

the language pleasant and agreeable, of a natural simplicity; the narrative pure, and the author's good faith showing through it clearly, free from vanity in speaking of himself, and of partiality or envy in speaking of others; his ideas and exhortations accompanied more by good zeal and truth than by any exquisite capacity; and, throughout, authority and gravity, representing the man of good background and brought up in great affairs."

On the *Memoirs* of Monsieur du Bellay:<sup>7</sup> "It is always a pleasure to see things written by people who have experienced how they should be conducted; but it cannot be denied that there is clearly revealed in these two lords a great falling off from the frankness and freedom of writing that shine forth in the ancients of their class, such as the sire de Joinville, intimate friend of Saint Louis; Eginhard, chancellor of Charlemagne; and, of more recent memory, Philippe de Commynes. This is rather a plea for King Francis against the Emperor Charles V, than a history. I will not believe that they have changed anything in the main facts; but as for turning the judgment of events to our advantage, often contrary to reason, and omitting everything that is ticklish in the life of their master, they make a practice of it: witness the disgrace of Messieurs de Montmorency and de Brion, which are forgotten; indeed the very name of Madame d'Etampes is not to be found. One may cover up secret actions; but to be silent about what all the world knows, and about things that have led to public results of such consequence, is an inexcusable defect. In short, to get a complete knowledge of King Francis and the events of his time, a man should turn elsewhere, if he takes my advice. The profit one can make here is from the detailed narrative of the battles and exploits of war at which these gentlemen were present; some private words and actions of certain princes of their time; and the dealings and negotiations carried on by the seigneur de Langey, in which there are plenty of things worth knowing, and ideas above the ordinary."

## 11 *Of cruelty*

<sup>4</sup>It seems to me that virtue is something other and nobler than the inclinations toward goodness that are born in us. Souls naturally regulated and wellborn follow the same path, and show the same countenance in their actions, as virtuous ones. But virtue means something greater and more active than letting oneself, by a happy disposition, be led gently and peacefully in the footsteps of reason. He

<sup>7</sup> These *Memoirs*, which cover the years 1513-47 and were first published in 1569, are presented by Martin du Bellay but include three books (out of ten) by his brother Guillaume du Bellay, seigneur de Langey. This explains Montaigne's reference to "these two lords."

who through a natural mildness and easygoingness should despise injuries received would do a very fine and praiseworthy thing; but he who, outraged and stung to the quick by an injury, should arm himself with the arms of reason against this furious appetite for vengeance, and after a great conflict should finally master it, would without doubt do much more. The former would do well, and the other virtuously; one action might be called goodness, the other virtue. For it seems that the name of virtue presupposes difficulty and contrast, and that it cannot be exercised without opposition. Perhaps this is why we call God good, strong, liberal, and just, but we do not call him virtuous: his operations are wholly natural and effortless.

Of the philosophers, not only Stoics but even the Epicureans<sup>1</sup>—

And this gradation I borrow from the common opinion, which is false, 'despite Arcesilaus' witty rejoinder to the man who reproached him that many people passed from his school to the Epicureans, but never the other way: "I should think so. Plenty of capons are made out of cocks, but cocks are never made out of capons." <sup>A</sup>For truly, in firmness and rigor of opinions and precepts the Epicurean sect in no way yields to the Stoic. And a Stoic—showing more honesty than these disputants who, to combat Epicurus and give themselves a good hand to play, make him say what he never even thought of, twisting his words awry, arguing by the laws of grammar another sense into his way of speaking and another belief than the one they know he had in his soul and in his conduct—says that he has given up being an Epicurean for this consideration, among others, that he finds their road too lofty and inaccessible: *and those who are called lovers of pleasure are lovers of beauty and lovers of justice, and they both cultivate and retain all the virtues* [Cicero]—

<sup>A</sup>Of the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers, I say, there were many who judged that it was not enough to have the soul in a good posture, well regulated and well disposed to virtue, that it was not enough to have our resolutions and our ideas set above all the attacks of fortune; but that we also had to seek occasions to put them to the proof. They want to seek pain, need, and contempt, in order to combat them and to keep their soul in trim: *virtue when challenged takes on much strength* [Seneca].

<sup>A</sup>This is one of the reasons why Epaminondas, who was of yet a third sect, refuses the riches that fortune puts into his hand in a very legitimate way, in order, he says, to have to duel with poverty, in which extreme he always persisted. Socrates, it seems to me, tested himself still more roughly, keeping for his exercise the malignity of his wife, which is a test with the naked blade.

Metellus alone, of all the Roman senators, undertook by the power

<sup>1</sup> The following paragraph is a vast parenthetical insert in the original, within a single sentence starting with "Of the philosophers" and ending with "put them to the proof." Montaigne rather often indulges in long sentences of this sort, as one of his devices for portraying himself and the movement of his thought by his style as well as his content.

of his virtue to withstand the violence of Saturninus, tribune of the people at Rome, who wanted at all costs to get an unjust law passed in favor of the common people, and thereby incurred the capital penalties that Saturninus had established against the refractory. To those who, in this extremity, were escorting him to the public square, he spoke in such terms as these: That it was too easy and too cowardly a thing to do evil, and that to do good where there was no danger was common; but to do good where there was danger was the proper duty of a virtuous man.

These words of Metellus represent to us very clearly what I was trying to prove: that virtue refuses facility for her companion; and that the easy, gentle, and sloping path that guides the footsteps of a good natural disposition is not the path of true virtue. It demands a rough and thorny road; it wants to have either external difficulties to struggle with, like those of Metellus, by means of which fortune takes pleasure in breaking up the unwaveringness of a man's career; or internal difficulties created by the disordered appetites <sup>c</sup>and imperfections <sup>a</sup>of our nature.

I have come this far quite at my ease. But at the end of this discourse it comes into my mind that the soul of Socrates, which is the most perfect that has come to my knowledge, would be, by my reckoning, a soul deserving little commendation: for I cannot conceive, in that person, any power of vicious lust. In the movement of his virtue I cannot imagine any difficulty or any constraint. I know his reason to be so powerful and so much the master in him that it would never so much as let a vicious appetite be born. I can put nothing up against a virtue as lofty as his. I seem to see it marching with a victorious and triumphant step, in pomp and at ease, without impediment or disturbance.

If virtue can shine only by clashing with opposing appetites, shall we then say that it cannot do without the assistance of vice, and that it owes to vice its repute and its honor? Also what would become of that brave and noble Epicurean *voluptas*, which undertakes to bring up virtue softly in her bosom and make it frolic, giving it as its playthings shame, fevers, poverty, death, and tortures? If I define perfect virtue as dependent upon combating pain, upon bearing it patiently, upon supporting attacks of the gout without giving way; if I assign it unpleasantness and difficulty as its necessary condition; then what will become of the virtue which has climbed so high that it not only despises pain but rejoices in it and feels tickled by the pangs of a bad colic, the kind of virtue introduced by the Epicureans, of which many of them by their actions have left us incontestable proof? As have many others, who, I find, have surpassed in action the very rules of their discipline.

Witness the younger Cato. When I see him dying and tearing out his entrails, I cannot be content to believe simply that he then had his soul totally free from disturbance and fright; I cannot believe that he merely maintained himself in the attitude that the rules of the Stoic

sect ordained for him, sedate, without emotion, and impassible; there was, it seems to me, in that man's virtue too much lustiness and verdancy to stop there. I believe without any doubt that he felt pleasure and bliss in so noble an action, and that he enjoyed himself more in it than in any other action of his life. *He so departed from life, as if he rejoiced in having found a reason for dying* [Cicero].

<sup>A</sup>I go so far in that belief that I begin to doubt whether he would have wanted to be deprived of the occasion for so fine an exploit. And if his goodness, which made him embrace the public advantage more than his own, did not hold me in check, I should easily fall into this opinion, that he was grateful to fortune for having put his virtue to so beautiful a test and for having favored that brigand<sup>2</sup> in treading underfoot the ancient liberty of his country. I seem to read in that action I know not what rejoicing of his soul, and an emotion of extraordinary pleasure and manly exultation, when it considered the nobility and sublimity of its enterprise:

<sup>B</sup>Prouder for having chosen death.

HORACE

<sup>A</sup>This enterprise was not spurred by some hope of glory, as the plebeian and effeminate judgments of some men have judged (for that consideration is too base to touch a heart so noble, so lofty, and so unbending), but was undertaken for the beauty of the very thing in itself, which he, who handled the springs of it, saw much more clearly in its perfection than we can see it.

<sup>C</sup>Philosophy has given me pleasure by judging that so beautiful an action would have been unbecomingly located in any other life than Cato's, and that it belonged to his alone to end thus. Therefore it was according to reason that he ordered his son and the senators who accompanied him to make some other provision for themselves. *Cato, since nature had endowed him with incredible firmness, and he had himself strengthened it by perpetual constancy, and had always remained in the plan he had set himself, had to die rather than look upon the face of a tyrant* [Cicero].

Every death should correspond with its life. We do not become different for dying. I always interpret the death by the life. And if they tell me of a death strong in appearance, attached to a feeble life, I maintain that it is produced by a feeble cause corresponding with the life.

<sup>A</sup>So the ease of this death and the facility that he had acquired through the strength of his soul, shall we say that it should cut down something of the luster of his virtue? And who that has a mind howsoever little tintured with true philosophy can be satisfied with imagining Socrates as merely free from fear and passion in the incident of his imprisonment, his fetters, and his condemnation? And who does not recognize in him not only firmness and constancy (that was his

<sup>2</sup> Caesar.

ordinary attitude), but also I know not what new contentment, and a blithe cheerfulness in his last words and actions?

<sup>c</sup>By that quiver of pleasure that he feels in scratching his leg after the irons were off, does he not betray a like sweetness and joy in his soul at being unfettered by past discomforts and prepared to enter into the knowledge of things to come? <sup>A</sup>Cato will pardon me, if he please; his death is more tragic and tense, but this one is still, I know not how, more beautiful. <sup>c</sup>Aristippus said to those who were deploring it: "May the gods send me one like it!"

<sup>A</sup>We see in the souls of these two persons and their imitators (for as for rivals, I doubt very much that there have been any) so perfect a habituation to virtue that it has passed into their nature. It is no longer a laborious virtue, or one formed by the ordinances of reason and maintained by a deliberate stiffening of the soul; it is the very essence of their soul, its natural and ordinary gait. They have made it so by a long exercise of the precepts of philosophy, coming upon a fine rich nature. The vicious passions that come to life in us can find nowhere to enter these men; the strength and rigidity of their soul stifles and extinguishes lusts as soon as they begin to stir.

Now I do not think there is any doubt that it is finer to prevent the birth of temptations by a lofty and divine resolution, and to have so formed oneself to virtue that the very seeds of the vices are rooted out, than to prevent their progress by main force, and, having let oneself be surprised by the first commotions of the passions, to arm and tense oneself to stop their course and conquer them; and that this second action still is finer than to be simply provided with a nature easy and affable and having an inborn distaste for debauchery and vice. For it certainly seems that this third and last type makes a man innocent, but not virtuous; exempt from doing ill, but not apt enough to do good. Besides, this condition is so close to imperfection and weakness that I do not very well know how to separate their confines and distinguish them. The very names of goodness and innocence are for this reason to some extent terms of contempt. I see that several virtues, like chastity, sobriety, and temperance, can come to us through bodily failing. Firmness in dangers (if firmness it should be called), contempt for death, endurance in misfortunes, can come to men, and are often found in them, through failure to judge such accidents rightly, and through not conceiving them as they are. Thus want of apprehension and stupidity sometimes counterfeit virtuous actions; as I have often seen it happen that people have praised men for something for which they deserved blame.

An Italian lord once maintained this theme in my presence, to the disadvantage of his nation: that the subtlety of the Italians and the liveliness of their imaginations were so great, that they foresaw the dangers and accidents that could happen to them from so far off, that it should not be thought strange if in war they were often seen providing for their security even before having recognized the peril; that we and the Spaniards, who were not so sharp, went further, and had

to be made to see the danger with our own eyes and touch it with our hands before taking fright, and that then we too no longer had any control; but that the Germans and Swiss, coarser and heavier, had hardly the sense to reconsider even when they were overwhelmed under the blows.

Perhaps this was only for a laugh. Yet it is quite true that novices in the business of war very often hurl themselves into dangers more recklessly than they will later, after they have been scalded:

<sup>B</sup>Knowing well the power of new-found pride  
In arms, and the sweet spell of the first armed encounter.

VIRGIL

<sup>A</sup>That is why when we judge a particular action we must consider many circumstances and the whole man who performed it, before we give it a name.

To say a word about myself. <sup>B</sup>I have sometimes seen my friends call prudence in me what was merely fortune, and consider as an advantage of courage and patience what was an advantage of judgment and opinion, and attribute to me one title for another, now to my gain, now to my loss. Moreover, <sup>A</sup>I am so far from having arrived at that first and most perfect degree of excellence where virtue becomes a habit, that even of the second degree I have hardly given any proof. I have not put myself to great effort to curb the desires by which I have found myself pressed. My virtue is a virtue, or I should say an innocence, that is accidental and fortuitous. If I had been born with a more unruly disposition, I fear it would have gone pitifully with me. For I have not experienced much firmness in my soul to withstand passions, if they are even the least bit vehement. I do not know how to foster quarrels and conflict within me. Thus I cannot give myself any great thanks because I find myself free from many vices:

If few and modest vices mar my soul,  
Otherwise sound, as you may find a mole  
Here and there even on the fairest body;

HORACE

I owe it more to my fortune than to my reason. It had me born of a race famous for integrity, and of a very good father. I do not know whether he infused into me a part of his humors, or else whether the home examples and the good education of my childhood insensibly contributed to it, or whether for some other reason I was born so:

<sup>B</sup>Whether 'twas Liber on my birth looked down,  
Dread Scorpio, with woe-betiding frown,  
Or Capricorn, who rules the western sea  
With tyrant hand;

HORACE

<sup>A</sup>but the fact is that of myself I hold most vices in horror.

<sup>C</sup>The answer of Antisthenes to the man who asked him what was the best apprenticeship, "To unlearn evil," seems to dwell on this idea.

I hold them in horror, I say, <sup>A</sup>from an attitude so natural and so much my own that the same instinct and impression that I brought away from my nurse I have still retained. Nothing has been able to make me alter it, not even my own reasonings, which, having in some things broken away from the common road, would easily give me license for actions which this natural inclination makes me hate.

<sup>B</sup>It is a monstrous thing that I will say, but I will say it all the same: I find in that area, in many things, more restraint and order in my morals than in my opinions, and my lust less depraved than my reason.

<sup>C</sup>Aristippus affirmed such bold opinions in favor of sensual pleasure and riches that he put all philosophy in an uproar against him. But as for his morals, when the tyrant Dionysius offered him three beautiful wenches to choose from, he replied that he chose all three, and that Paris had got into trouble for preferring one to her companions; but having brought them to his house, he sent them back without touching them. When his valet found himself overloaded on the road with the money he was carrying, he ordered him to throw away and get rid of as much as bothered him.

And Epicurus, whose doctrines are irreligious and effeminate, in his way of living bore himself very devoutly and laboriously. He writes to a friend of his that he lives on nothing but coarse bread and water, and for him to send him a little cheese for when he wants to make some sumptuous repast. Could it be true that to be wholly good we must be so by some occult, natural, and universal property, without law, without reason, without example?

<sup>A</sup>The excesses in which I have found myself involved are not, thank God, of the worst. I have indeed condemned them in myself according as they deserve; for my judgment has not been infected by them. On the contrary, it accuses them more vigorously in myself than in another. But that is all, for otherwise I bring to them too little resistance and let myself lean too easily toward the other side of the balance; except to regulate them and keep them from mixing with other vices, which for the most part hold together and intertwine, if you are not careful. Mine I have cut down and constrained to be as solitary and simple as I could:

<sup>B</sup>Nor beyond this  
Do I indulge my faults.

JUVENAL

<sup>A</sup>The Stoics say that the wise man operates, when he operates, by all the virtues together, although one of them will always stand out according to the nature of the action—and the comparison of the human body could serve them somewhat for this, for the action of anger cannot be exercised unless all the humors assist us in it, although anger predominates. But if from that they want to draw a like consequence, that when the sinner sins he sins by all the vices together, I do not believe them so simply or else I do not understand them, for

in fact I feel the contrary. <sup>c</sup>These are sharp, insubstantial subtleties, on which philosophy sometimes lingers.

I ply some vices, but I fly others as much as a saint could do. Moreover, the Peripatetics do not accept this indissoluble connection and bond; and Aristotle holds that a wise and just man may be both intemperate and incontinent. <sup>a</sup>Socrates admitted to those who recognized in his face some inclination to vice that that was in truth his natural propensity, but that he had corrected it by discipline. <sup>c</sup>And the intimates of the philosopher Stilpo said that, having been born susceptible to wine and women, he had by study made himself very abstinent from both.

<sup>a</sup>What good I have in me I have, on the contrary, by the chance of my birth. I have gotten it neither from law, nor from precept, nor from any other apprenticeship. <sup>b</sup>The innocence that is in me is a childish innocence: little vigor and no art.

<sup>a</sup>Among other vices, I cruelly hate cruelty, both by nature and by judgment, as the extreme of all vices. But this is to such a point of softness that I do not see a chicken's neck wrung without distress, and I cannot bear to hear the scream of a hare in the teeth of my dogs, although the chase is a violent pleasure.

Those who have to combat sensual pleasure like to use this argument to show that it is wholly vicious and unreasonable: that when it is at its greatest pitch it masters us to such an extent that reason can have no access. And they cite the experience of it that we feel in intercourse with women,

Anticipated joy the body feels,  
And Venus now prepares to sow the woman's fields;

LUCRETIVS

where it seems to them that the pleasure transports us so far beyond ourselves that our reason could not possibly then perform its function, being all crippled and ravished away in pleasure.

I know that it can go otherwise, and that we may sometimes, if we will, cast our soul back to other thoughts at this very instant. But we must tense and stiffen it vigilantly. I know that it is possible to master the onset of this pleasure; and <sup>c</sup>I am well versed in this; and I have not found Venus so imperious a goddess as many chaster men than I attest her. <sup>a</sup>I do not take it for a miracle, as does the queen of Navarre in one of the tales of her *Heptameron* (which is a nice book for one of its substance), or for an extremely difficult thing, to spend entire nights with every opportunity and in all freedom, with a long-desired mistress, keeping the faith one has pledged to her, to be content with kisses and simple contacts.

I think the example of the chase would be more appropriate. Even as there is less pleasure in it, so there is more transport and surprise, whereby our reason, stunned, loses the leisure to prepare and brace itself against it, when after a long quest the beast starts up suddenly and appears in a place where perhaps we were least expecting it. This



shock, and the ardor of the hue and cry, strike us so that it would be hard for those who love this sort of hunt to withdraw their thought elsewhere at that point. And the poets make Diana victorious over the torch and arrows of Cupid:

Who amid these does not forget the stings  
And all the cares love brings?

HORACE

To return to my subject, I sympathize very tenderly with the afflictions of others, and would readily weep to keep others company, if I could weep for any occasion whatever. <sup>c</sup>There is nothing that tempts my tears but tears, not only real ones, but all sorts, even the feigned or the painted. <sup>a</sup>The dead I hardly pity, and I should rather envy them; but I very greatly pity the dying. Savages do not shock me as much by roasting and eating the bodies of the dead as do those who torment them and persecute them living. Even the executions of the law, however reasonable they may be, I cannot witness with a steady gaze.

Someone having occasion to testify to Julius Caesar's clemency said: "He was mild in his revenges. Having forced the pirates to surrender to him, whom they had formerly taken prisoner and put to ransom, since he had threatened to crucify them he condemned them to that punishment, but only after having them strangled." Philemon, his secretary, who had tried to poison him, he punished no more harshly than simply by death. Even without the name of the Latin author<sup>s</sup> who dares to allege as evidence of clemency the mere killing of those by whom one has been injured, it is easy to guess that he is struck by the ugly and horrible examples of cruelty that the Roman tyrants put into practice.

As for me, even in justice, all that goes beyond plain death seems to me pure cruelty, and especially for us who ought to have some concern about sending souls away in a good state; which cannot happen when we have agitated them and made them desperate by unbearable tortures.

<sup>c</sup>These past days an imprisoned soldier, perceiving from his tower that carpenters were beginning to erect their structures in the square and that the people were assembling, concluded that it was for him, and, in desperation, having nothing else to kill himself with, seized an old rusty cart nail that fortune put in his way and with it gave himself two big blows around the throat; and seeing that he had not thus been able to budge his life, he soon after gave himself another in the stomach, from which he fell in a faint. And in this state he was found by the first of his guards who came in to see him. They brought him round; and to make use of the time before he expired, they at once had his sentence read to him, which was to have his head cut off; with which he was infinitely delighted, and consented to take some

<sup>s</sup> Suetonius.

wine, which he had refused; and thanking the judges for the unhopedor mildness of their condemnation, he said that this resolve to kill himself had come to him through the horror of some more cruel punishment, the fear of which had been increased in him by the preparations [which he had seen made in the square. He had conceived the idea that they wanted to torment him with some horrible torture. He had decided to summon death to escape a more unbearable one. And he seemed to be delivered from death for having changed it.]<sup>4</sup>

<sup>A</sup>I would advise that these examples of severity, by means of which they want to keep the people at their duty, be exercised against the corpses of criminals. For to see them deprived of burial, to see them boiled and quartered, would affect the common people just about as much as the punishments they make the living suffer, although in reality it is little or nothing, <sup>C</sup>as God says: *they kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do* [Saint Luke]. And the poets bring out remarkably the horror of this picture, as something beyond death:

Alas! a king's remains, half-burned, covered with blood,  
Torn to the bone, and dragged in shame amid the mud!

ENNIUS, QUOTED BY CICERO

<sup>A</sup>I happened to be in Rome one day at the moment when they were doing away with Catena, a notorious robber. They strangled him without any emotion among the crowd; but when they came to quarter him, the executioner struck no blow that the people did not follow with a plaintive cry and exclamation, as if everyone had lent his own sense of feeling to that carcass.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>B</sup>These inhuman excesses should be exercised against the shell, not against the living core. Thus Artaxerxes, in a somewhat similar case, softened the harshness of the ancient laws of Persia by ordaining that the lords who had failed in their charge, instead of being whipped, as was the custom, should be stripped, and their clothes whipped in their place; and that whereas they used to tear out their hair, they should only take away their high headgear. <sup>C</sup>The Egyptians, who were so devout, thought they satisfied divine justice well by sacrificing effigies and pictures of hogs: a bold idea, to try to pay God, a substance so essential, with painting and shadow.

<sup>A</sup>I live in a time when we abound in incredible examples of this vice, through the license of our civil wars; and we see in the ancient histories nothing more extreme than what we experience of this every day. But that has not reconciled me to it at all. I could hardly be con-

<sup>4</sup> The part bracketed here is taken from the 1595 edition, with a minor change in order (the position of the sentence "He had decided . . . unbearable one") which is necessitated by the fact that the 1595 reading is quite different in detail from that in the Bordeaux Copy. The reason for using the 1595 reading here is that the edge of the page in the Bordeaux Copy is cut and with it two-thirds of a line in Montaigne's hand, between "by the preparations" and "a more unbearable one."

<sup>5</sup> This paragraph is an addition of 1582 and refers to an incident of Montaigne's Italian trip (*Travel Journal*, January 11, 1581).

vinced, until I saw it, that there were souls so monstrous that they would commit murder for the mere pleasure of it; hack and cut off other men's limbs; sharpen their wits to invent unaccustomed torments and new forms of death, without enmity, without profit, and for the sole purpose of enjoying the pleasing spectacle of the pitiful gestures and movements, the lamentable groans and cries, of a man dying in anguish. For that is the uttermost point that cruelty can attain. <sup>c</sup>*That man should kill man not in anger, not in fear, but only to watch the sight* [Seneca].

<sup>a</sup>For myself, I have not even been able without distress to see pursued and killed an innocent animal which is defenseless and which does us no harm. And as it commonly happens that the stag, feeling himself out of breath and strength, having no other remedy left, throws himself back and surrenders to ourselves who are pursuing him, asking for our mercy by his tears,

<sup>b</sup>Bleeding, with moans  
Like some imploring creature,

VIRGIL

<sup>a</sup>that has always seemed to me a very unpleasant spectacle.

<sup>b</sup>I hardly take any animal alive that I do not give it back the freedom of the fields. Pythagoras used to buy them from fishermen and fowlers, to do the same:

<sup>a</sup>I think 'twas slaughtered animals first made  
The blood run hot upon the spotted blade.

OVID

Natures that are bloodthirsty toward animals give proof of a natural propensity toward cruelty.

<sup>b</sup>At Rome, after they had become accustomed to the spectacle of the slaughter of animals, they proceeded to that of men and of gladiators. Nature herself, I fear, attaches to man some instinct for inhumanity. No one takes his sport in seeing animals play with and caress one another, and no one fails to take it in seeing them tear apart and dismember one another.

<sup>a</sup>And so that people will not laugh at this sympathy that I have with them, Theology herself orders us to show some favor in their regard; and considering that one and the same master has lodged us in this place for his service, and that they, like ourselves, are of his family, she is right to enjoin upon us some respect and affection toward them. Pythagoras borrowed his metempsychosis from the Egyptians; but it has since been accepted by many nations, and notably by our Druids:

Souls do not die; they leave their first abodes, alive,  
And in new habitations dwell and ever thrive.

OVID

The religion of our ancient Gauls held that souls, being eternal, never ceased moving and changing places from one body to another.

Moreover, their religion combined with this fancy some consideration of divine justice; for according to the behavior of the soul while it had been in Alexander's body, they said that God ordained for it another body to inhabit, more or less disagreeable, and conforming to its condition:

<sup>B</sup>He makes them suffer  
The silent chains of brutes; the fierce he plants in bears;  
The thief a wolf's, the cheat a fox's body wears;  
And when through varied years and myriad shapes they've passed,  
He purges them in Lethe's stream, and then at last  
He calls them back to their primordial human form.

CLAUDIAN

<sup>A</sup>If it had been valiant, they lodged it in the body of a lion; if voluptuous, in that of a hog; if cowardly, in that of a stag or a hare; if malicious, in that of a fox; and so for the rest; until, purified by this chastisement, it resumed the body of some other man.

And in the Trojan War, for I remember well,  
I myself was Euphorbus, Pantheus' son.

OVID

As for that cousinship between us and the animals, I do not put much stock in it; nor in the fact that many nations, and notably some of the most ancient and noble, have not only received animals into their society and company, but given them a rank very far above themselves, sometimes esteeming them as intimates and favorites of the gods, and holding them in more than human respect and reverence. And other nations recognized no other god or divinity but animals: <sup>C</sup>*beasts were made sacred by the barbarians on account of the benefits they bestowed* [Cicero].

<sup>B</sup>This land adores the crocodile,  
That one the snake-gorged Ibis as divine;  
Here golden images of monkeys shine;

. . . . . while here  
A fish, and there a dog, whole towns revere.

JUVENAL

<sup>A</sup>And even the well-conceived interpretation that Plutarch gives of this error is still honorable for them. For he says that it was not the cat or the ox, for example, that the Egyptians worshiped in those animals, but some image of the divine faculties: in the ox patience and usefulness, in the cat liveliness—<sup>C</sup>or, like our neighbors the Burgundians, together with all of Germany, impatience at being confined, the cat thus signifying liberty, which they loved and worshiped beyond any other divine faculty—<sup>A</sup>and so for the rest. But when among the more moderate opinions I meet with arguments that try to show the close resemblance between us and the animals, and how much of a share they have in our greatest privileges, and with how much probability

they are likened to us, truly I beat down a lot of our presumption and willingly resign that imaginary kingship that people give us over the other creatures.

Even if all this were lacking, still there is a certain respect, and a general duty of humanity, that attaches us not only to animals, who have life and feeling, but even to trees and plants. We owe justice to men, and mercy and kindness to other creatures that may be capable of receiving it. There is some relationship between them and us, and some mutual obligation. <sup>C</sup>I am not afraid to admit that my nature is so tender, so childish, that I cannot well refuse my dog the play he offers me or asks of me outside the proper time.

<sup>B</sup>The Turks have alms and hospitals for animals. <sup>A</sup>The Romans made a public charge of the feeding of geese, by whose vigilance their Capitol had been saved. The Athenians ordained that the mules which had served in building the temple called Hecatompodon should be set free, and that they should be allowed to graze anywhere without hindrance.

<sup>C</sup>The Agrigentines commonly gave a solemn burial to animals they had held dear, such as horses of some rare merit, dogs, and useful birds, even those which had served only as a pastime for their children. And the magnificence that was ordinary with them in all other things was also singularly apparent in the sumptuousness and number of the monuments they raised to animals, monuments which have endured in their splendor for many centuries after. The Egyptians buried wolves, bears, crocodiles, dogs, and cats in sacred places, embalmed their bodies, and wore mourning at their death.

<sup>A</sup>Cimon gave honorable burial to the mares with which he had three times won the prize for the race at the Olympic games. The ancient Xantippus had his dog buried on a headland on the seacoast which has since retained its name. And Plutarch had scruples, he says, about selling and sending to the slaughterhouse, for a slight profit, an ox that had long served him.

## 12 *Apology for Raymond Sebond*

This chapter, by far the longest of the *Essays*, has been the most influential and remains one of the most perplexing. Its extreme skepticism, summed up in the famous motto *Que sçay-je?* (What do I know?), has been accepted by centuries of readers as the center of Montaigne's thought, although recent scholars have seen it rather as a step on his way to the psychological and moral convictions of Book Three.

It is perplexing mainly because it belies its title. Sebond, whose "Natural Theology" Montaigne had translated at his father's request, had argued that man could learn all about God and religion by reading in the book of God's creation, the world. Montaigne shows his complete disagreement here, as he already had when he translated Sebond's Preface. He is the most apologetic of apologists. The