necessary that he that consulteth what he should do, should declare what he will do. But let princes beware that the unsecreting of their affairs comes not from themselves. . . . One futile person that maketh it his glory to tell, will do more hurt than many, that know it their duty to conceal. . . .

For weakening of authority; the fable sheweth the remedy. Nay, the majesty of kings is rather exalted than diminished when they are in the chair of counsel; neither was there ever prince bereaved of his dependences by his counsel, except where there hath been either an over-greatness in one counsellor or an over-strict combination in divers; which are things soon found and holpen.

For the last inconvenience, that men will counsel with an eye to themselves; certainly, *non inveniet fidem super terram* (he shall not find faith on the earth) is meant of the nature of times, and not of all particular persons. There be that are in nature faithful, and sincere, and plain, and direct, not crafty and involved; let princes, above all, draw to themselves such natures. pp. 63-64

It is of singular use to princes if they take the opinions of their counsel both separately and together. For private opinion is more free, but opinion before others is more reverend. In private, men are more bold in their own humours; and in consort, men are more obnoxious to others' humours. Therefore it is good to take both. pp. 64-65

A king, when he presides in counsel, let him beware how he opens his own inclination too much in that which he propoundeth; for else counsellors will but take the wind of him, and instead of giving free counsel, sing him a song of *placebo* [I will please]. p. 66

### **Of Cunning**

It is a point of cunning, to wait upon him with whom you speak, with your eye, as the Jesuits give it in precept; for there be many wise men that have secret hearts and transparent countenances. Yet this would be done with a demure abasing of your eye sometimes, as the Jesuits also do use.

Another is, that when you have anything to obtain of present dispatch, you entertain or amuse the party with whom you deal with some other discourse, that he be not too much awake to make objections. I knew a counsellor and secretary, that never came to Queen Elizabeth of England with bills to sign, but he would always first put her into some discourse of estate, that she mought the less mind the bills.

The like surprise may be made by moving things when the party is in haste, and cannot stay to consider advisedly of that is moved. p. 68

### **Of Dispatch**

Above all things, order and distribution, and singling out of parts, is the life of dispatch; so as the distribution be not too subtle: for he that doth not divide will never enter well into business; and he that divideth too much will never come out of it clearly. To choose time is to save time; and an unseasonable motion is but beating the air. There be three parts of business: the preparation, the debate or examination, and the perfection. Whereof, if you look for dispatch, let the middle only be the work of many, and the first and last the work of few. The proceeding upon somewhat conceived in writing doth for the most part facilitate dispatch: for though it should be wholly rejected, yet that negative is more pregnant of direction than an indefinite; as ashes are more generative than dust. p. 77

## Of Friendship

Little do men perceive what solitude is, and how far it extendeth. For a crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love. The Latin adage meeteth with it a little, *Magna civitas, magna solitudo* [a great city is a great solitude]; because in a great town friends are scattered; so that there is not that fellowship, for the most part, which is in less neighborhoods. p. 80

It is a strange thing to observe how high a rate great kings and monarchs do set upon this fruit of friendship whereof we speak: so great, as they purchase it many times at the hazard of their own safety and greatness. For princes, in regard of the distance of their fortune from that of their subjects and servants, cannot gather this fruit, except (to make themselves capable thereof) they raise some persons to be as it were companions and almost equals to themselves, which many times sorteth to inconvenience. The modern languages give unto such persons the name of *favourites*, or *privadoes*; as if it were matter of grace, or conversation. But the Roman name attaineth the true use and cause thereof, naming them *participes curarum* [associates in their cares]; for it is that which tieth the knot. And we see plainly that this hath been done, not by weak and passionate princes only, but by the wisest and most politic that ever reigned; who have oftentimes joined to themselves some of their servants, whom both themselves have called *friends*, and allowed others likewise to call them in the same manner, using the word which is received between private men. p. 81

This communicating of a man's self to his friend works two contrary effects; for it redoubleth joys, and cutteth griefs in halves. For there is no man that imparteth his joys to his friend, but he joyeth the more; and no man that imparteth his griefs to his friend, but he grieveth the less. So that it is in truth of operation upon a man's mind, of like virtue as the alchemists use to attribute to their stone for man's body; that it worketh all contrary effects, but still to the good and benefit of nature. p. 83

The best preservative to keep the mind in health is the faithful admonition of a friend. The calling of a man's self to a strict account is a medicine, sometime, too piercing and corrosive. Reading good books of morality is a little flat and dead. Observing our faults in others is sometimes unproper for our case. But the best receipt (best, I say, to work, and best to take) is the admonition of a friend. It is a strange thing to behold what errors and extreme absurdities many (especially of the greater sort) do commit, for want of a friend to tell them of them, to the great damage both of their fame and fortune. p. 84

A man's person hath many proper relations which he cannot put off. A man cannot speak to his son but as a father; to his wife but as a husband; to his enemy but upon terms: whereas a friend may speak as the case requires, and not as it sorteth with the person. But to enumerate these things were endless: I have given the rule, where a man cannot fitly play his own part: if he have not a friend, he may quit the stage. p. 86

## Of the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates

Walled towns, stored arsenals and armouries, goodly races of horse, chariots of war, elephants, ordnance, artillery, and the like: all this is but a sheep in a lion's skin, except the breed and disposition of the people be stout and warlike. Nay, number (itself) in armies importeth not much, where the people is of weak courage; for (as Virgil saith) *It never troubles a wolf how many the sheep be*. The army of the Persians in the plains of Abela was such a vast sea of people, as it did somewhat astonish the commanders in Alexander's army; who came to him therefore, and wished him to set upon them by night; but he answered, *He would not pilfer the victory*. And the defeat was easy. When Tigranes the Armenian, being encamped upon a hill with 400,000 men, discovered the army of the Romans, being not above 14,000, marching towards him, he made himself merry with it and said, *Yonder men are too many for an ambassage and too few for a fight*. But before the sun set, he found them enough to give him the chase with infinite slaughter. Many are the examples of the great odds between number and courage: so that a man may truly make a judgement, the principal point of greatness in any state is to have a race of military men. p. 90

For empires and greatness, it importeth most, that a nation do profess arms as their principal honour, study and occupation. . . . Those states that continue long in that profession (as the Romans and Turks principally have done) do wonders. And those that have professed arms but for an age have notwithstandingly commonly attained that greatness in that age which maintained them long after, when their profession and exercise of arms hath grown to decay. p. 94

No body can be healthful without exercise, neither natural body nor politic; and certainly, to a kingdom or estate, a just and honorable war is the true exercise. A civil war, indeed, is like the heat of a fever; but a foreign war is like the heat of exercise, and serveth to keep the body in health; for in a slothful peace, both courages will effeminate and manners corrupt. p. 95

To conclude: no man can by *care taking* (as the Scripture saith) *add a cubit to his stature*, in this little model of a man's body; but in the great frame of kingdoms and commonwealths, it is in the power of princes or estates to add amplitude and greatness to their kingdoms. For by introducing such ordinances, constitutions, and customs, as we have now touched, they may sow greatness to their posterity and succession. But these things are commonly not observed, but left to take their chance. p. 97

## Of Regiment of health

Strength of nature in youth passeth over many excesses, which are owing a man till his age. Discern of the coming on of years, and think not to do the same things still; for age will not be defied. Beware of sudden change in any great point of diet, and if necessity enforce it, fit the rest to it. For it is a secret, both in nature and state, that it is safer to change many things than one. Examine thy customs of diet, sleep, exercise, apparel and

the like; and try, in any thing thou shalt judge hurtful, to discontinue it little by little; but so as, if thou dost find any inconvenience by the change, thou come back to it again: for it is hard to distinguish that is generally held good and wholesome, from that which is good particularly, and fit for thine own body. p. 98

### **Of suspicion**

There is nothing makes a man suspect much, more than to know little; and therefore men should remedy suspicion by procuring to know more, and not to keep their suspicions in smother. What would men have? Do they think those they employ and deal with are saints? Do they not think they will have their own ends, and be truer to themselves than to them? therefore there is no better way to moderate suspicions, than to account upon such suspicions as true, and yet to bridle them as false. p. 100

### **Of discourse**

He that questioneth much shall learn much, and content much; but especially if he apply his questions to the skill of the persons whom he asketh; for he shall give them occasion to please themselves in speaking, and himself shall continually gather knowledge. But let his questions not be troublesome; for that is fit for a poser. And let him be sure to let other men their turns to speak. Nay, if there be any that would reign and take up all the time, let him find means to take them off and to bring others on. pp. 102-103

### **Of ambition**

Ambition is like choler; which is an humour that maketh men active, earnest, full of alacrity, and stirring, if it not be stopped. But if it be stopped, and cannot have his way, it becometh adust, and thereby malign and venomous. So ambitious men, if they find the way open for their rising, and still get forward, they are rather busy than dangerous; but if they be checked in their desires, they become secretly discontent, and look upon men and matters with an evil eye, and are best pleased when things go backward; which is the worst property in a servant of a prince or state. Therefore it is good for princes, if they use ambitious men, to handle it so as they be still progressive and not retrograde; which because it cannot be without inconvenience, it is good not to use such natures at all. For if they rise not with their service, they will take order to make their service fall with them. p. 113

He that seeketh to be eminent among able men hath a great task; but that is ever good for the public. But he that plots to be the only figure among cyphers is the decay of an whole age. p. 114

### **Of Nature in Men**

He that seeketh victory over his nature, let him not set himself too great nor too small tasks: for the first will make him dejected by often failings; and the second will make him a small proceder, though by often prevailings. And at the first let him practise with



helps, as swimmers do with bladders or rushes; but after a time let him practise with disadvantages, as dancers do with thick shoes. For it breeds great perfection, if the practise be harder than the use. p. 117

Let not a man trust his victory over his nature too far; for nature will lay buried a great time, and yet revive upon the occasion or temptation. Like as it was with Aesop's damosel, turned from a cat to a women; who sate very demurely at the board's end, till a mouse ran before her. Therefore let a man either avoid the occasion altogether; or put himself often to it, that he may be little moved with it. A man's nature is best perceived in privateness, for there is no affectation; in passion, for that putteth a man out of his precepts; and in a new case or experiment, for there custom leaveth him. . . .

### **Of Fortune**

The way of fortune is like the milken way in the sky; which is a meeting or knot of a number of small stars, not seen asunder, but giving light together. So are there a number of little and scarce discerned virtues, or rather faculties and customs, that make men fortunate. The Italians note some of them, such as a man would little think. When they speak of one that cannot do amiss, they will throw in into his other conditions, that he hath *poco di matto* [a little of the fool or madman]. And certainly there be not two more fortunate properties, than to have a little of the fool, and not too much of the honest. Therefore extreme lovers of their country or masters were never fortunate, neither can they be. For when a man placeth his thoughts without himself, he goeth not his own way. pp 121-122

All wise men, to decline the envy of their own virtues, use to ascribe them to Providence and Fortune; for so they may the better assume them; and, besides, it is greatness in a man to be the care of the higher powers. . . . It hath been noted, that those that ascribe openly too much to their own wisdom and policy, end infortunate. It is written that Timotheus the Atheneian, after he had, in the account he gave to the state of his government, often interlaced this speech, *And in this Fortune had no part*, never prospered in any thing he undertook afterwards. Certainly, there be whose fortunes are like Homer's verses, that have a slide and easiness more than the verses of other poets. p.122

### **Of youth and age**

Young men, in the conduct and manage of actions, embrace more than they can hold; stir more than they can quiet; fly to the end, without consideration of the means and degrees; pursue some few principles which they have chanced upon absurdly; care not to innovate, which draws unknown inconveniences; use extreme remedies at first; and, that which doubleth all errors, will not acknowledge or retract them; like an unready horse, that will neither stop nor turn. Men of age object too much, consult too long, adventure too little, repent too soon, and seldom drive business home to the full period, but content themselves with a mediocrity of success. Certainly, it is good to compound employments of both; for that will be good for the present, because the virtues of either age may correct

the defects of both; and good for succession, that young men may be learners, while men in age are actors; and, lastly, good for extern accidents, because authority followeth old men, and favour and popularity youth. pp. 127-128

### **Of negotiating**

If you would work any man, you must either know his nature and fashions, and so lead him; or his ends, and so persuade him; or his weakness and disadvantages, and so awe him; or those that have interest in him, and so govern him. In dealing with cunning persons, we must ever consider their ends, to interpret their speeches; and it is good to say little to them, and that which they least look for. In all negotiations of difficulty, a man may not look to sow and reap at once; but must prepare business, and so ripen it by degrees. p. 145

### **Of studies**

Studies serve for delight, for ornament, and for ability. Their chief use for delight is in privateness and retiring; for ornament, is in discourse; and for ability, is in the judgement and disposition of business. For expert men can execute and perhaps judge of particulars, one by one; but the general counsels, and the plots and marshalling of affairs, come best from those that are learned. To spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for ornamentation is affectation; to make judgement wholly by their rules is the humour of a scholar. They perfect nature, and are perfected by experience; for natural abilities are like natural plants, that need pruning by study; and studies themselves give forth directions too much at large, except they be bounded in by experience. Crafty men contemn studies; simple men admire them; and wise men use them. p. 150

Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. p. 150

### **Of vain-glory**

It was prettily devised of Aesop: *The fly sate upon the axle-tree of the chariot wheel, and said, What a dust do I raise!* So are there some vain persons, that, whatever goeth alone or moveth upon greater means, if they have never so little hand in it, they think it is they that carry it. p. 158

In military commanders and soldiers, vain-glory is an essential point; for as iron sharpens iron, so by glory one courage sharpeneth another. In cases of great enterprise, upon charge and adventure, a composition of glorious natures doth put life into business; and those that are of solid and sober natures have more of the ballast than of the sail. p. 158

Amongst those arts there is none better than which Plinius Secundus speaketh of, which is to be liberal of praise and commendation to others, in that wherein a man's self hath any perfection. For saith Pliny very wittily: *In commending another you do yourself right; for he that you commend is either superior to you in that you commend, or inferior. If he be inferior, if he be to be commended, you much more; if he be superior, if he be not to be commended, you much less.* Glorious men are the scorn of wise men; the admiration of fools; the idols of parasites; and the slaves of their own vaunts. p. 159

### **Of Honour and Reputation**

The true marshalling of the degrees of sovereign honour are these. In the first place are *conditores imperiorum*, founders of states and commonwealths; such as were Romulus, Cyrus, Caesar, Ottoman, Ismal. In the second place are *legis-latores*, law-givers; which are also called *second founders*, or *perpetui principes*, because they govern by their ordinances after they are gone: such were Lycurgus, Solon, Justinian, Eadgar, Alphonsus of Castile the Wise, that made the *Siete Partidas* [the Seven Parts – the title of a Digest of the laws of Spain]. In the third place are *liberatores*, or *salvatores*; such as compound the long miseries of civil wars, or deliver their countries from servitude of strangers or tyrants; as Augustus Caesar, Vespasianus, Aurelianus, Theodoricus, King Henry VII. of England, King Henry IV of France. In the fourth place are *propagatores or propugnatores imperii* [extenders of defenders of empire]; such as in honourable wars enlarge their territories, or make noble defense against invaders. And in the last place are *patres Patrice* [fathers of their country], which reign justly, and make the times good wherein they live. Both which last kinds need no examples, they are in such number.

p. 160 – 161

### **Of Judicature**

Judges ought to remember that their office is *jus dicere*, and not *jus dare*; to interpret law, and not to make law, or give law. Else will it be like the authority claimed by the church of Rome; which, under pretext of exposition of Scripture, doth not stick to add and alter, and to pronounce that which they do not find, and by shew of antiquity to introduce novelty. Judges ought to be more learned than witty, more reverend than plausible, and more advised than confident. Above all things, integrity is their portion and proper virtue.

p. 162

The attendance of courts is subject to four bad instruments. First, certain persons that are sowers of suits; which make the court swell, and the country pine. The second sort is of those that engage courts in quarrels or jurisdiction, and are not truly *amici curice* [friends of the court], but *parasiti curice* [parasites of the court], in puffing a court up beyond their bounds, for their own scraps and advantage. The third sort is of those that may be accounted the left hands of the court; persons that are full of nimble and sinister tricks and shifts, whereby they pervert the plain and direct courses of courts, and bring justice into oblique lines and labyrinths. And the fourth is the poller and exacter of fees; which justifies the common resemblance of the courts of justice to the bush, where-unto while the sheep flies for defense in weather, he is sure to lose part of his fleece. On the other side, an

ancient clerk, skillful in precedence, wary in proceedings, and understanding in the business of the court, and doth many times point the way to the judge himself. p. 165

### **Of Anger**

To seek to extinguish anger utterly is but a bravery of the Stoics. We have better oracles: *Be angry, but sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your anger.* Anger must be limited and confined, both in race and in time. . . .

There is no other way but to meditate and ruminate well upon the effects of anger, how it troubles man's life. And the best time to do this is to look back upon anger when the fit is thoroughly over. Seneca saith well, *that anger is like ruin, which breaks itself upon that it falls.* p. 166

In all refrainings of anger, it is the best remedy to win time; and to make a man's self-belief, that the opportunity of his revenge is not yet come, but that he foresees a time for it; and so to still himself in the mean time, and reserve it.

To obtain anger from mischief, though it take hold of a man, there be two things whereof you must have special caution. The one, of extreme bitterness of words; especially if they be aculeate and proper; for *communia maledicta* [ill words applicable to all and sundry] are nothing so much: and again, that in anger a man reveal no secrets; for that makes him not fit for society. The other, that you do not peremptorily break off, in any business, in a fit of anger; but howsoever you shew bitterness, do not act any thing that is not revocable.

For raising and appeasing anger in another; it is done chiefly by choosing of times, when men are frowardest and worst disposed, to incense them. Again, by gathering (as was touched before) all that you can find out, to aggravate the contempt. And the two remedies are by the contraries. The former, to take good times, when first impression is much. And the other is, to sever, as much as may be, the construction of the injury from the point of contempt; imputing it to misunderstanding, fear, passion, or what you will. p. 167

### **Of Vicissitude of Things**

When the religion formerly received is rent by discords; and when the holiness of the professors of religion is decayed and full of scandal; and withal the times be stupid, ignorant, and barbarous; you may doubt the springing up of a new sect; if then also there should arise any extravagant and strange spirit to make himself author thereof. All which points held, then Mohamet published his law. p. 170

Upon the breaking and shivering of a great state and empire, you may be sure to have wars. For great empires, while they stand, do enervate and destroy the forces of the natives which they have subdued, resting upon their own protecting forces; and then, when they fail also, all goes to ruin, and they become a prey.

When a state grows to an over-power, it is like a great flood, that will be sure to overflow. As it hath been seen in the states of Rome, Turkey, Spain, and others. Look when the world hath fewest barbarous peoples, but such as commonly will not marry or generate, except they know means to live (as it is almost everywhere at this day, except Tartary), there is no danger of inundations of people: but when there be great shoals of people, which go on to populate without foreseeing means of life and sustentation, it is of necessity that once in an age or two they discharge a portion of their people upon other nations: which the ancient northern people were wont to do by the lot; casting lots what part should stay at home, and what should seek their fortunes. When a war-like state grows soft and effeminate, they may be sure of a war. For commonly such states are grown rich in the time of their degenerating; and so the prey inviteth, and their decay in valour encourageth a war. p. 171 - 172

In the youth of a state, arms to flourish: in the middle age of a state, learning; and then both of them together for a time: in the declining age of a state, mechanical arts and merchandize. Learning hath his infancy, when it is but beginning and almost childish: then his youth, when it is luxuriant and juvenile: then his strength of years, when it is solid and reduced: and lastly, his old age, when it waxeth dry and exhaust. But it is not good to look too long upon these turning wheels of vicissitude, lest we become giddy. As for the philosophy of them, that is but as circle of tales, and therefor not fit for this writing. p. 172 - 173