The Praise of Folly

DESIDERIUS ERASMUS
1466–1536

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Moriae encomium

Translated from the Latin with AI (Claude) and edited



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INTRODUCTION

Erasmus of Rotterdam, the most famous scholar of his age, wrote *The Praise of Folly* in 1509 at Thomas More's house in London, after a journey back from Italy; by his own account he wrote it in a few days. The title is a pun on More's name (Greek *moria*, "folly"), and the book is dedicated to him. It was printed in Paris in 1511 and became one of the best-sellers of the century.

The speaker is Folly herself, a goddess, who mounts the platform to deliver a formal oration in her own honor. She shows that life, love, friendship, marriage and society would be impossible without her, and that the happiest people are those who know least. Then her voice sharpens: she runs through the learned and the powerful, grammarians, lawyers, philosophers, theologians, monks, princes, bishops and popes, and finds them all her devoted servants. At the end the joke turns serious, and she claims for herself the "folly of the Cross" and the ecstasy of the saints.

The book delighted readers and alarmed churchmen; Erasmus spent years defending it. This edition includes his dedicatory letter to More. The chapter numbers are the conventional ones; the Latin text is the Leipzig edition of 1828.

Letter to Thomas More

Why a book in praise of Folly, why it is dedicated to More, and why a joke may be serious and a satire name no names.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
Ep.1	Superioribus diebus quum me ex Italia in Angliam reciperem, ne totum hoc tempus, quo equo fuit insidendum, ἀμούσοις et illiteratis fabulis tereretur, malui mecum aliquoties vel de communibus studiis nostris aliquid agitare, vel amicorum, quos hic ut doctissimos, ita et suavissimos reliqueram, recordatione frui. Inter hos tu, mi More, vel in primis occurrebas: cuius equidem absentis absens memoria non aliter frui solebam, quam praesentis praesens consuetudine consueveram; qua, dispeream, si quid unquam in vita contigit mellitius. Ergo quoniam omnino aliquid agendum duxi, et id tempus ad seriam commentationem parum videbatur accommodatum, visum est Moriae encomion ludere. Quae Pallas istuc tibi misit in mentem? inquies. Primum admonuit me Mori cognomen tibi gentile, quod tam ad Moriae vocabulum accedit, quam es ipse a re alienus.	A few days ago, as I was making my way back from Italy to England, I did not want all the time I had to spend in the saddle to be wasted on ἀμούσοις [tasteless] and unlettered small talk. So, now and then, I chose instead either to turn over in my mind something to do with the studies we share, or to enjoy remembering the friends I had left behind here, friends as delightful as they are learned. Among them, my dear More, you came to mind first of all. Absent as I was, I used to enjoy the memory of you in your absence just as I had enjoyed your company in person when we were together, and may I perish if anything sweeter has ever happened to me in my life. Since I felt I had to do something, and the time hardly seemed suited to serious thought, I decided to amuse myself with an encomium of Moria. "What Pallas put that into your head?" you will ask. First, I was prompted by your family name, More, which comes as close to the word Moria as you yourself are far from the thing.[1]
	Es autem vel omnium suffragiis alienissimus. Deinde suspicabar, hunc ingenii nostri lusum tibi praecipue probatum iri, propterea quod soleas huius generis iocis, hoc est, nec indoctis, ni fallor, nec usquequaque insulsis, impendio delectari; et omnino in communi mortalium vita Democritum quendam agere. Quanquam tu quidem, ut pro singulari quadam ingenii tui perspicacitate longe lateque a vulgo dissentire soles, ita pro incredibili morum suavitate facilitateque cum omnibus, omnium horarum hominem agere et potes et gaudes. Hanc igitur declamatiunculam non solum lubens accipies, ceu μνημόσυνον tui sodalis, verum etiam tuendam suscipies, utpote tibi dicatam, iamque tuam, non meam.	And by everyone's vote you are as far from it as anyone could be. Next, I suspected that this game of my wits would win your approval above all. You take enormous pleasure in jokes of this kind, jokes that are not unlearned, unless I am mistaken, and not altogether witless. And in the ordinary life of mortals you generally play a sort of Democritus. Yet although the singular sharpness of your mind usually sets you far apart from the crowd, the incredible sweetness and ease of your manners mean that you can be, and are glad to be, a man for all hours with everyone. So you will not only welcome this little declamation gladly, as a μνημόσυνον [keepsake] from your companion, but also take on its defense, since it is dedicated to you and is now yours, not mine.[2]

1 Moria (Greek μωρία, "folly") is Folly's Greek name. Erasmus puns on the name of his friend Thomas More (1478–1535), the future author of Utopia.

LATIN

Etenim non deerunt fortasse vitilitigatores, qui calumnientur, partim leviores esse nugas, quam ut theologum deceant, partim mordaciores, quam ut Christianae conveniant modestiae; nosque clamitabunt veterem comoediam, aut Lucianum quempiam referre, atque omnia mordicus arripere. Verum quos argumenti levitas et ludicrum offendit, cogitent velim, non meum hoc exemplum esse, sed idem iam olim a magnis auctoribus factitatum; quum ante tot secula Βατραχομυομαχίαν luserit Homerus, Maro Culicem et Moretum, Nucem Ovidius, quum Busiridem laudarit Polycrates et huius castigator Isocrates, Iniustitiam Glauco, Thersiten et quartanam febrim Favorinus, Calvitium Synesius, Muscam et Parasiticam Lucianus; quum Seneca Claudii luserit ἀποθέωσιν, Plutarchus Grylli cum Ulysse dialogum, Lucianus et Apuleius asinum, et nescio quis Grunnii Corocottae porcelli testamentum, cuius et divus meminit Hieronymus.

ENGLISH

For perhaps there will be no shortage of quibblers to slander it. Some will say that these trifles are too frivolous to befit a theologian, others that they bite too hard to suit Christian restraint. They will keep shouting that I am reviving the Old Comedy or playing some sort of Lucian, and sinking my teeth into everything. But I would ask those who are offended by the lightness and playfulness of the subject to consider that the precedent is not mine: great authors did the same long ago. So many centuries back, Homer amused himself with the Βατραχομυομαχία [Battle of Frogs and Mice], Virgil with the Gnat and the Moretum, Ovid with the Nut. Polycrates praised Busiris, and so did Isocrates, who took him to task for it. Glaucon praised Injustice, Favorinus Thersites and the quartan fever, Synesius Baldness, Lucian the Fly and the Parasite's Art. Seneca made fun of Claudius's ἀποθέωσιν [deification], Plutarch wrote the dialogue of Gryllus with Ulysses, Lucian and Apuleius wrote the Ass, and someone or other wrote the Will of the piglet Grunnius Corocotta, which even St. Jerome mentions.[3]

Proinde si videbitur, fingant isti, me latrunculis interim animi caussa lusisse, aut si malint, equitasse in arundine longa. Nam quae tandem est iniquitas, quum omni vitae instituto suos lusus concedamus, studiis nullum omnino lusum permittere, maxime si nugae seria ducant, atque ita tractentur ludicra ut ex his aliquanto plus frugis referat lector non omnino naris obesae, quam ex quorundam tetricis ac splendidis argumentis? veluti quum alius diu consarcinata oratione rhetoricen aut philosophiam laudat, alius principis alicuius laudes describit, alius ad bellum adversus Turcas movendum adhortatur, alius futura praedicit, alius novas de lana caprina comminiscitur quaestiunculas. Ut enim nihil nugacius, quam seria nugatorie tractare, ita nihil festivius, quam ita tractare nugas, ut nihil minus quam nugatus fuisse videaris.

So, if they like, let them imagine that I was passing the time with a board game to relax, or, if they prefer, riding a long cane like a hobby-horse. For how unfair is it to allow every walk of life its own amusements but permit learning none at all? Especially when trifles lead to serious things, and jests are handled in such a way that a reader whose nose is not completely dull gets rather more profit from them than from some people's grim and showy treatises. One man, for instance, praises rhetoric or philosophy in a speech long stitched together; another writes up the praises of some prince; another urges us to make war on the Turks; another foretells the future; another dreams up new little quibbles over goat's wool. For just as nothing is more trifling than to treat serious things triflingly, so nothing is more delightful than to treat trifles in such a way that you seem to have been doing anything but trifling.[4]

2 Democritus of Abdera (5th century BC) was the "laughing philosopher," said to laugh at human folly. "A man for all hours" is a proverb in Erasmus's Adages and the source of "a man for all seasons."

3 The Old Comedy of Athens (Aristophanes) was notorious for attacking people by name, and Lucian of Samosata (2nd century AD), the Greek satirist whom Erasmus and More translated, was its heir. The works listed are classical mock encomia and jests, some only attributed to the authors named.

4 To argue "about goat's wool" (a phrase from Horace) is proverbial for squabbling over nothing.

IN DEFENSE OF A BITING JOKE

Erasmus argues that satire naming no names teaches rather than wounds, and that Folly must speak in character.

LATIN

De me quidem aliorum erit iudicium: tametsi, nisi plane me fallit φιλαυτία, Stultitiam laudavimus, sed non omnino stulte. Iam vero ut de mordacitatis cavillatione respondeam, semper haec ingeniis libertas permissa fuit, ut in communem hominum vitam salibus luderent impune, modo ne licentia exiret in rabiem. Quo magis admiror his temporibus aurium delicias, quae nihil iam fere nisi solennes titulos ferre possunt. Porro nonnullos adeo praepostere religiosos videas, ut vel gravissima in Christum convicia ferant citius, quam pontificem aut principem levissimo ioco aspergi; praesertim si quid πρὸς τὰ ἄλφιτα attinet. At enim qui vitas hominum ita taxat, ut neminem omnino perstringat nominatim, quaeso, utrum is mordere videtur, an docere potius, ac monere? Alioqui quot obsecro nominibus ipse me taxo?

Praeterea qui nullum hominum genus praetermittit, is nulli homini, vitiis omnibus iratus videtur. Ergo si quis exstiterit, qui sese laesum clamabit, is aut conscientiam prodet suam, aut certe metum. Lusit hoc in genere multo liberius ac mordacius divus Hieronymus, ne nominibus quidem aliquoties parcens. Nos, praeterquam quod a nominibus in totum abstinemus, ita praeterea stilum temperavimus, ut cordatus lector facile sit intellecturus, nos voluptatem magis, quam morsum quaesisse. Neque enim ad Iuvenalis exemplum, occultam illam scelerum sentinam usquam movimus, et ridenda magis quam foeda recensere studuimus. Tum si quis est, quem nec ista placare possunt, is saltem illud meminerit, pulchrum esse a stultitia vituperari: quam quum loquentem fecerimus, decoro personae serviendum fuit.

Sed quid ego haec tibi, patrono tam singulari, ut caussas etiam non optimas optime tamen tueri possis? Vale, disertissime More, et Moriam tuam gnaviter defende. Ex Rure, Quinto Idus Iunias. An. MDVIII.

ENGLISH

As for me, others will be the judges. Still, unless φιλαυτία [self-love] utterly deceives me, I have praised Folly, but not altogether foolishly. Now, to answer the carping about my biting tone: wits have always been allowed this freedom, to make fun of the common life of mankind with impunity, provided their license did not turn into rabid fury. So I am all the more amazed at how delicate ears are these days: they can bear almost nothing now but formal titles. You can even see some people so perversely pious that they would sooner put up with the gravest insults against Christ than see a pope or a prince sprinkled with the lightest joke—especially if it touches πρὸς τὰ ἄλφιτα [their bread and butter]. But when someone censures human lives without grazing anyone at all by name, does he seem, I ask you, to bite, or rather to teach and admonish? Besides, on how many counts, I beg you, do I censure myself?

Moreover, a writer who passes over no class of people seems angry not at any individual but at every vice. So if anyone comes forward shouting that he has been wounded, he will betray either his guilty conscience or at least his fear. St. Jerome played this game far more freely and bitingly, at times not even sparing names. I, besides refraining from names altogether, have also tempered my pen so that a sensible reader will easily see I was after pleasure rather than a bite. Nowhere have I followed Juvenal's example and stirred up that hidden cesspool of crimes; I have tried to review what is laughable rather than what is foul. Then, if there is anyone whom even this cannot appease, let him at least remember that it is a fine thing to be abused by Folly. And since I made her the speaker, I had to keep to what suits her character.[5]

But why am I telling all this to you, an advocate so exceptional that you can defend even not-so-good cases superbly? Farewell, most eloquent More, and defend your Moria vigorously. From the country, 9 June 1508.[6]

5 Juvenal (c. AD 60–130), the Roman satirist, was famous for his savage indignation at vice.
6 The year is printed thus; the book was in fact written in 1509, in More's house, and first published in 1511.

Folly Takes the Stage

Chapters 1–9
Folly announces her own encomium, describes herself, and names her father Plutus, her nurses and her companions.

CHAPTER 1

	LATIN	ENGLISH
1	Utcunque de me vulgo mortales loquuntur, (neque enim sum nescia, quam male audiat stultitia etiam apud stultissimos,) tamen hanc esse, hanc inquam esse unam, quae meo numine Deos atque homines exhilaro, vel illud abunde magnum est argumentum, quod, simulatque in hunc coetum frequentissimum dictura prodii, sic repente omnium vultus nova quadam atque insolita hilaritate enituerunt, sic subito frontem exporrexistis, sic laeto quodam et amabili applausistis risu, ut mihi profecto, quotquot undique praesentes intueor, pariter deorum Homericorum nectare, non sine nepenthe, temulenti esse videamini, quum antehac tristes ac solliciti sederitis, perinde quasi nuper e Trophonii specu reversi.	Whatever mortals commonly say of me (and I know very well how badly Folly is spoken of, even among the biggest fools), I am the one—yes, I tell you, the only one—whose divine power brings cheer to gods and men. And here is ample proof: the moment I stepped forward to speak to this packed assembly, all your faces suddenly lit up with a new and unaccustomed gaiety. At once you smoothed your brows and applauded with such happy, friendly laughter that all of you I see around me look, I swear, as if you were tipsy on the nectar of Homer's gods, laced with nepenthe. And yet a moment ago you were sitting there gloomy and anxious, as if you had just come back from the cave of Trophonius.[1]
	Ceterum quemadmodum fieri consuevit, ut, quum primum sol formosum illud et aureum os terris ostenderit, aut ubi post asperam hyemem novum ver blandis aspirarit Favoniis, protinus nova rebus omnibus facies, novus color ac plane iuventa quaedam redeat, ita vobis, me conspecta, mox alius accessit vultus. Itaque quod magni alioqui Rhetores vix longa diuque meditata oratione possunt efficere, nempe ut molestas animi curas discutiant, id ego solo statim aspectu praestiti.	It is just as it usually is when the sun first shows the earth that lovely golden face of his, or when, after a harsh winter, the new spring breathes with gentle west winds: at once everything takes on a new face and a new color, and a kind of youth returns. In the same way, as soon as you caught sight of me, you all wore a different look. And so what great orators can scarcely achieve with a long and long-rehearsed speech—namely, to dispel troublesome cares from the mind—I accomplished instantly, just by being seen.

AN ENCOMIUM OF HERSELF

Folly explains her costume and announces she will play the sophist and praise herself.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
2	Quam ob rem autem hoc insolito cultu prodierim hodie, iam audietis, si modo non gravabimini dicenti praebere aures, non eas sane, quas sacris concionatoribus, sed quas	Why I have come out today in this unusual get-up, you will hear presently, provided you don't mind lending me your ears. Not, of course, the ears you

1 Nepenthe was the drug of forgetfulness that Helen gives in Homer's Odyssey. Those who consulted the oracle in Trophonius's cave in Boeotia came back so gloomy that it became proverbial.

LATIN

fori circulatoribus, scurris ac morionibus consuevistis arrigere, quasque olim Midas ille noster exhibuit Pani. Lubitum est enim paulisper apud vos Sophistam agere, non quidem huius generis, quod hodie nugas quasdam anxias inculcat pueris, ac plusquam muliebrem rixandi pertinaciam tradit, sed veteres illos imitabor, qui, quo infamem Sophorum appellationem vitarent, sophistae vocari maluerunt. Horum studium erat, Deorum ac fortium virorum laudes encomiis celebrare. Encomium igitur audietis, non Herculis, neque Solonis, sed meum ipsius, hoc est, Stultitiae.

ENGLISH

prick up for preachers, but the ones you usually prick up for street-corner quacks, buffoons and jesters, the ears that our friend Midas once lent to Pan. For I have taken a fancy to play the sophist before you for a little while. Not the kind who nowadays drum anxious trifles into schoolboys and teach them to wrangle with a more than mulish stubbornness. No, I will imitate those ancient ones who, to avoid the ill-famed title of Sophoi, "wise men," preferred to be called sophists. Their business was to celebrate the praises of gods and heroes in encomia. So you are about to hear an encomium—not of Hercules, nor of Solon, but of me myself, that is, of Folly.[2]

WHY PRAISE HERSELF

Folly argues that self-praise is more honest than hiring flatterers, since no one else has praised her.

LATIN

3 Iam vero non huius facio sapientes istos, qui, stultissimum et insolentissimum esse praedicant, si quis ipse laudibus se ferat. Sit sane, quam volent stultum, modo decorum esse fateantur. Quid enim magis quadrat, quam ut ipsa Moria suarum laudum sit buccinatrix, et αὐτὴ ἑαυτὴν αὐλῇ; Quis enim me melius exprimat, quam ipsa me? Nisi si cui forte notior sim, quam egomet sum mihi.

Quanquam ego hoc alioqui non paulo etiam modestius arbitror, quam id quod optimatum ac sapientum vulgus factitat, qui perverso quodam pudore, vel rhetorem quempiam palponem, vel poetam vaniloquum, subornare solent, eumque mercede conductum, a quo suas laudes audiant, hoc est, mera mendacia; et tamen verecundus interim ille, pavonis in morem pennas tollit, cristas erigit, quum impudens assentator nihili hominem diis aequiparat, quum absolutum omnium virtutum exemplar proponit, a quo sciat ille se plus quam δὶς διὰ πασῶν abesse: quum corniculam alienis convestit plumis: quum Αἰθίοπα λευκαίνει, denique quum ἐκ μύας ἐλέφαντα ποιεῖ. Postremo sequor tritum illud vulgi proverbium, quo dicitur is recte laudare sese, cui nemo alius contigit laudator.

ENGLISH

Now, I don't care a straw for those wise men who proclaim that it is the height of folly and arrogance to sing your own praises. Let it be as foolish as they like, so long as they admit it is fitting. For what could be more apt than for Moria herself to trumpet her own praises, and αὐτὴ ἑαυτὴν αὐλῇ [play her own pipe]? Who could portray me better than I myself? Unless perhaps someone knows me better than I know myself.

Besides, I consider this a good deal more modest than what the common run of nobles and wise men do. Out of some perverse sense of shame, they usually suborn some fawning orator or windbag poet and pay him a fee to hear their own praises from him—that is, pure lies. And all the while our bashful friend spreads his feathers like a peacock and raises his crest, as the shameless flatterer makes this good-for-nothing the equal of the gods and holds him up as the perfect model of every virtue, though the man knows he is more than δὶς διὰ πασῶν [two full octaves] away from it. The flatterer dresses the little crow in borrowed feathers, Αἰθίοπα λευκαίνει [washes the Ethiopian white], and in short ἐκ μύας ἐλέφαντα ποιεῖ [makes an elephant out of a fly]. Finally, I am following that well-worn popular proverb which says a man does right to praise himself when no one else has turned up to praise him.

2 King Midas judged Pan's piping superior to Apollo's lyre, and Apollo gave him a donkey's ears for it.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
	Quanquam hic interim demiror mortalium ingratitudinem dicam, an segnitiem, quorum quum omnes me studiose colant, meamque libenter sentiant beneficentiam, nemo tamen tot iam seculis exstitit, qui grata oratione Stultitiae laudes celebrarit, quum non defuerint, qui Busirides, Phalarides, febres quartanas, muscas, calvitia, atque id genus pestes, accuratis magnaque et olei et somni iactura elucubratis laudibus evexerint. A me extemporariam quidem illam, et illaboratam, sed tanto veriorem audietis orationem.	Here, though, I can't help wondering at the ingratitude—or should I say laziness?—of mortals. They all worship me devotedly and gladly enjoy my kindness, yet in all these centuries no one has ever come forward to celebrate the praises of Folly in a speech of thanks. And this when there have been people who extolled Busirises, Phalarises, quartan fevers, flies, baldness and pests of that sort in carefully crafted eulogies, worked up by lamplight at great cost of oil and sleep. From me you will hear a speech that is off-the-cuff, I admit, and unpolished, but all the more truthful for that.[3]

NO DEFINITION, NO DIVISION

Folly refuses to define or divide herself, since everyone can see her standing there.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
4	Id quod nolim existimetis ad ingenii ostentationem esse confictum, quemadmodum vulgus oratorum facit. Nam ii, sicuti nostis, quum orationem totis triginta annis elaboratam, nonnunquam et alienam proferunt, tamen triduo sibi quasi per lusum scriptam, aut etiam dictatam esse deierant. Mihi porro semper gratissimum fuit, ὅττι κεν ἐπ' ἀκαιρίμαν γλῶτταν ἔλθῃ, dicere. At ne quis iam a nobis exspectet, ut iuxta vulgarium istorum Rhetorum consuetudinem me ipsam finitione explicem; porro ut dividam, multo minus. Nam utrumque ominis est inauspicati, vel fine circumscribere eam, cuius numen tam late pateat, vel secare, in cuius cultum omne rerum genus ita consentiat. Tametsi quorsum tandem attinet mei velut umbram atque imaginem finitione repraesentare, quum ipsam me coram praesentes praesentem oculis intueamini?	And I wouldn't want you to think I am making this up to show off my talent, as the common run of orators do. For they, as you know, deliver a speech they have labored over for a full thirty years—sometimes one that isn't even theirs—and still swear they wrote it in three days, as if for fun, or even dictated it. As for me, I have always liked best to say ὅττι κεν ἐπ' ἀκαιρίμαν γλῶτταν ἔλθῃ [whatever comes to the tip of my tongue]. But let no one expect me, in the manner of your run-of-the-mill rhetoricians, to explain myself by a definition, much less divide myself into parts. Either would be a bad omen: to hem in with limits one whose divine power reaches so far, or to cut up one in whose worship the whole of creation is so united. Besides, what is the point of presenting a mere shadow and image of me in a definition, when you are here in person, looking at me here in person with your own eyes?
	Sum etenim, uti videtis, vera illa largitrix ἐάων, quam Latini Stultitiam, Graeci μωρίαν appellant.	For I am, as you see, that true giver of ἐάων [good things] whom the Latins call Stultitia and the Greeks μωρίαν [Moria].

A FACE THAT CANNOT LIE

Folly cannot be disguised, and those who claim wisdom betray themselves as fools, like Midas by his ears.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
5	Quanquam quid vel hoc opus erat dicere? quasi non ipso ex vultu fronteque, quod aiunt, satis, quae sim, prae me	But why did I even need to say that? As if my very face and brow, as they say, did not show clearly

3 Busiris, a mythical Egyptian king who sacrificed strangers, and Phalaris, a Sicilian tyrant who roasted his victims in a bronze bull, had both received mock praise from Isocrates and Lucian.

LATIN	ENGLISH
feram, aut quasi, si quis me Minervam aut Sophiam esse contendat, non statim solo possit obtutu coargui, etiamsi nulla accedat oratio, minime mendax animi speculum. Nullus apud me fucis locus, nec aliud fronte simulo, aliud in pectore premo: sumque mei undique simillima, adeo ut nec ii me dissimulare possint, qui maxime Sapientiae personam ac titulum sibi vendicant, καὶ ἐν τῇ πορφύρᾳ πίθηκοι, καὶ ἐν τῇ λεοντῇ ὄνοι obambulant. Quamvis autem sedulo fingant, tamen alicunde prominentes auriculae Midam produnt. Ingratum mehercle et hoc hominum genus; qui quum maxime sint nostrae factionis, tamen apud vulgum cognominis nostri sic pudet, ut id passim aliis magni probri vice obiiciant.	enough who I am! Or as if anyone who claimed I was Minerva or Sophia could not be refuted at a single glance, even without speech, that least deceptive mirror of the mind. With me there is no room for make-up. I don't put on one thing in my face and keep another hidden in my heart. I am entirely like myself all over, so much so that I cannot be disguised even by those who most loudly lay claim to the mask and title of Wisdom, and go strutting about καὶ ἐν τῇ πορφύρᾳ πίθηκοι, καὶ ἐν τῇ λεοντῇ ὄνοι [both apes in purple and asses in a lion's skin]. However hard they pretend, their ears stick out somewhere and give away the Midas. An ungrateful breed of men, too, by Hercules! Though they belong to my party more than anyone, in public they are so ashamed of my name that they fling it at others everywhere as a great insult.
Proinde istos, quum sint μωρότατοι, ceterum Sophi ac Thaletes videri velint, nonne iure optimo μωροσώφους illos appellabimus?	So, since these people are μωρότατοι [utter fools] but want to pass for sages and Thaleses, shall we not have every right to call them μωροσώφους [foolosophers]?[4]

APING THE RHETORICIANS

Folly mocks orators who stud their Latin with Greek words and obscure archaisms to impress.

LATIN	ENGLISH
6 Visum est enim hac quoque parte nostri temporis rhetores imitari, qui plane deos esse sese credunt, si hirudinum ritu bilingues appareant, ac praeclarum facinus esse ducunt, latinis orationibus subinde graeculas aliquot voculas, velut emblemata intertexere, etiamsi nunc non erat his locus. Porro si desunt exotica, e putribus chartis quatuor aut quinque prisca verba eruunt, quibus tenebras offundant lectori, videlicet ut, qui intelligunt, magis ac magis sibi placeant; qui non intelligunt, hoc ipso magis admirentur, quo minus intelligunt. Quandoquidem est sane et hoc nostratium voluptatum genus non inelegans, quam maxime peregrina maxime suspicere. Quodsi qui paulo sunt ambitiosiores, arrideant tamen et applaudant, atque asini exemplo τὰ ὦτα κινῶσι, quo ceteris probe intelligere videantur. Καὶ ταῦτα δὴ μὲν ταῦτα. Nunc ad institutum recurro.	I decided to imitate the rhetoricians of our day in this respect too. They think themselves positively gods if they show themselves two-tongued like leeches, and they consider it a splendid feat to weave a few little Greek words into their Latin speeches every so often, like inlays in a mosaic, even when this was not the place for them. And if they run short of foreign words, they dig four or five archaic ones out of moldering manuscripts to cloud the reader in darkness. The point, of course, is that those who understand may be more and more pleased with themselves, while those who don't may admire all the more the less they understand. For this, too, is one of my people's not inelegant pleasures: to look up most to whatever is most foreign. And if some are a little more pretentious, they still smile and applaud and, like the donkey, τὰ ὦτα κινῶσι [twitch their ears], so as to seem to the others to understand perfectly. Καὶ

4 Thales of Miletus (6th century BC) was counted among the Seven Sages. The Greek word μωρόσοφος, "foolishly wise," is found in Lucian.

LATIN	ENGLISH
	ταῦτα δὴ μὲν ταῦτα [So much for that]. Now back to my subject.[5]

HER FATHER, WEALTH

Folly names her father as Plutus, god of wealth, who governs all human affairs.

LATIN	ENGLISH
7 Nomen igitur habetis, viri, quid addam epitheti? quid, nisi stultissimi? Nam quo alio honestiore cognomine Mystas suos compellet dea Stultitia? Sed quoniam non perinde multis notum est, quo genere prognata sim, id iam Musis bene iuvantibus exponere conabor.	So you have my name, gentlemen. What epithet shall I add for you? What else but "most foolish"? For by what more honorable title could the goddess Folly address her initiates? But since not so many know my parentage, I shall now try to explain it, with the kind help of the Muses.
Mihi vero neque Chaos, neque Orcus, neque Saturnus, neque Iapetus, aut alius id genus obsoletorum ac putrium deorum quisquam pater fuit, sed Πλοῦτος, ipse unus, vel invitis Hesiodo et Homero, atque ipso adeo Iove, πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε: cuius unius nutu, ut olim, ita nunc quoque sacra profanaque omnia sursum ac deorsum miscentur; cuius arbitrio bella, paces, imperia, consilia, iudicia, comitia, connubia, pacta, foedera, leges, artes, ludicra, seria, (iam spiritus me deficit) breviter, publica privataque omnia mortalium negotia administrantur; citra cuius opem totus ille poeticorum numinum populus, dicam audacius, ipsi quoque dii selecti aut omnino non essent, aut certe οἰκόσιτοι sane quam frigide victitarent; quem quisquis iratum habuerit, huic ne Pallas quidem satis auxilii tulerit; contra, quisquis propitium, is vel summo Iovi, cum suo fulmine, mandare laqueum possit: τούτου πατρὸς εὔχομαι εἶναι.	My father was not Chaos, nor Orcus, nor Saturn, nor Iapetus, nor any other of those outdated, moldy gods. It was Πλοῦτος [Plutus, Wealth], he alone—whatever Hesiod and Homer and even Jupiter himself may think—πατὴρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε [father of men and gods]. At his nod alone, now as in the past, everything sacred and profane is turned upside down. By his decision wars, peace, empires, counsels, judgments, elections, marriages, contracts, treaties, laws, arts, amusements, serious matters—I'm running out of breath—in short, all the public and private business of mortals is managed. Without his help that whole tribe of poets' deities—I'll go further—even the select gods themselves would either not exist at all or would live οἰκόσιτοι [on home fare], and very meagerly at that. Whoever has him angry will get no real help even from Pallas; whoever has him on his side can tell even Jupiter on high, thunderbolt and all, to go hang himself. τούτου πατρὸς εὔχομαι εἶναι [This is the father I boast of].[6]
Atque hic quidem me progenuit non e cerebro suo, quemadmodum tetricam illam ac torvam Palladem Iupiter, verum ex Neotete Nympha multo omnium venustissima, pariter ac festivissima: neque rursum id tristi illi illigatus coniugio, quomodo faber ille claudus natus est, verum, quod non paulo suavius; ἐν φιλότητι μιχθείς, quemadmodum noster ait Homerus. Genuit autem, ne quid erretis, non Aristophanicus ille Plutus, iam capularis, iam oculis captus, sed quondam integer adhuc calidusque iuventa, neque iuventa solum, verum multo magis nectare, quod tum forte in deorum convivio largius ac meracius hauserat.	And he begot me not from his own brain, the way Jupiter produced that grim, glowering Pallas, but on the nymph Neotes, by far the loveliest and merriest of them all. Nor was he bound to her in gloomy wedlock, the way that lame smith was born, but—something rather sweeter—ἐν φιλότητι μιχθείς [mingling in love], as our Homer puts it. And make no mistake: the one who fathered me was not Aristophanes' Plutus, already with one foot in the grave and stone-blind, but Plutus as he once was, still sound and hot with youth—and not only with youth, but far more with nectar, which

5 Leeches were thought to have a forked tongue; the Latin bilinguis means both "two-tongued" and "bilingual."
6 Plutus is the Greek god of wealth. The "select gods" were the twenty principal deities in the scholar Varro's classification.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
		he happened to have drunk rather freely, and neat, at a banquet of the gods.[7]

BORN IN THE ISLES OF THE BLESSED

Folly describes her birthplace and her two nurses, Drunkenness and Lack of Education.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
8	Quod si locum quoque natalem requiritis, (quandoquidem id hodie vel inprimis ad nobilitatem interesse putant, quo loco primos edideris vagitus) ego nec in erratica Delo, nec in undoso mari, nec ἐν σπέσσι γλαφυροῖσι sum edita, sed in ipsis insulis fortunatis, ubi ἄσπαρτα καὶ ἀνήροτα omnia proveniunt; in quibus neque labor, neque senium, neque morbus est ullus, nec usquam in agris asphodelus, malva, squilla, lupinumve, aut faba, aut aliud hoc genus nugarum conspicitur, sed passim oculis, simulque naribus adblandiuntur moly, panace, nepenthes, amaracus, ambrosia, lotus, rosa; viola, hyacinthus, Adonidis hortuli. Atque in his quidem nata deliciis, nequaquam a fletu sum auspicata vitam, sed protinus blande arrisi matri.	And if you also want to know my birthplace (since nowadays people think it matters above all for nobility where you uttered your first wails), I was born neither on wandering Delos, nor in the billowing sea, nor ἐν σπέσσι γλαφυροῖσι [in hollow caves], but in the very Isles of the Blessed, where everything grows ἄσπαρτα καὶ ἀνήροτα [unsown and unplowed]. There is no toil there, no old age, no sickness of any kind. Nowhere in the fields do you see asphodel, mallow, squill, lupines, beans or any rubbish of that sort; instead, on every side, moly, panacea, nepenthe, marjoram, ambrosia, lotus, rose, violet, hyacinth and gardens of Adonis charm the eyes and the nose together. Born amid these delights, I did not begin my life by crying, but at once gave my mother a sweet smile.[8]
	Iam vero non invideo ἐν ὑπάτῳ Κρονίωνι capram altricem, quum me duae lepidissimae nymphae suis aluerint mammis, Methe Baccho progenita, et Apaedia Panos filia, quas hic quoque in ceterarum comitum ac pedisequarum mearum consortio videtis, quarum mehercle nomina, si voletis cognoscere, ex me quidem non nisi Graece audietis.	Nor do I envy ἐν ὑπάτῳ Κρονίωνι [the most high son of Cronus] his nanny goat, since two most charming nymphs nursed me at their breasts: Methe, daughter of Bacchus, and Apaedia, daughter of Pan. You can see them here too, among the rest of my companions and attendants. If you want to know these ladies' names, by Hercules, you will hear them from me only in Greek.[9]

FOLLY'S COMPANIONS

Folly introduces her attendants: Self-Love, Flattery, Forgetfulness, Laziness, Pleasure, Madness, Wantonness, Revelry and Sound Sleep.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
9	Haec nimirum, quam sublatis superciliis conspicamini, Φιλαυτία est. Huic, quam velut arridentibus oculis ac plaudentem manibus videtis, Κολακία nomen. Haec semisomnis ac dormitanti similis Λήθη vocatur. Haec, cubito utroque innitens, consertisque manibus, Μισοπονία dicitur. Haec, roseo revincta serto, et undique delibuta unguentis, Ἡδονή. Haec lubricis et huc atque	This one, of course, whom you see with her eyebrows raised, is Φιλαυτία [Self-Love]. The one you see with smiling eyes, as it were, clapping her hands, is named Κολακία [Flattery]. This one, half asleep and looking drowsy, is called Λήθη [Forgetfulness]. This one, propped on both elbows with

7 Neotes is Greek for "Youth." The lame smith is Vulcan, lawful son of Jupiter and Juno; in Aristophanes' comedy Plutus (388 BC) Wealth is an old blind man.
8 Apollo and Diana were born on the floating island of Delos, and Venus rose from the sea. The Isles of the Blessed were a mythical paradise in the far western ocean.
9 Methe means "Drunkenness" and Apaedia "Lack of Education." Jupiter, son of Cronus, was suckled on Crete by the goat Amalthea.

LATIN

illuc errantibus luminibus, Ἄνοια dicitur. Haec, nitida cute, probeque saginato corpore, Τρυφή nomen habet. Videtis et deos duos, puellis admixtos, quorum alterum Κῶμον vocant, alterum νήγρετον Ὕπνον. Huius, inquam, famulitii fidelibus auxiliis genus omne rerum meae subiicio ditioni, ipsis etiam imperans imperatoribus.

ENGLISH

her hands folded, is called Μισοπονία [Laziness]. This one, crowned with a garland of roses and dripping with perfumes all over, is Ἡδονή [Pleasure]. This one, with slippery eyes that wander this way and that, is called Ἄνοια [Madness]. This one, with glossy skin and a well-fattened body, goes by the name Τρυφή [Wantonness]. You also see two gods among the girls: one they call Κῶμον [Revelry], the other νήγρετον Ὕπνον [Sound Sleep]. With the faithful help of this household, I tell you, I bring the whole world under my sway, and give orders even to emperors.[10]

10 Self-Love (Philautia) is one of Folly's chief allies and returns again and again in her speech.

What Life Owes to Folly

Chapters 10–30
Birth, childhood, old age, the gods, pleasure, friendship, marriage, war and the arts: nothing pleasant or great happens without her.

CHAPTER 10

	LATIN	ENGLISH
10	Genus, educationem et comites audistis: nunc, ne cui sine caussa videar mihi deae nomen usurpare, quantis commoditatibus deos simul et homines adficiam, quamque late meum pateat numen, arrectis auribus accipite. Etenim si non inscite scripsit quidam, hoc demum esse Deum, iuvare mortales, et si merito in deorum senatum asciti sunt, qui vinum, aut frumentum, aut unam aliquam huiusmodi commoditatem mortalibus ostenderunt, cur non ego iure deorum omnium ἄλφα dicar habearque, quae una omnibus largior omnia?	You have heard of my birth, my upbringing and my companions. Now, so that no one thinks I claim the title of goddess without reason, prick up your ears and hear how many benefits I bestow on gods and men alike, and how far my divine power extends. If someone wrote, not unwisely, that this is what it means to be a god—to help mortals—and if those who showed mortals wine, or grain, or some single benefit of that kind were rightly admitted to the senate of the gods, why should I not rightly be called and considered the ἄλφα [alpha] of all the gods, I who alone lavish everything on everyone?[1]

THE SOURCE OF LIFE

Folly claims that every human being, even the Stoic wise man's child, owes his birth to her.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
11	Principio quid esse potest vita ipsa vel dulcius vel preciosius? At huius exordium cui tandem acceptum ferri convenit, nisi mihi? Neque enim aut ὀβριμοπάτρης hasta Palladis, aut νεφεληγερέτου Iovis aegis hominum genus vel progignit, vel propagat; verum ipse deum pater atque hominum rex, qui totum nutu tremefactat Olympum, fulmen illud trisulcum ponat oportet, et vultum illum Titanicum, quo, quum lubet, Deos omneis territat, planeque histrionum more aliena sumenda misero persona, si quando velit id facere, quod nunquam non facit, hoc est, παιδοποιεῖν. Iam vero Stoici se diis proximos autumant.	To begin with, what can be sweeter or more precious than life itself? And to whom should its beginning be credited, if not to me? For it is not the spear of ὀβριμοπάτρης [mighty-fathered] Pallas or the aegis of νεφεληγερέτου [cloud-gathering] Jupiter that begets or propagates the human race. Why, the father of gods and king of men himself, who shakes all Olympus with his nod, has to lay down that three-forked thunderbolt of his and that Titanic scowl with which he terrifies all the gods whenever he pleases. Like an actor, the poor fellow has to put on someone else's mask whenever he wants to do what he is forever doing, that is, παιδοποιεῖν [to make children]. Now, the Stoics claim that they come closest to the gods.
	At date mihi terque quaterque, aut si libet, sexcenties Stoicum, tamen huic quoque, si non barba, insigne	But give me a Stoic three or four times over—or six hundred times, if you like—and even he will have

1 The saying that to be a god is to help mortals comes from Pliny the Elder's Natural History (2.18).

LATIN

sapientiae, etiamsi cum hircis commune, certe supercilium erit ponendum, explicanda frons, abiicienda dogmata illa adamantina, ineptiendum ac delirandum aliquantisper: in summa, me, me, inquam, sapiens ille accersat oportet, si modo pater esse velit. Et cur non apertius meo more vobiscum fabuler? Quaeso, num caput, num facies, num pectus, num manus, num auris, quae partes honestae putantur, progenerant deos aut homines? Non opinor; imo ea pars, adeo stulta, adeoque ridicula, ut nec nominari citra risum possit, humani generis est propagatrix: is est sacer ille fons, unde vitam hauriunt omnia verius, quam ille Pythagoricus quaternio.

ENGLISH

to lay aside, if not his beard, the badge of wisdom (though goats have one too), then at least his frown. He will have to smooth his brow, throw away those adamantine doctrines, and play the fool and rave for a while. In short, me—me, I tell you—that wise man must call upon if he ever wants to be a father. And why shouldn't I chat with you more frankly, as is my way? Tell me, does the head, the face, the breast, the hand or the ear—the parts considered respectable—beget gods or men? I think not. No, it is that part, so foolish and so ridiculous that it cannot even be named without a laugh, that propagates the human race. That is the sacred spring from which all things draw life, more truly than from that Pythagorean tetrad.[2]

Age vero, qui vir obsecro matrimonii capistro velit praebere os, si, quemadmodum isti sapientes facere consueverunt, prius eius vitae incommoda secum perpenderit: aut quae tandem mulier virum admissura sit, si partus periculosos labores, si educationis molestiam vel norit, vel cogitarit? Porro, si coniugiis debetis vitam, coniugium autem debetis Ἀνοία pedisequae, mihi nimirum quid debeatis, intelligitis. Tum quae, semel haec experta, denuo repetere velit, nisi Λήθης praesens numen adfuerit? Neque vero id Venus ipsa, vel reclamante Lucretio, unquam inficias iverit, sine nostri numinis accessione suam vim mancam atque irritam esse.

Come now, what man, I ask you, would offer his face to the halter of matrimony if, as those wise men usually do, he first weighed up the drawbacks of that life? Or what woman would ever let a man near her if she knew, or stopped to think about, the dangerous labor of childbirth and the trouble of bringing up children? So if you owe your life to marriage, and marriage to my attendant Ἀνοία [Madness], you can see what you owe to me. And what woman who has been through all this once would want to do it again, unless the divinity of Λήθης [Forgetfulness] stood by her? Venus herself, whatever Lucretius may protest, would never deny that without the addition of my divine power her own force is maimed and ineffective.[3]

Itaque ex nostro illo temulento ridiculoque lusu proveniunt et superciliosi philosophi, in quorum locum nunc successere, quos vulgus monachos appellat, et purpurei reges, et pii sacerdotes, et ter sanctissimi pontifices: postremo totus etiam ille deorum poeticorum coetus, adeo frequens, ut turbam vix iam ipse capiat Olympus, tametsi spatiosissimus.

So from that tipsy and ridiculous game of mine come haughty philosophers (whose place has now been taken by those the common people call monks), kings in purple, pious priests and thrice-most-holy popes—and finally that whole assembly of the poets' gods, so numerous that Olympus itself, spacious as it is, can scarcely hold the crowd.

LIFE WITHOUT PLEASURE

Folly argues that life would not be worth living without pleasure, the seasoning of folly.

LATIN

ENGLISH

12 At sane parum sit, mihi vitae seminarium ac fontem deberi, nisi, quicquid in omni vita commodi est, id quoque totum ostendero mei muneris esse. Quid autem? vita haec, num omnino vita videtur appellanda, si

But it would hardly be enough to show that I am the seedbed and source of life unless I also showed that every good thing in the whole of life is my gift as well. Well, then: would this life seem to deserve

2 The Pythagoreans revered the tetractys, the numbers 1 to 4 adding up to the perfect number 10, as the source of all nature.
3 Lucretius's poem On the Nature of Things opens with a hymn to Venus as the creative power of all nature.

LATIN	ENGLISH
voluptatem detraxeris? Applausistis. Equidem sciebam, neminem vestrum ita sapere, vel desipere magis, imo sapere potius, ut in hac esset sententia. Quanquam ne Stoici quidem isti voluptatem aspernantur, tametsi sedulo dissimulant, milleque conviciis eam apud vulgus dilacerant, nimirum ut, deterritis aliis, ipsi prolixius fruantur. Sed dicant mihi per Iovem: quae tandem vitae pars est non tristis, non infestiva, non invenusta, non insipida, non molesta, nisi voluptatem, id est, stultitiae condimentum adiunxeris?	the name of life at all, if you took pleasure away? You applaud! I knew that none of you was so wise—or rather so foolish—no, so wise after all—as to hold that view. In fact, not even those Stoics despise pleasure, though they carefully pretend to, and tear it to shreds with a thousand insults in public—no doubt so that, once the others are scared off, they can enjoy it more lavishly themselves. But let them tell me, by Jove: what part of life is not gloomy, dull, graceless, tasteless and tiresome, unless you add pleasure, that is, the seasoning of folly?
Cuius rei quum satis idoneus testis esse possit ille nunquam satis laudatus Sophocles, cuius exstat pulcherrimum illud de nobis elogium: Ἐν τῷ φρονεῖν γὰρ μηδὲν, ἥδιστος βίος, tamen age, rem omnem sigillatim aperiamus.	That never sufficiently praised Sophocles could serve as quite an adequate witness to this; we still have his beautiful tribute to me: Ἐν τῷ φρονεῖν γὰρ μηδὲν, ἥδιστος βίος [For the sweetest life lies in knowing nothing]. Still, come, let us lay out the whole matter point by point.[4]

CHILDHOOD AND SECOND CHILDHOOD

Folly credits herself with the charm of children and the contentment of doting old age.

LATIN	ENGLISH
13 Principio, quis nescit, primam hominis aetatem multo laetissimam multoque omnibus gratissimam esse? Quid est enim illud in infantibus, quod sic exosculamur, sic amplectimur, sic fovemus, ut hostis etiam huic aetati ferat opem, nisi stultitiae lenocinium, quod data opera prudens natura recens natis adjunxit, ut aliquo voluptatis velut auctoramento et educantium labores delinire queant, et tuentium favores eblandiantur? Deinde quae succedit huic adolescentia, quam est apud omnes gratiosa, quam illi candide favent omnes, quam studiose provehunt, quam officiose porrigunt auxiliares manus! At unde quaeso ista iuventae gratia? unde, nisi ex me? cuius beneficio quam minimum sapit, atque ob id quam minime ringitur.	First of all, who doesn't know that the earliest stage of human life is by far the happiest and by far the most delightful to everyone? What is it about babies that makes us kiss them, hug them and cuddle them so, so that even an enemy would help a child of that age, if not the allure of folly? Wise Nature has deliberately given it to the newborn so that, with a kind of wage of pleasure, they can sweeten the labors of those who raise them and coax goodwill from those who look after them. Then comes youth. How popular it is with everyone! How sincerely all favor it, how eagerly they help it get ahead, how dutifully they hold out helping hands! But where, I ask you, does that charm of youth come from? Where, if not from me? Thanks to me, youth has as little wisdom as possible, and therefore as little sourness as possible.
Mentior, nisi mox, ubi, grandiores facti, per rerum usum ac disciplinas virile quiddam sapere coeperint, continuo deflorescit formae nitor, languescit alacritas, frigescit lepos, labascit vigor; quoque longius a me subducitur, hoc minus minusque vivit, donec succedat τὸ χαλεπὸν γῆρας, id est, molesta senectus, non iam aliis modo, verum etiam	Call me a liar if, as soon as they grow older and through experience and education begin to have some grown-up wisdom, the bloom of their beauty does not fade at once, their liveliness flag, their charm cool and their vigor give way. The further one is drawn away from me, the less and less one

4 The line is from Sophocles' tragedy Ajax (554).

LATIN

sibimet invisa. Quae quidem prorsum nulli mortalium foret tolerabilis, nisi rursum tantorum miserta laborum dextra adessem, et, quemadmodum dii poetarum solent pereuntibus aliqua metamorphosi succurrere, itidem ego quoque iam capulo proximos denuo, quoad licet, ad pueritiam eos revocarem; unde non abs re vulgus eos παλίμπαιδας appellare consuevit. Porro, si quis transformandi rationem requirat, ne id quidem celarim.

Ad Lethes nostrae fontem, nam in insulis fortunatis oritur; (siquidem apud inferos tenuis modo rivulus labitur), eos produco, ut, simul atque illic longa potarint oblivia, paulatim dilutis animi curis repubescant. At isti iam delirant, inquiunt, iam desipiunt. Esto sane: sed istuc ipsum est repuerascere. An vero aliud est, puerum esse, quam delirare, quam desipere? An non hoc vel maxime in ea delectat aetate, quod nihil sapit? Quis enim non ceu portentum oderit atque execretur puerum virili sapientia? Astipulatur et vulgo iactatum proverbium: *Odí puerulum praécoci sapiéntia*. Quis autem sustineret habere commercium aut consuetudinem cum eo sene, qui ad tantam rerum experientiam, parem animi vigorem, iudiciique acrimoniam adiunxisset?

Itaque delirat senex meo munere: sed tamen delirus iste meus interim miseris illis curis vacat, quibus sapiens ille distorquetur. Interim non illepidus est compotor. Non sentit vitae taedium, quod robustior aetas vix tolerat. Nonnunquam cum sene Plautino ad tres illas litteras revertitur, infelicissimus si sapiat. At interim meo beneficio felix, interim amicis gratus, ne congerro quidem infestivus. Quandoquidem et apud Homerum e Nestoris ore fluit oratio melle dulcior, quum Achillis sit amarulenta, et apud eundem, senes in moenibus considentes τὴν λειριόεσσαν vocem edunt. Quo quidem calculo ipsam etiam superant pueritiam, suavem quidem illam, sed infantem, ac praecipuo vitae oblectamento, puta garrulitate, carentem. Addite huc, quod pueris quoque gaudeant impensius senes, ac pueri vicissim senibus delectantur: Ὡς αἰεὶ τὸν ὅμοιον ἄγει θεὸς ὡς τὸν ὅμοιον.

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lives, until τὸ χαλεπὸν γῆρας [harsh old age] arrives—that is, irksome old age—hateful now not only to others but even to itself. No mortal could stand it at all if I did not take pity on such great hardships and once again lend a helping hand. Just as the poets' gods usually rescue the dying with some metamorphosis, so I bring those who already have one foot in the grave back to childhood again, as far as I can. That is why people quite rightly call them παλίμπαιδας [children a second time]. And if anyone asks how I transform them, I won't hide that either.

I lead them to the spring of my Lethe—for it rises in the Isles of the Blessed, while in the underworld it flows only as a thin little stream—so that, as soon as they have drunk long drafts of forgetfulness there, their cares gradually wash away and they grow young again. "But they are already going senile," people say, "already losing their wits." Granted—but that is exactly what becoming a child again means. Or is being a child anything other than being silly and witless? Isn't what delights us most at that age precisely that it knows nothing? Who would not hate and loathe as a monster a boy with a grown man's wisdom? The popular proverb agrees: *I hate a little boy with wisdom before his time*. And who could bear to deal or keep company with an old man who had joined to his long experience of the world an equal vigor of mind and sharpness of judgment?[5]

So the old man goes doddering, thanks to my gift. But meanwhile this dotard of mine is free of those wretched cares that torment the wise man. Meanwhile he is quite good company over a drink. He doesn't feel the weariness of life, which a sturdier age can hardly bear. Sometimes, like the old man in Plautus, he goes back to those three letters—and he would be the unhappiest of men if he had any sense. But meanwhile, thanks to me, he is happy, dear to his friends, and not even a dull companion at a party. After all, in Homer too, speech sweeter than honey flows from Nestor's mouth, while Achilles' is rather bitter; and in the same poet, the old men sitting on the walls send forth a voice τὴν λειριόεσσαν [delicate as lilies]. On this count they even outdo childhood itself, which is sweet, to be sure, but tongue-tied, and lacks life's chief delight

5 Lethe, "forgetfulness," is both Folly's companion and the river of the underworld whose water made the dead forget their past.

LATIN	ENGLISH
	—chatter, I mean. Add to this that old people take especially great joy in children, and children in turn delight in the old: Ὡς αἰεὶ τὸν ὅμοιον ἄγει θεὸς ὡς τὸν ὅμοιον [So God always brings like to like].[6]
Quid enim inter illos non convenit, nisi quod hic rugosior, et plures numerat natales? Alioqui capillorum albor, os edentulum, corporis modus minor, lactis appetentia, balbuties, garrulitas, ineptia, oblivio, incogitantia, breviter omnia cetera congruunt; quoque magis accedunt ad senectam, hoc propius ad pueritiae similitudinem redeunt, donec puerorum ritu, citra vitae taedium, citra mortis sensum emigrant e vita.	What is there, after all, that they do not share, except that one is more wrinkled and counts more birthdays? Otherwise the white hair, the toothless mouth, the smaller body, the craving for milk, the stammering, the chatter, the silliness, the forgetfulness, the thoughtlessness: in short, everything else matches. And the nearer they come to old age, the closer they return to the likeness of childhood, until at last, like children, without weariness of life and without any sense of death, they pass out of life.

PERPETUAL YOUTH

Folly says fools never grow old, unlike scholars and philosophers worn out by their cares.

LATIN	ENGLISH
14 Eat nunc, qui volet, et hoc meum beneficium cum reliquorum Deorum metamorphosi comparet. Qui quid irati faciant, non libet commemorare; sed quibus quam maxime propitii sunt, eos solent in arborem, in avem, in cicadam, aut etiam in serpentem transformare: quasi vero non istud ipsum sit perire, aliud fieri. Ego vero hominem eundem optimae ac felicissimae vitae parti restituo. Quod si mortales prorsus ab omni sapientiae commercio temperarent, ac perpetuo mecum aetatem agerent, ne esset quidem ullum senium, verum perpetua iuventa fruerentur felices. An non videtis tetricos istos et vel philosophiae studiis, vel seriis et arduis addictos negotiis, plerumque priusquam plane iuvenes sint, iam consenuisse, videlicet curis et assidua acrique cogitationum agitatione sensim spiritus et succum illum vitalem exhauriente?	Now let anyone who likes go and compare this kindness of mine with the metamorphoses worked by the other gods. What they do when they are angry I would rather not mention. But those they favor most they usually turn into a tree, a bird, a cicada, or even a snake. As if becoming something else were not itself a way of perishing! I, on the other hand, restore the very same person to the best and happiest part of life. And if mortals would keep entirely clear of any dealings with wisdom and spend their whole lives with me, there would not even be such a thing as old age. They would be happy and enjoy perpetual youth. Don't you see how those gloomy types, given over either to the study of philosophy or to serious and difficult business, have mostly grown old before they are fully young? It is, of course, their cares and the constant, sharp churning of their thoughts that gradually drain away their spirits and that vital sap.[7]
quum contra Moriones mei pinguiculi sint, et nitidi, et bene curata cute, plane χοῖροι, quod aiunt, Ἀκαρνάνιοι, nunquam profecto senectutis incommodum ullum sensuri, nisi nonnihil, ut fit, sapientum contagio inficerentur. Adeo nihil patitur hominum vita omni ex parte beatum esse. Accedit ad haec vulgati proverbii non	My fools, by contrast, are plump and sleek, with well-tended skin, regular χοῖροι Ἀκαρνάνιοι [Acarnanian hogs], as the saying goes. They would never feel any of the discomforts of old age at all, unless, as happens, they caught a little infection from contact with the wise. So true is it that hu-

6 In Plautus's Merchant an old man falls in love; the "three letters" spell amo, "I love."
7 In myth Tithonus became a cicada and Cadmus a snake; Daphne was turned into a laurel tree.

LATIN

leve testimonium, quo dictitant, Stultitiam unam esse rem, quae et iuventam alioqui fugacissimam remoretur, et improbam senectam procul arceat. Ut non temere de Brabantis populari sermone iactatum sit, quum ceteris hominibus aetas prudentiam adferre soleat, hos, quo propius ad senectam accedunt, hoc magis atque magis stultescere. Atqui hac gente non est alia vel ad communem vitae consuetudinem festivior, vel quae minus sentiat senectutis tristitiam.

His quidem, ut loco, ita et vitae instituto confines sunt Hollandi mei; cur enim non meos appellem, usque adeo studiosos mei cultores, ut inde vulgo cognomen emeruerint? cuius illos adeo non pudet, ut hinc vel praecipue sese iactitent. Eant nunc stultissimi mortales, et Medeas, Circes, Veneres, Auroras, et fontem nescio quem requirant, quo sibi iuventam restituant, quum id sola praestare et possim et soleam. Apud me succus est ille mirificus, quo Memnonis filia Tithoni avi sui iuventam prorogavit. Ego sum Venus illa, cuius favore Phaon ille repubuit, ita ut a Sapphone tantopere deamaretur. Meae sunt herbae, si quae sunt, mea precamina, meus ille fons, qui non solum revocat elapsam adolescentiam, sed, quod est optabilius, perpetuam servat.

Quod si omnes huic sententiae subscribitis, adolescentia nihil esse melius, senectute nihil detestabilius, quantum mihi debeatis videtis opinor, quae tantum bonum retineam, tanto excluso malo.

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man life allows nothing to be happy in every respect. Add to this the weighty testimony of a common proverb, which has it that Folly is the one thing that both holds back youth, otherwise so fleeting, and keeps wretched old age far away. So it is not without reason that people commonly say of the Brabanters that, while age usually brings other men good sense, they grow more and more foolish the closer they come to old age. And yet no other people is more cheerful in the ordinary business of life, or less aware of the gloom of old age.[8]

Next to these, in way of life as in location, are my Hollanders. Why shouldn't I call them mine, when they worship me so devotedly that they have earned a popular nickname from it? And they are so far from being ashamed of it that they boast of it above all else. Let the most foolish of mortals go now and look for Medeas, Circes, Venuses, Auroras, and some fountain or other to restore their youth, when I alone can do it, and regularly do. I have that marvelous juice with which the daughter of Memnon prolonged the youth of her grandfather Tithonus. I am that Venus by whose favor Phaon grew young again, so that Sappho fell desperately in love with him. Mine are the herbs, if there are any; mine the spells; mine that fountain which not only brings back lost youth but, what is more desirable, preserves it for ever.[9]

So if you all subscribe to the view that nothing is better than youth and nothing more hateful than old age, you can see, I think, how much you owe me, since I keep so great a good and shut out so great an evil.

FOLLY AMONG THE GODS

Folly shows that the most delightful gods, Bacchus, Cupid and Venus, are the most foolish.

LATIN

15 Sed quid adhuc de mortalibus loquor? Coelum omne lustrate, et mihi meum nomen opprobret licebit, quicunque volet, si quem omnino deorum repererit non insuavem et aspernabilem, nisi meo numine commendetur. Etenim cur semper ephebus et comatus Bacchus? Nempe quia, vecors ac temulentus, conviviis, saltationibus, choreis, lusibus vitam omnem transigens,

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But why am I still talking about mortals? Search the whole of heaven, and anyone who likes may fling my name in my face if he finds a single god who is not disagreeable and contemptible unless my divine power recommends him. Why, after all, is Bacchus always a long-haired youth? Plainly be-

8 Acarnania, in western Greece, was proverbial for its fat pigs. Brabant is a duchy of the Low Countries, around Brussels and Antwerp.

9 In the usual myth Aurora (the Dawn) was Tithonus's wife and Memnon's mother. Phaon, an aged ferryman, was made young and beautiful by Venus.

LATIN

ne tantulum quidem habet cum Pallade commercii. Denique tantum abest, ut sapiens haberi postulet, ut ludibriis ac iocis coli gaudeat. Neque proverbio offenditur, quod illi fatui cognomentum attribuit; id est huiusmodi, Μορύχου μωρότερος. Porro Morycho nomen verterunt, quod illum pro templi foribus sedentem, musto ficisque recentibus agricolarum lascivia consueverit oblinere. Tum autem quid non scommatum in hunc vetus iacit comoedia? O insulsum, inquiunt, deum, et dignum qui ex inguine nasceretur.

At quis non malit hic fatuus et insulsus esse, semper festivus, semper pubescens, semper omnibus lusus ac voluptatem adferens, quam vel ἀγκυλομήτης ille Iupiter, omnibus formidabilis, vel Pan, suis tumultibus omnia senio vitians, vel favillis oppletus Vulcanus ac semper officinae laboribus squalidus, aut Pallas etiam ipsa sua Gorgone et hasta terribilis, καὶ ἀεὶ ἐνορῶσα δριμύ. Cur semper puer Cupido! cur? nisi quia nugator est, καὶ μηδὲν ὑγιὲς neque facit, neque cogitat? Cur aureae Veneri semper vernat sua forma? Nimirum, quia mecum habet affinitatem, unde et patris mei colorem vultu refert: atque hac de caussa est apud Homerum χρυσῆ Ἀφροδίτη. Deinde perpetuo ridet, si quid modo poetis credimus, aut horum aemulis statuariis. Quod numen unquam religiosius coluere Romani, quam Florae, omnium voluptatum parentis?

Quanquam si quis etiam tetricorum deorum vitam diligentius requirat ab Homero reliquisque poetis, reperiet, stultitiae plena omnia. Quid enim attinet, reliquorum facta commemorare, quum Iovis ipsius fulminatoris amores ac lusus probe noritis? quum severa illa Diana, oblita sexus, nihil aliud quam venetur, Endymionem interim deperiens? Verum illi sua facinora a Momo audiant malim, a quo saepius quondam audire solebant. Sed hunc nuper irati una cum Ate in terras praecipitem dederunt, quod sapientia sua felicitati deorum importunus obstreperet; neque mortalium ullus exulem dignatur hospitio, tantum abest, ut illi in principum aulis sit locus, in quibus tamen mea Κολακία

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cause he is witless and tipsy, spends his whole life in feasts, dances, choruses and games, and has not the slightest dealings with Pallas. In fact he is so far from claiming to be thought wise that he delights in being worshipped with pranks and jokes. Nor is he offended by the proverb that gives him the nickname of fool, which runs: Μορύχου μωρότερος [More foolish than Morychus]. They gave him the name Morychus because the country folk, in their high spirits, used to smear him with new wine and fresh figs as he sat before the doors of his temple. And then what gibes does Old Comedy not hurl at him? "O stupid god," they say, "fit to be born from a groin!"[10]

But who would not rather be this foolish, stupid god, always merry, always young, always bringing everyone fun and pleasure, than that ἀγκυλομήτης [crooked-counseling] Jupiter, whom everyone fears? Or Pan, who blights everything with the gloom of his panics? Or Vulcan, covered in ashes and always grimy from the labors of his forge? Or even Pallas herself, terrifying with her Gorgon and her spear, καὶ ἀεὶ ἐνορῶσα δριμύ [and forever glaring fiercely]? Why is Cupid always a boy? Why? Because he is a trifler, καὶ μηδὲν ὑγιὲς [and nothing sound] does he either do or think. Why is golden Venus's beauty always in its springtime? Clearly because she is related to me. That is why her face has my father's color, and for that reason Homer calls her χρυσῆ Ἀφροδίτη [golden Aphrodite]. Besides, she is always smiling, if we are to believe the poets at all, or their rivals the sculptors. What deity did the Romans ever worship more devoutly than Flora, mother of all pleasures?[11]

And yet if anyone looks more closely, in Homer and the other poets, into the lives of even the stern gods, he will find everything full of folly. Why bother recounting the deeds of the rest, when you know perfectly well the love affairs and frolics of Jupiter the Thunderer himself? When that severe Diana, forgetting her sex, does nothing but hunt, while all the time dying of love for Endymion? But I would rather they heard about their misdeeds from Momus, from whom they used to hear about them quite often in the old days. Recently, though, in a fit of anger, they hurled him headlong down to

10 Bacchus was born from the thigh of Jupiter, into which he had been sewn after his mother Semele's death.
11 Flora was the Roman goddess of flowers, whose festival, the Floralia, was notorious for its license.

LATIN	ENGLISH
primas tenet, cui cum Momo non magis convenit, quam cum agno lupis.	earth together with Ate, because with his wisdom he kept rudely interrupting the gods' happiness. And no mortal deigns to give the exile shelter, still less is there room for him in the courts of princes, where my Κολακία [Flattery] holds first place, and she gets on with Momus no better than wolves with a lamb.[12]
Itaque, sublato illo, iam multo licentius ac suavius nugantur dii; vere ῥᾳ̃ον ἄγοντες, ut inquit Homerus, nullo videlicet censore. Quos enim non praebet iocos ficulnus ille Priapus! Quos non ludos exhibet furtis ac praestigiis suis Mercurius! Quin et Vulcanus ipse in deorum conviviis γελωτοποιὸν agere consuevit, ac modo claudicatione, modo cavillis, modo ridiculis dictis exhilarare compotationem. Tum et Silenus ille senex amator τὸν κόρδακα saltare solitus, una cum Polyphemo τὴν θρεττανελό, Nymphis τὴν γυμνοποδίαν saltantibus. Satyri semicapri Atellanas agitant, Pan insulsa quapiam cantiuncula risum omnibus movet, quem ita malunt, quam ipsas audire Musas, praecipue quum iam nectare coeperint madere. Porro quid ego nunc commemorem, quae probe poti dii post convivium agitent? adeo mehercle stulta, ut ipsa nonnunquam a risu temperare nequeam.	So with him out of the way the gods now fool about far more freely and pleasantly, truly ῥᾳ̃ον ἄγοντες [taking life easy], as Homer says, with no censor, of course. What jokes that fig-wood Priapus provides! What sport Mercury puts on with his thefts and conjuring tricks! Vulcan himself regularly plays the γελωτοποιὸν [jester] at the gods' banquets, cheering up the drinking party now with his limp, now with his teasing, now with his comic sayings. Then there is that amorous old Silenus, who dances τὸν κόρδακα [the cordax], with Polyphemus dancing τὴν θρεττανελό [the threttanelo], while the Nymphs dance τὴν γυμνοποδίαν [the barefoot dance]. The half-goat Satyrs perform Atellan farces. Pan sets everyone laughing with some silly little song, and they would rather hear him than the Muses themselves, especially once they have begun to get soaked in nectar. And why should I now mention what the gods get up to after the banquet, when they are well and truly drunk? Things so foolish, by Hercules, that sometimes even I can't help laughing.[13]
At satius est in his Harpocratis meminisse, ne forte nos quoque Corycaeus aliquis Deus auscultet, ea narrantes, quae ne Momus quidem impune proloquutus est.	But in such matters it is better to remember Harpocrates, in case some Corycaean god should be eavesdropping on us as we tell things that not even Momus got away with saying.[14]

REASON AGAINST THE PASSIONS

Folly explains that Jupiter gave humans far more passion than reason, to keep life from being grim.

LATIN	ENGLISH
16 Sed iam tempus est, ut ad Homericum exemplar relictis coelitibus vicissim in terram demigremus; quanquam ibi nihil laetum aut felix, nisi meo munere, dispiciamus. In primis videtis, quanta providentia natura parens et humani generis opifex illud caverit, ne usquam deesset stultitiae condimentum. Etenim quum Stoicis	But it is time now to follow Homer's example: to leave the heavenly ones and come down in our turn to earth. There, too, we shall find nothing happy or fortunate except by my gift. First of all, you see with what foresight Nature, the parent and maker of the human race, made sure that the

12 Momus was the god of fault-finding; Ate, the goddess of ruinous folly, was thrown out of heaven by Jupiter (Homer, Iliad 19).
13 The cordax was a lewd comic dance; "threttanelo" imitates the twang of the Cyclops' lyre in Aristophanes' Wealth. Atellan farces were rustic Roman comedies.
14 Harpocrates was the god of silence, shown with a finger to his lips; the people of Corycus were proverbial eavesdroppers.

LATIN	ENGLISH
definitoribus nihil aliud sit sapientia, quam duci ratione, contra stultitia, affectuum arbitrio moveri: ne plane tristis ac tetrica esset hominum vita, Iupiter quanto plus indidit affectuum quam rationis! Quasi semiunciam compares ad assem. Praeterea rationem in angustum capitis angulum relegavit, reliquum omne corpus perturbationibus reliquit. Deinde duos quasi tyrannos violentissimos uni opposuit, iram, quae praecordiorum arcem obtinet, atque adeo ipsum vitae fontem, cor; et concupiscentiam, quae ad imam usque pubem latissime imperium occupat.	seasoning of folly should never be lacking anywhere. By the Stoics' definitions, wisdom is nothing other than being guided by reason, and folly, on the contrary, is being swayed by the whim of the passions. So, to keep human life from being utterly sad and grim, Jupiter put in how much more passion than reason! About as much as a pound to half an ounce. Besides, he banished reason to a cramped corner of the head and left all the rest of the body to the disturbances. Then against this one he set two most violent tyrants, as it were: anger, which holds the citadel of the breast and so the very fountain of life, the heart; and lust, which extends its empire far and wide, right down to the groin.
Adversus has geminas copias quantum valeat ratio, communis hominum vita satis declarat, quum illa, quod unum licet, vel usque ad ravim reclamat, et honesti dictat formulas, verum hi laqueum regi suo remittunt, multoque odiosius obstrepunt, donec iam his quoque fessus ultro cedit, ac manus dat.	How much reason can do against these twin forces, ordinary human life shows clearly enough. Reason does the one thing it can: it shouts back till it is hoarse and dictates the rules of virtue. But the passions tell their king to go and hang himself, and raise a far more obnoxious din, until at last, worn out, reason gives way of its own accord and surrenders.

THE GIFT OF WOMAN

Folly mockingly claims to have advised Jupiter to give man a foolish, charming woman as companion.

LATIN	ENGLISH
17 Ceterum quoniam viro, administrandis rebus nato, plusculum de rationis unciola erat aspergendum, ut huic quoque pro virili consuleret, me, sicut in ceteris, in consilium adhibuit, moxque consilium dedi me dignum, nempe uti mulierem adiungeret; animal videlicet stultum quidem illud atque ineptum, verum ridiculum et suave, quo convictu domestico virilis ingenii tristitiam sua stultitia condiret atque edulcaret. Nam quod Plato dubitare videtur, utro in genere ponat mulierem, rationalium animantium, an brutorum, nihil aliud voluit, quam insignem eius sexus stultitiam indicare. Quodsi qua forte mulier sapiens haberi voluit, ea nihil aliud agit, quam ut bis stulta sit, perinde quasi bovem aliquis ducat ad ceroma, invita reluctanteque, ut aiunt, Minerva. Conduplicat enim vitium, quisquis contra naturam virtutis fucum inducit, atque alio deflectit ingenium.	However, since man, born to manage affairs, had to be sprinkled with a little more than his tiny ounce of reason, Jupiter, to provide for him too as best he could, called me in for advice, as he does in everything else. And I promptly gave advice worthy of myself: that he should give man a woman. She is a foolish and silly creature, to be sure, but amusing and sweet, and by sharing his home she could season and sweeten the gloom of the male temperament with her folly. For when Plato seems unsure which class to put woman in, rational animals or brutes, he simply meant to point out the remarkable folly of her sex. And if any woman happens to want to be thought wise, all she achieves is being doubly a fool, just as if someone were to lead an ox to the wrestling ring, against the will and resistance of Minerva, as the saying goes. For whoever puts a coat of virtue on something against its nature, and bends its character in another direction, doubles the fault.

LATIN	ENGLISH
Quemadmodum, iuxta Graecorum proverbium, simia semper est simia, etiam si purpura vestiatur, ita mulier semper mulier est, hoc est stulta, quamcunque personam induxerit. Neque vero mulierum genus usque adeo stultum arbitror, ut eam ob rem mihi succenseant, quod illis, et ipsa mulier et Stultitia, stultitiam attribuam. Etenim si rem recta reputent via, hoc ipsum Stultitiae debent acceptum ferre, quod sint viris multis calculis fortunatiores. Primum formae gratiam, quam illae merito rebus omnibus anteponunt, cuiusque praesidio in tyrannos etiam ipsos tyrannidem exercent. Alioqui undenam horror ille formae, hispida cutis, et barbae sylva, plane senile quiddam in viro, nisi a prudentiae vitio, quum foeminarum semper laeves malae, vox semper exilis, cutis mollicula, quasi perpetuam quandam adolescentiam imitentur?	Just as, according to the Greek proverb, an ape is always an ape, even if dressed in purple, so a woman is always a woman, that is, a fool, whatever mask she puts on. But I don't think the female sex is so foolish as to be angry with me for attributing folly to them, when I am both a woman myself and Folly. For if they think the matter through properly, they have Folly to thank for being better off than men on many counts. First, they owe her the grace of beauty, which they rightly prize above everything else, and with whose help they lord it over even tyrants themselves. Otherwise where does that rough appearance come from, the bristly skin and forest of beard, something plainly elderly in a man, if not from the vice of good sense? Women's cheeks, by contrast, are always smooth, their voices always light, their skin soft, as if they were imitating a kind of perpetual youth.
Deinde quid aliud optant in hac vita, quam ut viris quam maxime placeant? Nonne huc spectant tot cultus, tot fuci, tot balnea, tot compturae, tot unguenta, tot odores, tot componendi, pingendi, fingendique vultus, oculos et cutem artes? Iam, num alio nomine viris magis commendatae sunt, quam stultitiae? Quid enim est, quod illi mulieribus non permittunt? At quo tandem auctoramento, nisi voluptatis? Delectant autem [feminae] non alia re, quam stultitia. Id esse verum non ibit inficias, quisquis secum reputarit, quas vir cum muliere dicat ineptias, quas agat nugas, quoties foeminea voluptate decreverit uti.	Next, what else do they want in this life than to please men as much as possible? Isn't that the aim of all the finery, all the make-up, all the baths, the hairdos, the ointments, the perfumes, all the arts of arranging, painting and shaping the face, the eyes and the skin? And is there any other title that recommends them to men more than folly? For what is there that men won't allow women? And for what wages, pray, if not pleasure? But women give delight by nothing other than their folly. No one will deny this who considers what nonsense a man talks with a woman, and what silliness he gets up to, whenever he has made up his mind to enjoy a woman's pleasures.
Habetis igitur, primum et praecipuum vitae oblectamentum quo fonte proficiscatur.	So there you have the source from which life's first and chief delight springs.

BANQUETS AND DRINKING PARTIES

Folly argues that no banquet is enjoyable without jesters, games and foolish entertainment.

LATIN	ENGLISH
18 Sed sunt nonnulli, cum primis autem senes, bibaces quidem illi magis quam mulierosi, qui summam voluptatem in compotationibus constituunt. Equidem an sit ullum lautum convivium, ubi mulier non adsit, viderint alii. Illud certe constat, citra stultitiae condimentum, nullum omnino suave esse; adeo ut si desit, qui seu vera, seu simulata stultitia risum moveat, γελωτοποιὸν quempiam vel mercede conductum accersant, aut ridiculum aliquem parasitum adhibeant,	But there are some, old men above all, more given to the bottle than to women, who place the height of pleasure in drinking parties. Whether there can be any fine banquet without a woman present, let others decide. This much is certain: without the seasoning of folly no banquet is pleasant at all. So much so that, if there is no one present to raise a laugh with folly, real or put on, they send for some γελωτοποιὸν [jester], even a hired one, or bring in

LATIN	ENGLISH
qui ridendis, hoc est, stultis dicteriis, silentium ac tristitiam compotationis discutiat. Quorsum enim attinebat, tot bellariis, tot lauticiis, tot cupediis onerare ventrem, nisi et oculi pariter et aures, nisi totus animus, risu, iocis, leporibus pasceretur? At istiusmodi tragematum ego sum architectrix unica.	some ridiculous parasite to dispel the silence and gloom of the drinking with laughable, that is, foolish, quips. For what was the point of loading the belly with so many sweets, so many delicacies, so many dainties, unless the eyes and ears as well, unless the whole mind, were fed on laughter, jokes and wit? But of that kind of dessert I am the one and only architect.
Quanquam illa ipsa iam in conviviis solennia, regem sortiri talis, lusitare tesseris, philotesiis invitare, certare συμπεριφοραῖς ad myrtum canere, saltare, gesticulari, non a septem Graeciae sophis, verum a nobis, ad humani generis salutem reperta sunt. Atqui omnium huiusmodi rerum ea natura est, ut, quo plus habeant stultitiae, hoc plus conferant vitae mortalium, quae si tristis sit, ne vita quidem appellanda videatur. Tristis autem evadat oportet, nisi cognatum taedium hoc genus oblectamentis absterseris.	Indeed, the very rituals now usual at banquets—drawing lots for a king with knucklebones, playing at dice, drinking toasts, competing συμπεριφοραῖς [in rounds round the table], singing over the myrtle, dancing, miming—were invented not by the Seven Sages of Greece but by us, for the salvation of the human race. Yet the nature of all such things is that the more folly they contain, the more they contribute to the life of mortals. And a sad life hardly seems to deserve the name of life at all. Sad it is bound to turn out, though, unless you wipe away its inborn boredom with amusements of this kind.[15]

FRIENDSHIP NEEDS ILLUSION

Folly argues that friends stay friends only by overlooking, or even admiring, each other's faults.

LATIN	ENGLISH
19 Sed erunt fortassis, qui hoc quoque voluptatis genus negligant, et in amicorum charitate et consuetudine acquiescant, amicitiam dictitantes unam rebus omnibus anteponendam, quippe rem usque adeo necessariam, ut nec aer, nec ignis, nec aqua magis; rursum adeo iucundam, ut, qui hanc de medio sustulerit, solem sustulerit; adeo denique honestam, si quid tamen hoc ad rem pertinet, ut nec ipsi philosophi vereantur eam inter praecipua bona commemorare. Sed quid, si doceo me huius quoque tanti boni et puppim esse et proram? Docebo autem non crocodilitis, aut soritis, ceratinis, aut aliis id genus dialecticorum argutiis, sed pingui, quod aiunt, Minerva rem digito propemodum ostendam. Age, connivere, labi, caecutire, hallucinari in amicorum vitiis, quaedam etiam insignia vitia pro virtutibus amare mirarique, an non stultitiae videtur affine? Quid?	But perhaps there will be some who scorn this kind of pleasure too, and find their contentment in the affection and company of friends. They keep saying that friendship alone is to be preferred to everything else: a thing so necessary that neither air nor fire nor water is more so; so delightful that whoever takes it away takes away the sun; and finally so honorable (if that has anything to do with it) that even the philosophers themselves do not hesitate to list it among the chief goods. But what if I show that of this great good, too, I am both stern and prow? And I shall show it not with crocodilites or sorites or ceratines or other such quibbles of the logicians. No, with plain homespun wits, as they say, I shall practically point to it with my finger. Come now: to wink at your friends' faults, to slip, to be blind to them, to be deceived by them, even to love and admire certain glaring faults as virtues—doesn't that look close kin to folly? And what about this?[16]

15 At Greek banquets a myrtle branch was passed round, and whoever held it had to sing.
16 The Crocodile, the Heap (sorites) and the Horned Man (ceratine) were classic logical puzzles of ancient dialecticians.

LATIN

quum alius exosculatur naevum in amica, alium delectat polypus Agnae, quum filium strabonem appellat paetum pater, quid, inquam, hoc est, nisi mera stultitia? Clament terque quaterque stultitiam esse: atqui haec una *stultitia, et iungit, iunctos et servat amicos*. De mortalibus loquor, quorum *nemo sine vitiis nascitur; optimus ille est, qui minimis urgetur*: quum interim inter sapientes istos deos aut omnino non coalescit amicitia, aut tetrica quaedam et insuavis intercedit, nec ea nisi cum paucissimis, (nam cum nullis dicere religio est,) propterea quod maxima pars hominum desipit, imo nullus est, qui non multis modis deliret, et non nisi inter similes cohaeret necessitudo.

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When one man kisses a mole on his mistress, another is charmed by Agna's nasal polyp, and a father calls his squint-eyed son "his little blinker": what, I ask, is this but pure folly? Let them cry three and four times over that it is folly. Yet this one thing, *folly, both makes friends and keeps them friends*. I am speaking of mortals, of whom *no one is born without faults; the best is he who is burdened with the least*. Meanwhile, among those wise men who are gods, either friendship does not take root at all, or some grim and disagreeable kind exists, and that only with very few—for to say "with none" would be sacrilege. This is because the greater part of mankind is foolish; indeed there is no one who is not mad in many ways, and close bonds hold only between like and like.[17]

Quodsi quando inter severos istos coierit mutua benevolentia, ea certe haudquaquam stabilis est, nec admodum duratura, nimirum inter morosos et plus satis oculatos, ut qui in amicorum vitiis tam cernunt acutum, *quam aut aquila, aut serpens Epidaurius*. At ipsi in propriis vitiis quam lippiunt, et quam non vident manticam in tergo pendentem? Itaque quum ea sit hominum natura, ut nullum ingenium reperiatur non magnis obnoxium vitiis: adde tantam animorum ac studiorum dissimilitudinem, tot lapsus, tot errata, tot casus vitae mortalis: quo pacto vel horam constabit inter Argos istos amicitiae iucunditas, nisi accesserit ea, quam mire Graeci εὐήθειαν appellant, hanc seu stultitiam, seu morum facilitatem vertas licebit? Quid autem?

And if mutual goodwill does ever spring up between those severe types, it is certainly far from stable and will not last long. Naturally so, among men who are peevish and sharper-eyed than they should be, who see their friends' faults as keenly *as an eagle or the Epidaurian serpent*. But how bleary-eyed they are about their own faults, and how they fail to see the bag hanging on their back! Human nature, then, is such that no character can be found that is not subject to great faults. Add the vast difference of minds and interests, all the slips, all the errors, all the mishaps of mortal life. How will the pleasure of friendship last even an hour among those Arguses, unless there is added what the Greeks, with a wonderful word, call εὐήθειαν [good-natured simplicity]? You may translate it as either folly or easy temper, as you please. And what of this?[18]

an non Cupido ille omnis necessitudinis auctor et parens, prorsum oculis captus est, cui quemadmodum τὰ μὴ καλὰ καλὰ πέφανται, itidem inter vos quoque efficit, ut suum cuique pulchrum videatur, ut cascus cascam, perinde ut pupus pupam, deamet. Haec passim et fiunt et ridentur, sed tamen haec ridicula iucundam vitae glutinant copulantque societatem.

Isn't Cupid, the author and parent of every bond, completely blind? To him τὰ μὲν καλὰ καλὰ πέφανται [what is not fair appears fair], and in the same way he brings it about among you, too, that each finds his own beautiful, so that the old man dotes on his old woman just as a little boy dotes on his little girl. These things happen everywhere and are laughed at everywhere; and yet these absurdities are what glue and bind together the pleasant fellowship of life.[19]

17 The examples and the second quotation come from Horace, Satires 1.3.
18 In Aesop's fable each person carries two bags, others' faults in front and his own behind. Argus was the hundred-eyed watchman of myth.
19 Theocritus, Idylls 6.19.

MARRIAGE AND ITS BLIND SPOTS

Folly claims that marriages last only because spouses flatter, deceive and ignore each other.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
20	Porro quod de amicitia dictum est, id multo magis de coniugio sentiendum, quod quidem nihil est aliud, quam individua vitae coniunctio. Deum immortalem, quae non divortia, aut etiam divortiis deteriora passim acciderent, nisi viri foeminaeque domestica consuetudo per adulationem, per iocum, per facilitatem, errorem, dissimulationem, meum utique satellitium, fulciretur alereturque? Papae! quam pauca coirent matrimonia, si sponsus prudenter exquireret, quos lusus delicata illa, sicuti videtur, ac pudens virguncula iam multo ante nuptias luserit? Tum quanto pauciora cohaererent inita, nisi plurima uxorum facta per viri vel negligentiam vel stuporem laterent? Atque haec quidem merito stultitiae tribuuntur: verum ea interim praestat, ut marito iucunda sit uxor, uxori iucundus maritus, ut tranquilla domus, ut maneat affinitas. Ridetur, cuculus, curruca et quid non vocatur, quum moechae lacrymas labellis exorbet.	Now what has been said of friendship applies far more to marriage, which is nothing other than an inseparable union for life. Immortal God, what divorces, or worse than divorces, would be happening everywhere, if the home life of man and woman were not propped up and nourished by flattery, by joking, by easygoingness, by illusion, by pretense—my retinue, in other words! My word, how few marriages would be made if the bridegroom wisely inquired what games that dainty (as she seems) and modest little maiden had been playing long before the wedding! And how many fewer, once made, would hold together, if most of the wives' doings did not escape notice through the husband's carelessness or dullness! These things, it is true, are rightly put down to folly; but meanwhile it is folly that makes the wife pleasing to the husband and the husband to the wife, keeps the household peaceful, and preserves the family tie. The husband is laughed at and called a cuckoo, a hedge-sparrow and who knows what, when he kisses away the tears of his unfaithful wife.[20]
	At quanto felicius, sic errare, quam zelotypiae diligentia quum sese conficere, tum omnia miscere tragoediis?	But how much happier to be deceived like that than to wear yourself out with jealous vigilance and turn everything upside down with tragic scenes!

SOCIETY HELD TOGETHER

Folly says no human bond, from prince and people to master and servant, lasts without her.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
21	In summa, usque adeo nulla societas, nulla vitae coniunctio sine me vel iucunda, vel stabilis esse potest, ut nec populus principem, nec servum herus, nec heram pedisequa, nec discipulum praeceptor, nec amicus amicum, nec maritum uxor, nec locator conductorem, nec contubernalis contubernalem, nec convictor convictorem diutius ferat, nisi vicissim inter sese nunc errent, nunc adulentur, nunc prudentes conniveant, nunc aliquo stultitiae melle sese deliniant. Iam haec scio videri maxima; sed audietis maiora.	In short, no society, no union in life can be either pleasant or lasting without me. So much so that the people would not put up with their prince for long, nor the master with his servant, nor the mistress with her maid, nor the teacher with his pupil, nor friend with friend, nor wife with husband, nor landlord with tenant, nor comrade with comrade, nor housemate with housemate, unless they took turns to deceive each other, to flatter each other, to wink sensibly at things, to soothe each other with some honey of folly. Now I know this seems very great; but you will hear greater things.

20 Both birds stood for the deceived husband: the hedge-sparrow raises the cuckoo's chicks as its own.

SELF-LOVE

Folly argues that people must first please themselves before they can please anyone else.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
22	Quaeso num quenquam amabit, qui ipse semet oderit? Num cum alio concordabit, qui secum ipse dissidet? Num ulli voluptatem adferet, qui sibimet ipsi sit gravis ac molestus? Illud opinor nemo dixerit, nisi qui sit ipsa stultior stultitia. Atqui si me excluseris, adeo nemo poterit alterum ferre, ut ipse etiam sibi quisque puteat, sua cuique sordeant, sibi quisque sit invisus. Quandoquidem id mali natura, non paucis in rebus noverca magis quam parens, mortalium ingeniis insevit, praecipue paulo cordatiorum, ut sui quemque poeniteat, admiretur aliena. Quo fit ut omnes dotes, omnis elegantia decorque vitae vitietur pereatque. Quid enim proderit forma, praecipuum deorum immortalium munus, si putiditatis vitio contaminetur? Quid iuventa, si senilis tristitiae fermento corrumpatur?	Tell me, will anyone love another who hates himself? Will anyone get on with another who is at odds with himself? Will anyone give pleasure to another who is a burden and a nuisance to himself? No one would say so, I think, unless he were more foolish than Folly herself. Yet if you shut me out, so far will anyone be from bearing another that each will stink in his own nostrils, find everything of his own squalid, and be hateful to himself. For Nature, in many things more a stepmother than a mother, has planted this evil in the minds of mortals, especially those with a little more sense: that each is dissatisfied with himself and admires what belongs to others. The result is that all gifts, all the elegance and grace of life, are spoiled and destroyed. For what use will beauty be, the chief gift of the immortal gods, if it is tainted by the vice of disgust? What use youth, if it is soured by the leaven of an old man's gloom?
	Denique quid in omni vitae munere vel tecum, vel apud alios acturus es cum decoro (est enim non artis modo, verum etiam omnis actionis caput, decere quod agas) nisi adsit dextra haec Philautia, quae mihi merito germanae est vice: adeo strenue meas ubique partes agit. Quid autem aeque stultum, atque tibi ipsi placere? te ipsum admirari? At rursum, quid venustum, quid gratiosum, quid non indecorum erit, quod agas, ipse tibi displicens? Tolle hoc vitae condimentum, et protinus frigebit cum sua actione orator, nulli placebit cum suis numeris musicus, explodetur cum sua gesticulatione histrio, ridebitur una suis cum Musis poeta, sordebit cum arte pictor, esuriet cum pharmacis medicus. Postremo pro Nireo Thersites, pro Phaone Nestor, pro Minerva sus, pro facundo infans, pro urbano rusticus videberis.	In short, what will you do with any propriety in any duty of life, whether alone or among others (for not only in art but in every action the main thing is that what you do should be fitting), unless this kindly Self-Love is at hand? She quite rightly takes the place of a sister to me, so energetically does she play my part everywhere. Yet what is as foolish as pleasing yourself? As admiring yourself? But then again, what will there be graceful, charming, or anything but unbecoming in what you do, if you are displeased with yourself? Take away this seasoning of life, and at once the orator will be left cold, delivery and all; the musician will please no one, rhythms and all; the actor will be hissed off, gestures and all; the poet will be laughed at, Muses and all; the painter will be despised, art and all; the doctor will go hungry, drugs and all. In the end you will seem Thersites instead of Nireus, Nestor instead of Phaon, a sow instead of Minerva, tongue-tied instead of eloquent, a bumpkin instead of a man of wit.[21]
	In tantum necesse est, ut sibi quoque quisque blandiatur, et assentatiuncula quapiam sibi prius commendetur, quam aliis possit esse commendatus. Denique quum	So necessary is it that each should flatter himself and win his own approval with a little self-flattery before he can win the approval of others. Finally,

21 Nireus was the handsomest Greek at Troy and Thersites the ugliest; Nestor was the oldest.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
	praecipua felicitatis pars sit, ut, *quod sis, esse velis*, nimirum totum hoc praestat compendio mea Philautia, ut neminem suae formae, neminem sui ingenii, neminem generis, neminem loci, neminem instituti, neminem patriae poeniteat, adeo ut nec Hirlandus cum Italo, nec Thrax cum Atheniensi, nec Scytha cum insulis fortunatis cupiat permutare. Et o singularem naturae solicitudinem, ut in tanta rerum varietate paria fecit omnia! Ubi dotibus suis nonnihil detraxit, ibi plusculum philautiae solet addere; quanquam hoc ipsum stulte profecto dixi, quum haec ipsa dos sit vel maxima.	since the chief part of happiness is *to wish to be what you are*, my Self-Love supplies all this at a stroke. No one regrets his looks, no one his talents, no one his family, no one his station, no one his way of life, no one his country. So much so that the Irishman would not want to change places with the Italian, nor the Thracian with the Athenian, nor the Scythian with the Isles of the Blessed. And oh, the remarkable care of Nature, how in such variety she has made everything equal! Where she has held back a little on her gifts, there she usually adds a bit more self-love—though that was a foolish thing of me to say, since this is itself the greatest gift of all.[22]
	Ut ne dicam interim, nullum egregium facinus adiri, nisi meo impulsu, nullas egregias artes, nisi me auctore fuisse repertas.	Not to mention, for now, that no notable deed has ever been undertaken except at my prompting, and no notable arts invented except on my initiative.

WAR AND WISE MEN

Folly calls war the source of famous deeds and shows that wise men are useless in battle.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
23	An non omnium laudatorum facinorum seges ac fons est bellum? Porro quid stultius, quam ob caussas nescio quas certamen eiusmodi suscipere, unde pars utraque semper plus aufert incommodi, quam boni? Nam eorum qui cadunt, veluti Megarensium, οὐδεὶς λόγος. Dein quum iam utrinque constitere ferratae acies, et *rauco crepuerunt cornua cantu*, quis oro sapientum istorum usus, qui studiis exhausti, vix tenui frigidoque sanguine spiritum ducunt? Crassis ac pinguibus opus est, quibus quam plurimum adsit audaciae, mentis quam minimum. Nisi si quis Demosthenem militem malit, qui, Archilochi sequutus consilium, vix conspectis hostibus, abiecto clypeo fugit, tam ignavus miles, quam orator sapiens. Sed consilium, inquiunt, in bellis plurimum habet momenti.	Isn't war the seedbed and source of all celebrated deeds? Yet what is more foolish than to take up a contest of this kind for who knows what reasons, when both sides always carry away more harm than good? For of those who fall, as with the Megarians, οὐδεὶς λόγος [no account is taken]. Then, when the iron-clad lines stand facing each other and *the horns have blared their harsh music*, what use, I ask you, are those wise men, worn out by study, barely drawing breath with their thin, cold blood? What is needed is men thick and fat, with as much daring as possible and as little brain as possible. Unless someone would prefer Demosthenes as a soldier: following Archilochus's advice, he threw away his shield and ran the moment he caught sight of the enemy, as cowardly a soldier as he was wise an orator. "But," they say, "counsel counts for most in war."[23]
	Equidem fateor, in duce; verum id quidem militare, non philosophicum; alioqui parasitis, lenonibus, latronibus, sicariis, agricolis, stupidis, obaeratis, et huiusmodi	In a general, I grant you; but that is a soldier's counsel, not a philosopher's. Otherwise, so glorious a business is carried on by parasites, pimps, robbers, cutthroats, peasants, dullards, debtors

22 The quotation is from Martial, Epigrams 10.47.
23 The Megarians were proverbially "of no account"; the horn line is from Virgil, Aeneid 8.2. Demosthenes fled at Chaeronea (338 BC); the poet Archilochus boasted of throwing away his shield.

LATIN	ENGLISH
mortalium faece res tam praeclara geritur, non philosophis lucernariis.	and such dregs of humanity—not by lamplit philosophers.

USELESS PHILOSOPHERS

Folly points to Socrates, Plato, Cicero and others as proof that the wise fail in public life.

LATIN	ENGLISH
24 Qui quidem quam sint ad omnem vitae usum inutiles, vel Socrates ipse, unus Apollinis oraculo sapiens, sed minime sapienter iudicatus, documento esse potest, qui nescio quid publice conatus agere, summo cum omnium risu discessit. Quanquam vir is in hoc non usquequaque desipit, quod sapientis cognomen non agnoscit, atque ipsi deo rescribit, quodque censet sapienti a Republica tractanda abstinendum esse, nisi quod potius monere debuerat, a sapientia temperandum ei, qui velit in hominum haberi numero. Deinde quid eundem accusatum ad cicutam bibendam adegit, nisi sapientia? Nam dum nubes et ideas philosophatur, dum pulicis pedes metitur, dum culicum vocem miratur, quae ad vitam communem attinent, non didicit.	How useless these are for every practical purpose of life is shown by Socrates himself, the one man judged wise by the oracle of Apollo, though judged none too wisely. He once attempted some public business or other and left amid roars of laughter from everyone. Admittedly the man was not altogether foolish in this: he did not accept the title of wise but referred it back to the god himself; and he held that the wise man should keep out of public affairs. Except that he ought rather to have advised that whoever wants to be counted among men should keep clear of wisdom. And then what drove this same man, once accused, to drink the hemlock, if not wisdom? For while he philosophized about clouds and Ideas, while he measured a flea's feet, while he marveled at the hum of gnats, he never learned the things that belong to ordinary life.[24]
Sed adest praeceptori de capite periclitanti discipulus Plato; egregius scilicet patronus, qui, turbae strepitu offensus, vix dimidiatam illam periodum pronunciare potuit. Iam quid dicam de Theophrasto? qui progressus in concionem repente obmutuit, perinde repente quasi lupo conspecto. Qui militem animasset in bello, Isocrates ob ingenii timiditatem nec hiscere unquam est ausus. M. Tullius, eloquentiae Romanae parens, semper indecora trepidatione, perinde quasi puer singultiens, exordiri consuevit; idque Fabius interpretatur cordati oratoris et periculum intelligentis argumentum. Verum quum hoc dicit, an non palam fatetur, sapientiam obstare ad rem probe gerendam? Quid isti facient, quum res ferro geritur, qui tum metu exanimantur, quum nudis verbis est decertandum? Et post haec celebratur, si diis placet, praeclara illa Platonis sententia, beatas fore respublicas, si aut imperent philosophi aut philosophentur imperatores.	But here comes his disciple Plato to help his master, now on trial for his life. An excellent advocate, to be sure: put off by the noise of the crowd, he could barely get through half of that sentence of his. Then what shall I say of Theophrastus? He stepped forward to address an assembly and suddenly fell silent, exactly as if he had suddenly seen a wolf. Isocrates, who could have put heart into a soldier in war, was so timid by temperament that he never dared even to open his mouth. Marcus Tullius, the father of Roman eloquence, always began his speeches with an unseemly trembling, like a sobbing boy; and Fabius takes this as the sign of a sensible orator who understands the danger. But in saying this, isn't he openly admitting that wisdom is an obstacle to getting things done properly? What will these people do when the matter is settled with the sword, if they are frightened to death when the fight is waged with bare words? And after all this, if you please, people celebrate that famous saying of Plato's, that com-

24 The flea and the gnats come from Aristophanes' Clouds, which mocks Socrates; he was condemned to drink hemlock in 399 BC.

LATIN	ENGLISH
	monwealths would be happy if either philosophers ruled or rulers philosophized.[25]
Imo si consules historicos, reperies nimirum nullos reipublicae pestilentiores fuisse principes, quam si quando in philosophastrum aliquem aut litteris addictum inciderit imperium. Cuius rei satis, opinor, faciunt fidem Catones: quorum alter insanis delationibus Reipublicae tranquillitatem vexavit, alter libertatem Populi Romani, dum nimium sapienter vindicat, funditus subvertit. Adde his Brutos, Cassios, Gracchos, ac Ciceronem etiam ipsum, qui non minus pestilens fuit Romanorum Reipublicae, quam Demosthenes Atheniensium. Porro M. Antoninus, ut donemus bonum imperatorem fuisse (nam id ipsum extorquere possim; fuit enim hoc ipso nomine gravis atque invisus civibus, quod tam philosophus esset. Sed tamen ut donemus fuisse bonum,) at certe pestilentior fuit Reipublicae, tali relicto filio, quam fuerat sua administratione salutaris.	On the contrary, if you consult the historians, you will find that no princes have been more of a plague to the state than when power has fallen to some philosophaster or bookish man. The Catos are proof enough of this, I think. One of them disturbed the peace of the Republic with his mad accusations; the other, while defending the liberty of the Roman people all too wisely, overthrew it completely. Add to these the Brutuses and Cassiuses, the Gracchi, and even Cicero himself, who was no less a plague to the Roman Republic than Demosthenes to the Athenian. Then there is Marcus Antoninus. Granted he was a good emperor (though I could dispute even that, for he was burdensome and hateful to his citizens precisely because he was so much the philosopher—but still, granted he was good), he certainly did the state more harm by leaving behind such a son than he had done it good by his rule.[26]
Quandoquidem solet hoc hominum genus, qui se sapientiae studio dediderunt, quum ceteris in rebus, tum praecipue in liberis propagandis infelicissimum esse, providente opinor natura, ne malum hoc sapientiae inter mortales latius serpat. Itaque Ciceroni degenerem fuisse filium constat, et sapiens ille Socrates liberos habuit matri similiores quam patri, ut non omnino pessime scripsit quidam, id est, stultos.	For this sort of person, who has devoted himself to the pursuit of wisdom, is usually most unlucky in everything else, and above all in producing children. Nature, I suppose, is making sure that this evil of wisdom does not spread too widely among mortals. Thus it is well known that Cicero had a degenerate son, and the wise Socrates had children more like their mother than their father, as someone wrote not at all badly—that is, fools.

THE WISE MAN AT DINNER

Folly describes the wise man as clumsy and useless in every ordinary business of life.

LATIN	ENGLISH
25 Sed utcunque ferendum, si tantum ad publica munia forent ὄνοι πρὸς λύραν, nisi ad omnem prorsus vitae functionem nihilo essent dexteriores. Ad convivium adhibe sapientem: aut tristi silentio, aut molestis quaestiunculis obturbabit. Ad choream advoca, camelum saltare dices. Ad publicos ludos trahe, ipso vultu populi voluptatibus obstabit, et cogetur e theatro migrare sapiens Cato, quandoquidem supercilium non potest ponere. In colloquium inciderit, repente lupus in fabula. Si quid emendum, si contrahendum, breviter si quid	Still, it could be borne somehow if they were ὄνοι πρὸς λύραν [asses at the lyre] only in public duties, and not just as clumsy in every other business of life. Invite a wise man to a dinner party: he will spoil it with gloomy silence or with tiresome little questions. Ask him to a dance: you would say a camel was dancing. Drag him to the public games: his face alone will stand in the way of the people's pleasures, and the wise Cato will have to leave the theater, since he cannot put off his frown. Let him

25 Marcus Tullius is Cicero; Fabius is Quintilian, the Roman teacher of rhetoric. Plato's saying is from the Republic.
26 Cato the Elder was a relentless prosecutor; Cato the Younger defended the Republic against Caesar. Marcus Antoninus (Marcus Aurelius) was succeeded by his son Commodus.

LATIN	ENGLISH
eorum agendum, sine quibus haec quotidiana vita transigi non potest; stipitem dicas sapientem istum, non hominem: usque adeo neque sibi neque patriae, neque suis usquam usui esse potest, propterea quod communium rerum sit imperitus et a populari opinione vulgaribusque institutis longe lateque discrepet.	stumble into a conversation, and suddenly it is the wolf in the fable. If something has to be bought, or a contract made, or, in short, any of the things done without which our daily life cannot go on, you would call this wise man of yours a log, not a man. So completely useless can he be, to himself, to his country and to his own people, because he knows nothing of ordinary affairs and is far removed from popular opinion and common customs.[27]
Qua quidem ex re odium quoque consequatur necessum est, nimirum ob tantam vitae atque animorum dissimilitudinem. Quid enim omnino geritur inter mortales non stultitiae plenum, idque a stultis, et apud stultos? Quod si quis unus universis velit obstrepere, huic ego suaserim, ut, Timonem imitatus, in solitudinem aliquam demigret, atque ibi solus sua fruatur sapientia.	Hatred is bound to follow from this too, naturally, given so great a difference in their way of life and of thinking. For what is done anywhere among mortals that is not full of folly, done by fools and before fools? If one man alone wants to shout down everyone else, my advice to him would be to follow Timon's example, move off to some wilderness and enjoy his wisdom there by himself.[28]

FABLES THAT FOUNDED CITIES

Folly says peoples have been ruled and reconciled by flattery and childish fables, not philosophy.

LATIN	ENGLISH
26 Verum ut ad id, quod institueram, revertar, quae vis saxeos, quernos, et agrestes illos homines in civitatem coegit, nisi adulatio? Nihil enim aliud significat illa Amphionis et Orphei cithara. Quae res plebem Romanam iam extrema molientem, in concordiam civitatis revocavit! Num oratio philosophica? Minime. Imo ridiculus ac puerilis apologus de ventre reliquisque corporis membris confictus. Idem valuit Themistoclis apologus consimilis de vulpe et ericio. Quae sapientis oratio tantundem potuisset, quantum commentitia illa cerva Sertorii potuit, quantum Laconis illius de duobus canibus, deque vellendis equinae caudae pilis ridendum [modo dicti Sertorii] commentum. Ut ne quid dicam de Minoe deque Numa, quorum uterque fabulosis inventis stultam multitudinem rexit. Huiusmodi nugis commovetur ingens ac potens illa bellua, populus.	But to return to what I had begun: what force brought those stony, oaken, rustic men together into a city, if not flattery? That is all the lyre of Amphion and of Orpheus means. What was it that called the Roman plebs back to civic harmony when it was already contemplating extreme measures? A philosophical speech? Not at all. It was a silly, childish fable made up about the belly and the other parts of the body. A similar fable of Themistocles, about the fox and the hedgehog, worked just as well. What wise man's speech could have done as much as Sertorius' invented hind, or as much as the laughable invention of that Spartan about the two dogs, or of that same Sertorius about plucking the hairs from a horse's tail? Not to mention Minos and Numa, both of whom ruled the foolish multitude with fabulous inventions. Trifles of this kind are what move that huge and powerful beast, the people.[29]

27 Cato the Younger walked out of the Floralia so that his presence would not stop the customary show. "The wolf in the fable" is the proverb for the sudden hush when an unwelcome person appears.
28 Timon of Athens, the proverbial misanthrope of the 5th century BC.
29 Menenius Agrippa's fable of the belly reconciled the plebs in 494 BC; Sertorius claimed his white hind brought him messages from Diana. Lycurgus taught the Spartans with a trained and an untrained dog, and Sertorius had soldiers pull out a horse's tail hair by hair to show the power of patience.

VAINGLORY AND HEROIC DEEDS

Folly credits the love of glory with the self-sacrifice of heroes and the founding of states.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
27	At rursum, quae civitas unquam Platonis aut Aristotelis leges, aut Socratis dogmata recepit! Tum autem quae res Deciis persuasit, ut ultro sese diis manibus devoverent? Quid Q. Curtium in specum traxit, nisi inanis gloria, dulcissima quaedam Siren, sed mirum quam a Sapientibus istis damnata!	Then again, what city ever adopted the laws of Plato or Aristotle, or the doctrines of Socrates? And what persuaded the Decii to devote themselves of their own accord to the gods of the underworld? What drew Quintus Curtius into the chasm, if not vainglory, that sweetest of Sirens, though it is astonishing how harshly your wise men condemn her?[30]
	Quid enim stultius, inquiunt, quam supplicem candidatum blandiri populo, congiariis favorem emere, venari tot stultorum applausus, acclamationibus sibi placere, in triumpho veluti signum aliquod populo spectandum circumferri, aeneum in foro stare? Adde his nominum et cognominum adoptiones: Adde divinos honores homuncioni exhibitos: adde publicis cerimoniis in deos relatos etiam sceleratissimos tyrannos. Stultissima sunt haec, et ad quae ridenda non unus sufficiat Democritus: quis negat? Atqui hoc fonte nata sunt fortium Heroum facinora, quae tot eloquentium virorum litteris in coelum tolluntur. Haec stultitia parit civitates, hac constant imperia, magistratus, religio, consilia, iudicia; nec aliud omnino est vita humana, quam stultitiae lusus quidam.	"For what is more foolish," they say, "than for a candidate to fawn on the people like a suppliant, to buy their favor with handouts, to hunt for the applause of so many fools, to be pleased with himself at their cheers, to be carried about in a triumph like some image for the people to gape at, to stand in bronze in the forum?" Add to this the taking on of names and surnames. Add divine honors paid to a mere manikin. Add the enrolling among the gods, in public ceremonies, of even the most criminal tyrants. These things are utterly foolish, and one Democritus would not be enough to laugh at them: who denies it? And yet from this spring were born the deeds of brave heroes, praised to the skies in the writings of so many eloquent men. This folly gives birth to cities; on it rest empires, magistracies, religion, councils, courts of law. Human life is nothing at all but a kind of game of folly.

THE ARTS BORN OF AMBITION

Folly says the thirst for glory spurred the invention of all the arts and disciplines.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
28	Iam vero ut de artibus dicam, quid tandem mortalium ingenia ad excogitandas prodendasque posteris tot egregias, ut putant, disciplinas excitavit, nisi gloriae sitis? Tantis vigiliis, tantis sudoribus, famam, nescio quam, qua nihil esse potest inanius, redimendam putarunt homines vere stultissimi. Sed interim stultitiae tot iam egregia vitae commoda debetis; quodque est longe dulcissimum, aliena fruimini insania.	Now, to speak of the arts: what was it, after all, that spurred human minds to devise and hand down to posterity so many excellent disciplines, as they think them, if not the thirst for glory? With so many sleepless nights and so much sweat these truly most foolish men thought they had to buy some fame or other, though nothing can be emptier. But meanwhile you owe so many excellent comforts of life to folly; and, what is by far the

30 The Decii, father and son, gave their lives in battle as offerings to the gods below; Curtius leapt armed into a chasm in the Forum in 362 BC to save Rome.

LATIN	ENGLISH
	sweetest thing, you enjoy the fruits of other people's madness.

THE TWO FACES OF THINGS

Folly claims prudence for fools and compares human things to the Sileni of Alcibiades.

LATIN	ENGLISH
29 Ergo posteaquam mihi fortitudinis et industriae laudem vindicavi, quid si prudentiae quoque vindicem? Sed dixerit aliquis: eadem opera ignem aquae misceas licebit. Verum hoc quoque successurum arbitror, si vos modo, quod antehac fecistis, auribus atque animis favebitis. Principio si rerum usu constat prudentia, in utrum magis competet eius cognominis honos, in sapientem, qui partim ob pudorem, partim ob animi timiditatem nihil aggreditur, an in stultum, quem neque pudor, quo vacat, neque periculum, quod non perpendit; ab ulla re deterret? Sapiens ad libros Veterum confugit, atque hinc meras vocum argutias ediscit. Stultus adeundis cominusque periclitandis rebus veram, ni fallor, prudentiam colligit. Id quod vidisse videtur Homerus, etiamsi caecus, quum ait ῥεχθὲν δέ τε νήπιος ἔγνω.	So, now that I have claimed the credit for courage and industry, what if I claim prudence as well? "But," someone will say, "you might as well mix fire with water." I think I shall bring this off too, if only you go on favoring me, as you have so far, with your ears and your goodwill. To begin with, if prudence rests on experience of things, which of the two better deserves the honor of the name: the wise man, who out of modesty, partly, and partly out of timidity, attempts nothing; or the fool, whom neither shame, since he has none, nor danger, since he never weighs it, deters from anything? The wise man takes refuge in the books of the ancients and learns nothing from them but verbal hair-splitting. The fool, by tackling things and running risks at close quarters, gathers true prudence, unless I am mistaken. Homer seems to have seen this, blind though he was, when he says ῥεχθὲν δέ τε νήπιος ἔγνω [even a fool knows a thing once it is done].[31]
Sunt enim duo praecipua ad cognitionem rerum parandam obstacula, pudor, qui fumum offundit animo, et metus, qui ostenso periculo, dehortatur ab adeundis facinoribus. At his magnifice liberat stultitia. Pauci mortales intelligunt, ad quam multas alias quoque commoditates conducat, nunquam pudescere et nihil non audere. Quodsi prudentiam accipere malunt eam, quae rerum iudicio constat, audite obsecro, quam procul absint ab hac, qui hoc nomine sese venditant.	For there are two chief obstacles to gaining knowledge of things: shame, which clouds the mind with smoke, and fear, which points to the danger and talks us out of bold undertakings. From both, folly frees us splendidly. Few mortals realize how many other advantages also come from never being ashamed and daring anything. But if they prefer to take prudence as the kind that rests on judging things rightly, then listen, I beg you, to how far from it are those who sell themselves under that name.
Principio constat, res omneis humanas, velut Alcibiadis Silenos, binas habere facies nimium inter sese dissimiles; adeo ut, quod prima, ut aiunt, fronte mors est, si interius inspicias, vita sit: contra, quod vita, mors: quod formosum, deforme: quod opulentum, id pauperrimum: quod infame, gloriosum: quod doctum, indoctum: quod robustum, imbecille: quod generosum, ignobile: quod laetum, triste: quod prosperum, adversum: quod amicum, inimicum: quod salutare, noxium: breviter omnia repente	To begin with, it is well known that all human things, like the Sileni of Alcibiades, have two faces, utterly unlike each other. So what is death at first glance, as they say, turns out to be life if you look inside; and, conversely, what is life is death; what is beautiful is ugly; what is rich is poorest of all; what is disgraceful is glorious; what is learned is ignorant; what is strong is feeble; what is noble is base; what is joyful is sad; what is prosperous is

31 Homer, Iliad 17.32.

LATIN	ENGLISH
versa reperies, si Silenum aperueris. Id si cui forte nimis philosophice dictum videtur, age pinguiore, quemadmodum dici solet, Minerva planius faciam. Quis regem non et opulentum et dominum fatetur? Atqui nullis animi bonis instructus est, atqui nihil illi satis est: iam videlicet pauperrimus est. Tum animum habet plurimis addictum vitiis: iam turpiter servus est.	adverse; what is friendly is hostile; what is wholesome is harmful. In short, you will find everything suddenly turned upside down if you open the Silenus. If this seems to anyone too philosophically put, come, I will make it plainer, "with a homelier Minerva," as the saying goes. Who does not grant that a king is both rich and a lord? Yet he is furnished with no goods of the mind, and nothing is ever enough for him: so he is plainly the poorest of men. Then his mind is in bondage to a great many vices: so he is a shameful slave.[32]

THE PLAY OF LIFE

Folly likens human life to a play that a wise man would ruin by pulling off the masks.

LATIN	ENGLISH
Ad eundem modum in ceteris quoque philosophari liceret. Sed hoc exempli vice posuisse satis sit. At quorsum haec? inquiet aliquis. Audite quo rem deducamus. Si quis histrionibus in scena fabulam agentibus personas detrahere conetur, ac spectatoribus veras nativasque facies ostendere, nonne is fabulam omnem perverterit, dignusque habeatur, quem omnes e theatro velut lymphatum saxis eiiciant? Exorietur autem repente nova rerum species, ut, qui modo mulier, nunc vir; qui modo iuvenis, mox senex: qui paulo ante rex, subito Dama: qui modo Deus, repente homunculus appareat. Verum eum errorem tollere, est fabulam omnem perturbare. Illud ipsum figmentum et fucus est, quod spectatorum oculos detinet.	One could philosophize the same way about everything else, but let this serve as an example. "But where is all this leading?" someone will ask. Listen, and see where I am taking it. If someone tried to pull the masks off actors performing a play on stage and show the spectators their real, natural faces, would he not ruin the whole play, and be thought to deserve being driven out of the theater with stones by everyone, as a madman? A new appearance of things would suddenly arise: the one who was just now a woman is now a man; the youth is presently an old man; the king of a moment ago is suddenly Dama; the god of a moment ago turns out to be a little man. But to remove that illusion is to throw the whole play into confusion. It is precisely the fiction and the paint that hold the spectators' eyes.[33]
Porro mortalium vita omnis quid aliud est, quam fabula quaepiam, in qua alii aliis obtecti personis procedunt, aguntque suas quisque partes, donec choragus educat e proscenio? Qui saepe tamen eundem diverso cultu prodire iubet, ut, qui modo regem purpuratum egerat, nunc servulum pannosum gerat. Adumbrata quidem omnia, sed haec fabula non aliter agitur.	And what else is the whole life of mortals but a kind of play, in which each comes on in a different mask and acts his own part until the director leads him off the stage? Often, too, he sends the same actor back in different costume, so that the one who just now played a king in purple now plays a ragged little slave. It is all make-believe, of course; but this play is acted in no other way.
Hic si mihi sapiens aliquis, coelo delapsus, subito exoriatur, clamitetque, hunc, quem omnes, ut Deum ac dominum, suspiciunt, nec hominem esse, quod pecudum ritu ducatur affectibus; servum esse infimae sortis, quod	Now suppose some wise man, dropped from the sky, were suddenly to rise up here and start shouting that this man, whom everyone looks up to as a god and lord, is not even a man, since he is driven

32 Sileni were little statues of Silenus that opened to reveal the image of a god; in Plato's Symposium Alcibiades compares Socrates to them.

33 Dama is a stock slave's name in Horace.

LATIN

tam multis tamque foedis dominis sponte serviat: rursum alium, qui parentem exstinctum luget, ridere iubeat, quod iam demum ille vivere coeperit, quum alioqui vita haec nihil aliud sit, quam mors quaedam: porro alium, stemmatis gloriantem, ignobilem ac nothum appellet, quod a virtute longe absit, quae sola nobilitatis sit fons, adque eundem modum de ceteris omnibus loquatur: quaeso quid is aliud egerit, nisi ut demens ac furiosus omnibus esse videatur?

Ut nihil est stultius praepostera sapientia, ita perversa prudentia nihil imprudentius: siquidem perverse facit, qui sese non accommodet rebus praesentibus, foroque nolit uti, nec saltem legis illius convivialis meminerit, ἢ πίθι, ἢ ἄπιθι, postuletque, ut fabula iam non sit fabula: contra, vere prudentis est, quum sis mortalis, nihil ultra sortem sapere velle, cumque universa hominum multitudine vel connivere libenter, vel comiter errare. At istud ipsum, inquiunt, stultitiae est. Haud equidem inficias iverim, modo fateantur illi vicissim, hoc esse, vitae fabulam agere.

ENGLISH

by his passions like a beast; that he is a slave of the lowest rank, since he willingly serves so many and such foul masters. Suppose he told another, who is mourning his dead father, to laugh, since that man has only now begun to live, this life being nothing but a kind of death. Suppose he called another, who boasts of his pedigree, low-born and illegitimate, since he is far from virtue, the only source of nobility, and spoke in the same way about all the rest. What, I ask you, would he achieve, except to seem to everyone out of his mind and raving?

Just as nothing is more foolish than wisdom out of place, so nothing is more imprudent than wrong-headed prudence. For a man acts perversely who will not adapt himself to things as they are, will not "use the market," will not even remember that law of the drinking party, ἢ πίθι, ἢ ἄπιθι [drink, or go], and insists that the play should no longer be a play. On the contrary, the truly prudent man, since he is mortal, wants to be no wiser than his lot allows, and with the whole multitude of mankind either gladly turns a blind eye or goes wrong in good company. "But that very thing," they say, "is folly." I will not deny it, provided they in turn admit that this is what it means to act in the play of life.[34]

AGAINST THE STOIC WISE MAN

Folly argues that passions lead to virtue, and that the passionless Stoic sage would be a monster.

LATIN

30 Ceterum illud, o Dii immortales! eloquarne, an sileam? Cur autem sileam, quum sit vero verius? Sed praestiterit fortassis in re tanta, Musas ex Helicone accersere, quas poetae saepius ob meras nugas advocare solent. Adeste igitur paulisper, Iovis filiae, dum ostendo, nec ad egregiam illam sapientiam ac felicitatis, ut ipsi vocant, arcem aditum esse cuiquam, nisi stultitia duce. Iam primum illud in confesso est, affectus omnes ad stultitiam pertinere; quandoquidem hac nota a stulto sapientem discernunt, quod illum affectus, hunc ratio temperat; eoque Stoici perturbationes omnes ceu morbos a sapiente semovent. Verum affectus isti non solum paedagogorum vice funguntur ad sapientiae portum properantibus, verum etiam in omni virtutis functione, ceu calcaria stimulique quidam, adesse solent, velut ad bene agendum exhortatores.

ENGLISH

But this next thing, immortal gods! Shall I speak it, or keep silent? And why should I keep silent, when it is truer than truth? Still, in so great a matter it might be best to summon the Muses from Helicon, whom the poets call upon often enough for mere trifles. Be with me, then, for a little while, daughters of Jupiter, while I show that no one gains access to that excellent wisdom and to what they call the citadel of happiness except with folly as guide. First of all, it is agreed that all the passions belong to folly. Indeed, this is the mark by which they tell the wise man from the fool: the fool is ruled by his passions, the wise man by reason. That is why the Stoics remove all disturbances of the mind from the wise man, as if they were diseases. But these

34 "To use the market" is a proverb in Erasmus's Adages for adapting to circumstances; the drinking rule is quoted by Cicero, Tusculan Disputations 5.118.

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ENGLISH

passions not only act as tutors to those hurrying toward the harbor of wisdom; in every exercise of virtue they are also there like spurs and goads, urging us on to do good.

Quanquam hic fortiter reclamat bis Stoicus Seneca, qui prorsum omnem affectum adimit sapienti. Verum quum id facit, iam ne hominem quidem relinquit, sed novum potius deum quendam δημιουργεῖ, qui nusquam nec exstitit unquam, nec exstabit: imo, ut apertius dicam, marmoreum hominis simulacrum constituit, stupidum, et ab omni prorsus humano sensu alienum. Proinde si libet, ipsi suo sapiente fruantur, citraque rivalem ament licet, cumque eo vel in civitate Platonis, vel, si malint, in idearum regione, vel in Tantaliis inhabitent hortis.

Here, it is true, Seneca, that doubly Stoic Stoic, protests loudly, taking every last emotion away from the wise man. But in doing so he leaves not even a man; rather he δημιουργεῖ [fashions] a sort of new god who has never existed anywhere and never will. Indeed, to put it more plainly, he sets up a marble statue of a man, senseless and wholly devoid of human feeling. So, if they like, let them enjoy their wise man by themselves, love him without a rival, and live with him in Plato's republic, or, if they prefer, in the realm of the Ideas, or in the gardens of Tantalus.[35]

Quis enim non istiusmodi hominem ceu portentum ac spectrum fugitet horreatque, qui ad omnes naturae sensus obsurduerit, qui nullis sit affectibus, nec amore, nec misericordia magis commoveatur, *quam si dura silex, aut stet Marpesia cautes*, quem nihil fugiat, qui nihil erret, sed ceu Lynceus quispiam nihil non perspiciat, nihil non ad amussim perpendat, nihil ignoscat, qui solus seipso sit contentus, solus dives, solus sanus, solus rex, solus liber, breviter omnia solus, sed suo solius iudicio, qui nullum moretur amicum, ipse amicus nemini, qui diis quoque ipsis non dubitet mandare laqueum, qui quicquid in omni vita geritur, velut insanum damnet rideatque? Atqui huiusmodi animal est absolutus ille sapiens. Quaeso, si res agatur suffragiis, quae civitas istiusmodi magistratum sibi velit, aut quis exercitus talem optet ducem?

For who would not run from such a man and shudder at him as at a monster or a ghost? He has gone deaf to all the feelings of nature; he is moved by no passions, no more touched by love or pity *than if he were hard flint, or stood a Marpesian crag*. Nothing escapes him, he never errs, but like some Lynceus sees through everything, weighs everything by the rule, forgives nothing. He alone is content with himself, alone rich, alone sane, alone king, alone free, in short alone everything, but only in his own judgment. He cares for no friend and is himself no one's friend; he would not hesitate to tell the very gods to go hang themselves; and whatever is done in all of life he condemns and laughs at as insane. Yet that is the kind of animal your perfect wise man is. If it came to a vote, I ask you, what city would want such a magistrate, or what army would wish for such a general?[36]

imo quae mulier id genus maritum, quis convivator eiusmodi convivam, quis servus talibus moribus dominum vel optet, vel ferat? Quis autem non malit vel unum quemvis de media stultissimorum hominum plebe, qui stultus stultis vel imperare possit, vel parere, qui sui similibus placeat, sed quam plurimis, qui comis sit in uxorem, iucundus amicis, bellus conviva, convictor facilis, postremo qui nihil humani a se alienum putet? Sed me quidem iamdudum istius sapientis piget. Quare ad reliqua commoda sese recipiat oratio.

Indeed, what woman would want, or put up with, such a husband? What host such a guest? What servant a master of such character? Who would not rather have any man at all from the thick of the crowd of greatest fools: a fool who can either command fools or obey them; who pleases those like himself, and that means as many as possible; who is kind to his wife, pleasant to his friends, good company at table, easy to live with; and, finally, who thinks nothing human foreign to himself? But I have long been sick of that wise man. So let my speech return to my other benefits.[37]

35 The "gardens of Tantalus" are proverbial in the Adages for things that exist only in the imagination.
36 Virgil, Aeneid 6.471, of Dido unmoved in the underworld; Lynceus the Argonaut could see even through the earth.

37 The last phrase echoes Terence, The Self-Tormentor 77: “I am human; I think nothing human foreign to me.”

The Happiness of Fools

Chapters 31–47
Human misery and the illusions that sweeten it: natural fools, happy madness, hunters, builders, gamblers, worshippers of saints, self-love.

CHAPTER 31

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31	Agedum, si quis velut e sublimi specula circumspiciat, ita ut Iovem poetae facere praedicant, quot calamitatibus hominum vita sit obnoxia, quam misera quamque sordida nativitas, quam laboriosa educatio, quot iniuriis exposita pueritia, quot sudoribus adacta iuventus, quam gravis senectus, quam dura mortis necessitas, deinde in omni vita, quot morborum agmina infestent, quot immineant casus, quot ingruant incommoda, quam nihil usquam non plurimo felle tinctum, ut ne commemorem ista, quae homini ab homine inferuntur mala; quod genus sunt, paupertas, carcer, infamia, pudor, tormenta, insidiae, proditio, convicia, lites, fraudes! Sed ego iam plane τὴν ἄμμον ἀναμετρεῖν aggredior. Porro quibus admissis ista commeruerint homines, aut quis deus iratus eos in has miserias nasci coegerit, non est mihi fas in praesentia proloqui.	Come now, suppose someone were to look around as if from a lofty watchtower, as the poets say Jupiter does, and see how many calamities human life is exposed to: how wretched and squalid our birth, how laborious our upbringing, how many wrongs childhood suffers, how much sweat youth is driven to, how heavy old age, how harsh the necessity of death; then, throughout life, how many armies of diseases beset us, how many accidents threaten, how many troubles fall upon us, how nothing anywhere is not steeped in plenty of gall, not to mention the evils man inflicts on man, such as poverty, prison, disgrace, shame, torture, plots, betrayal, insults, lawsuits, frauds! But now I am plainly setting out τὴν ἄμμον ἀναμετρεῖν [to measure the sand]. As for what crimes men committed to deserve all this, or what angry god forced them to be born into such miseries, it is not lawful for me to speak of that at present.
	Verum ista qui secum perpendat, nonne Milesiarum virginum probabit exemplum, etiamsi miserandum! At quinam potissimum sibi vitae taedio fatum accersivere? Nonne sapientiae confines? Inter quos, ut interim Diogenes, Xenocrates, Catones, Cassios, ac Brutos sileam, Chiron ille, quum immortalem esse liceret, ultro mortem praeoptavit. Videtis opinor, quid futurum sit, si passim sapiant homines: nempe altero luto, altero figulo Prometheo opus fore. Verum ego partim per ignorantiam, partim per incogitantiam, nonnunquam per oblivionem malorum, aliquando spem bonorum, aliquoties nonnihil mellis voluptatibus aspergens, ita tantis in malis succurro, ut ne tum quidem libeat vitam relinquere, quum, exacto Parcarum stamine, ipsa iamdudum eos relinquit vita; quoque minus sit caussae, cur in vita manere debeant, hoc magis iuvet vivere, tantum abest, ut ullo vitae taedio tangantur.	Yet anyone who weighs these things in his mind, will he not approve the example of the Milesian maidens, pitiable as it is? And who are the people who above all have summoned their own fate out of weariness with life? Are they not the neighbors of wisdom? Among them, to say nothing for now of Diogenes, Xenocrates, the Catos, the Cassiuses and the Brutuses, there is Chiron, who, though he could have been immortal, chose death of his own accord. You see, I think, what would happen if men everywhere were wise: we would need fresh clay and another potter like Prometheus. But I come to the rescue in these great evils, partly through ignorance, partly through thoughtlessness, sometimes through forgetfulness of ills, at times through hope of good things, now and then by sprinkling a little honey of pleasures. And I do it so well that people do not want to leave life even

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when the thread of the Fates is spun out and life itself has long been leaving them. The less reason they have for staying alive, the more they enjoy living, so far are they from being touched by any weariness of life.[1]

Mei nimirum muneris est, quod passim Nestorea senecta senes videtis, quibus iam ne species quidem hominis superest, balbos, deliros, edentulos, canos, calvos, vel ut magis Aristophanicis eos describam verbis, ῥυπῶντας, κυφοὺς, ἀθλίους, ῥυσοὺς, μαδῶντας, νωδοὺς καὶ ψωλούς, tamen usque adeo vita delectari, adeoque νεανίζειν, ut alius tingat canos, alius appositia coma calvitium dissimulet, alius dentibus utatur mutuo fortassis a sue quopiam sumptis, hic in puellam aliquam misere depereat, et amatoriis ineptiis quemvis etiam superet adolescentulum. Nam ut capulares iam, meraque silicernia, teneram aliquam iuvenculam ducant uxorem, eamque et indotatam, et aliis usui futuram, id adeo frequens, ut propemodum et laudi detur.

It is my doing, of course, that everywhere you see old men of Nestor's age, with not even the look of a human being left to them, stammering, doting, toothless, white-haired, bald, or, to describe them better in Aristophanes' words, ῥυπῶντας, κυφοὺς, ἀθλίους, ῥυσοὺς, μαδῶντας, νωδοὺς καὶ ψωλούς [filthy, bent, wretched, wrinkled, bald, toothless and lecherous], who are nevertheless so delighted with life and so eager νεανίζειν [to play the young man] that one dyes his white hair, another hides his baldness with a wig, another uses teeth borrowed, perhaps, from some pig, and this one is hopelessly in love with some girl and outdoes any youngster in amorous nonsense. As for men ready for the coffin, mere living corpses, marrying some tender young girl, without a dowry, and one who will be of use to others, that is so common that it is almost counted to their credit.[2]

Sed multo etiam suavius, si quis animadvertat, anus, longo iam senio mortuas adeoque cadaverosas, ut ab inferis redisse videri possint, tamen illud semper in ore habere: φῶς ἀγαθόν, adhuc catullire, atque, ut Graeci dicere solent, καπροῦν, et magna mercede conductum aliquem Phaonem inducere, fucis assidue vultum oblinere, nusquam a speculo discedere, infimae pubis sylvam vellere, vietas ac putres ostentare mammas, tremuloque gannitu languentem solicitare cupidinem, potitare, misceri puellarum choris, litterulas amatorias scribere. Ridentur haec ab omnibus tanquam, uti sunt, stultissima: at ipsae sibi placent et in summis interim versantur deliciis, totasque sese melle perungunt, meo videlicet beneficio felices. Porro quibus haec deridicula videntur, illud secum expendant velim, utrum satius ducant, huiusmodi stultitia vitam plane mellitam exigere, an trabem, ut aiunt, suspendio quaerere.

But it is far more delightful still to watch old women, long since dead of old age and so corpse-like that they might seem to have come back from the underworld, who still always have on their lips φῶς ἀγαθόν [light is good]. They are still on heat and, as the Greeks say, καπροῦν [rutting like sows]; they hire some Phaon at great expense, constantly plaster their faces with make-up, never leave the mirror, pluck the thicket of their private parts, show off their shriveled, sagging breasts, try to rouse a flagging desire with a quavering whine, drink, mix with the dances of girls, and write little love letters. Everyone laughs at this as utterly foolish, which it is. But they are pleased with themselves, and meanwhile live in the height of delight, soaking themselves all over in honey, happy, of course, thanks to me. As for those who find all this ridiculous, I would like them to consider whether they think it better to spend a life of pure honey in folly of this kind, or to look for a beam, as they say, to hang themselves from.

Porro quod haec vulgo putantur infamiae obnoxia, istud nihil ad stultos meos, qui malum hoc aut non sentiunt,

Further, the fact that these things are commonly thought disgraceful means nothing to my fools,

1 Plutarch tells of an epidemic of suicide among the girls of Miletus; the centaur Chiron, incurably wounded, gave up his immortality.

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aut, si quid sentiunt, facile negligunt. Si saxum in caput incidat, id vere malum sit: ceterum pudor, infamia, probrum, maledicta, tantum adferunt noxae, quantum sentiuntur. Si sensus absit, ne mala quidem sunt. Quid laedit, si totus populus in te sibilet, modo tute tibi plaudas? Atque ut id liceat, sola stultitia praestat.	who either do not feel this evil or, if they feel it at all, easily ignore it. If a stone falls on your head, that is truly an evil. But shame, disgrace, reproach and abuse do only as much harm as they are felt. If there is no feeling, they are not even evils. What harm is it if the whole people hisses at you, so long as you applaud yourself? And that this is possible, folly alone guarantees.

IGNORANCE IS NATURAL

Folly argues that being ignorant is no more wretched for humans than lacking grammar is for a horse.

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32 Sed mihi videor audire reclamantes philosophos. Atqui hoc ipsum est, inquiunt, miserum, stultitia teneri, errare, falli, ignorare. Imo hoc est hominem esse. Porro miserum cur vocent, non video, quandoquidem sic nati estis, sic instituti, sic conditi, ea est communis omnium sors. Nihil autem miserum, quod in suo genere constat, nisi forte quis hominem deplorandum existimet, qui neque volare possit cum avibus, neque quaternis ingredi pedibus cum reliquo pecudum genere, neque cornibus sit obarmatus, quemadmodum tauri. Verum is eadem opera equum etiam bellissimum infelicem vocabit, quod neque grammaticam didicerit, neque placentis vescatur; taurum miserum, quod ad palaestricam sit inutilis. Igitur ut equus imperitus grammaticae miser non est, ita nec homo stultus infelix, propterea quod haec cum illius natura cohaerent. Verum rursus urgent logodaedali.	But I seem to hear the philosophers protesting. "But this is just what is wretched," they say: "to be in the grip of folly, to err, to be deceived, to be ignorant." On the contrary, this is what it is to be human. I do not see why they should call it wretched, since you were born so, formed so, made so; it is the common lot of all. Nothing is wretched that is true to its own kind, unless perhaps someone thinks man is to be pitied because he cannot fly with the birds, or go on four feet with the rest of the animals, or is not armed with horns like bulls. But by the same token he will call even the finest horse unhappy because it has not learned grammar and does not eat cakes, and the bull wretched because it is no good at wrestling. So, just as a horse ignorant of grammar is not wretched, neither is a foolish man unhappy, since these things belong to their nature. But the word-spinners press me again.
Est, inquiunt, homini peculiariter addita disciplinarum cognitio, quarum adminiculis id, quod natura diminutum est, ingenio penset. Quasi vero ullam veri faciem habeat, naturam, quae in culicibus, atque adeo in herbis ac flosculis tam sollicite vigilaverit, in uno homine dormitasse, ut disciplinis opus esset, quas Theutus ille humano generi infensus genius, in summam perniciem excogitavit, adeo non utiles ad felicitatem, ut illi quoque ipsi officiant, ad quod proprie repertae dicuntur, ut eleganter arguit apud Platonem rex ille prudentissimus de litterarum invento. Igitur disciplinae cum reliquis humanae vitae pestibus irrepserunt, iisdem auctoribus, a quibus omnia flagitia proficiscuntur, puta daemonibus, quibus hinc nomen etiam inventum; quasi δαήμονας, hoc est, scientes appelles. Siquidem simplex illa aurei seculi	"To man alone," they say, "has been given knowledge of the disciplines, so that with their help he may make up by intelligence for what nature has stinted." As if there were any likelihood that nature, which kept such careful watch over gnats, and even over plants and little flowers, should have dozed off in the case of man alone, so that he needed disciplines. These were devised by Theuth, that spirit hostile to the human race, for its utter ruin; so far from being useful for happiness, they even hinder the very thing they are said to have been invented for, as that very wise king in Plato elegantly argues about the invention of writing. So the disciplines crept in along with the other plagues of human life, from the same authors

2 The Greek list is from Aristophanes, Wealth 266.

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gens, nullis armata disciplinis, solo naturae ductu instinctuque vivebat.	from whom all crimes proceed, namely the demons, who even get their name from it, as if you called them δαήμονας [daēmones], that is, "knowing ones." For that simple race of the golden age, armed with no disciplines, lived by the guidance and instinct of nature alone.[3]
Quorsum enim opus erat grammatica, quum eadem esset omnibus lingua, nec aliud sermone petebatur, nisi ut alius alium intelligeret? Quis usus dialectices, ubi nulla erat pugnantium inter se sententiarum dimicatio? Quis rhetoricae locus, quum nullus alteri negotium facesseret? Quorsum requireretur legum prudentia, quum abessent mali mores, ex quibus haud dubie bonae leges prognatae sunt? Porro religiosiores erant, quam ut impia curiositate arcana naturae, siderum mensuras, motus, effectus, abditas rerum caussas scrutarentur, nefas esse rati, si homo mortalis ultra sortem suam sapere conaretur. Iam, quid extra coelum esset, inquirendi dementia ne in mentem quidem veniebat.	For what need was there of grammar, when everyone had the same language and nothing more was asked of speech than that people should understand one another? What use was dialectic, where there was no battle of conflicting opinions? What room was there for rhetoric, when nobody made trouble for anyone else? Why should anyone need legal expertise, when there were no bad morals, the undoubted parents of good laws? Besides, they were too religious to pry with impious curiosity into the secrets of nature, the measurements, motions and influences of the stars, the hidden causes of things; they thought it wrong for a mortal to try to know more than his lot allows. As for the madness of asking what lies beyond the heavens, it never even entered their minds.
At, labente paulatim aetatis aureae puritate, primum a malis, ut dixi, geniis inventae sunt artes, sed paucae, atque hae quidem a paucis receptae: postea sexcentas addidit Chaldaeorum superstitio et Graecorum otiosa levitas, meras ingeniorum cruces, adeo ut vel una grammatica abunde satis sit ad perpetuam vitae carnificinam.	But as the purity of the golden age gradually slipped away, first, as I said, arts were invented by evil spirits, though only a few, and these were taken up by only a few people. Later the superstition of the Chaldeans and the idle frivolity of the Greeks added hundreds more, sheer torments of the mind, so many that grammar alone is quite enough to make life a lifelong torture.

THE ARTS NEAREST FOLLY

Folly says the most valued professions, medicine and law, are those closest to folly.

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33 Quanquam inter has ipsas disciplinas hae potissimum in pretio sunt, quae ad sensum communem, hoc est, ad stultitiam quam proxime accedunt. Esuriunt Theologi, frigent Physici, ridentur Astrologi, negliguntur Dialectici. Solus ἰατρὸς γὰρ ἀνὴρ πολλῶν ἀντάξιος ἄλλων. Atque in hoc ipso genere, quo quisque indoctior, audacior, incogitantiorque, hoc pluris fit etiam apud torquatos istos Principes. Atqui medicina, praesertim ut nunc a compluribus exercetur, nihil aliud est quam assentationis particula, non minus profecto, quam rhetorica. Secundum hos proximus datur locus leguleiis, et haud scio, an primus, quorum professionem, ne quid ipsa	Yet among these very disciplines, the ones most prized are those that come nearest to common sense, that is, to folly. Theologians go hungry, natural philosophers are left out in the cold, astrologers are laughed at, dialecticians are ignored. Only ἰατρὸς γὰρ ἀνὴρ πολλῶν ἀντάξιος ἄλλων [a physician is worth many other men]. And within this very profession, the more ignorant, reckless and thoughtless a man is, the more he is valued, even by those princes with their gold chains. Yet medicine, especially as many practice it nowadays, is nothing but a branch of flattery, no less, indeed,

3 In Plato, Phaedrus 274c–275b, King Thamus of Egypt rejects the god Theuth's invention of writing as harmful to memory.

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pronuntiem, velut asininam philosophi magno consensu ridere solent. Sed tamen horum asinorum arbitrio maxima minimaque negotia transiguntur. His latifundia crescunt, quum Theologus interim, excussis totius divinitatis scriniis, lupinum arrodit, cum cimicibus ac pediculis assidue bellum gerens.	than rhetoric. After them the next place goes to the pettifogging lawyers, and I am not sure it is not the first. The philosophers, with great unanimity, usually laugh at their profession as asinine (I would not pronounce on it myself). And yet it is by the decision of these asses that the greatest and the smallest affairs are settled. Their estates grow, while the theologian, having ransacked every coffer of divinity, gnaws on a lupine, waging constant war with bugs and lice.[4]
Ut igitur feliciores sunt artes, quae maiorem habent cum stultitia affinitatem, ita longe felicissimi sunt hi, quibus prorsus licuit ab omnium disciplinarum commercio abstinere, solamque naturam ducem sequi, quae nulla sui parte manca est, nisi forte mortalis sortis pomeria transilire velimus. Odit natura fucos, multoque felicius provenit, quod nulla sit arte violatum.	So, just as the happier arts are those most closely related to folly, by far the happiest people are those who have been able to keep entirely clear of dealings with any discipline and follow nature alone as their guide. Nature is lacking in no part of herself, unless perhaps we want to leap over the boundaries of the mortal lot. Nature hates make-up, and what has not been violated by any art thrives far more happily.

HAPPIER ANIMALS

Folly points to bees and birds, guided by nature alone, as happier than learned human beings.

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34 Agedum, annon videtis ex unoquoque reliquorum animantium genere ea felicissime degere, quae sunt a disciplinis alienissima, nec ullius magisterio nisi naturae ducuntur? Quid apibus aut felicius aut mirabilius? At his ne corporis quidem omnes sensus adsunt. Quid simile in exstruendis aedificiis reperiat architectura? Quis unquam philosophus similem instituit rempublicam? Rursum equus, quoniam humanis sensibus affinis est et in hominum contubernium demigravit, humanarum item calamitatum est particeps; quippe qui non raro, dum vinci pudet in certaminibus, ducit ilia, et in bellis, dum ambit triumphum, confoditur, simulque cum sessore terram ore momordit: ut ne commemorem interim lupata frena, aculeata calcaria, stabuli carcerem, scuticas, fustes, vincula, sessorem, breviter omnem illam servitutis tragoediam, ni se ultro addixit, dum, fortes viros imitatus, impensius hostem ulcisci studet.	Come now, don't you see that in every kind of other living creature, those live most happily which are furthest from the disciplines and are led by no teacher but nature? What is happier or more wonderful than bees? Yet they do not even have all the bodily senses. What could architecture find to match them in building? What philosopher ever founded such a commonwealth? The horse, on the other hand, because its senses are close to ours and it has moved in to live with men, also shares in human calamities. Often enough, ashamed to be beaten in a race, it runs itself broken-winded; in war, eager for a triumph, it is run through and bites the dust along with its rider. Not to mention for now the spiked bits, the sharp spurs, the prison of the stable, the whips, cudgels, tethers, the rider, in short that whole tragedy of servitude, to which it gave itself up of its own accord when, imitating brave men, it was too eager to take revenge on its enemy.[5]
Quanto optabilior muscarum et avicularum vita, ex tempore soloque naturae sensu degentium, modo per	How much more desirable is the life of flies and little birds, which live for the moment and by the

4 Homer, Iliad 11.514.

5 Horace (Epistles 1.10) tells how the horse, to get revenge on the stag, accepted a rider and a bit, and was never free again.

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hominum insidias liceat. Quae si quando caveis inclusae assuescant humanas sonare linguas, mirum quam a nativo illo nitore degenerent: adeo modis omnibus laetius est, quod natura condidit, quam quod fucavit ars. Proinde nunquam satis laudarim gallum illum Pythagoram, qui quum unus omnia fuisset, philosophus, vir, mulier, rex, privatus, piscis, equus, rana, opinor etiam spongia, tamen nullum animal iudicavit calamitosius homine, propterea quod cetera omnia naturae finibus essent contenta, solus homo sortis suae limites egredi conaretur.

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sense of nature alone, so far as human snares allow! If they are ever shut up in cages and learn to repeat human speech, it is amazing how they fall away from their native splendor. So much happier in every way is what nature has made than what art has painted over. That is why I can never praise enough that cock who was Pythagoras. Though he had been everything himself, philosopher, man, woman, king, private citizen, fish, horse, frog, even, I think, a sponge, he judged no animal more miserable than man, because all the others were content with the limits of nature, while man alone tried to step beyond the bounds of his lot.[6]

THE HAPPINESS OF NATURAL FOOLS

Folly praises simpletons as free of fear, conscience and care, and beloved by everyone.

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35 Rursum inter homines, idiotas multis partibus anteponit doctis ac magnis. Et Gryllus ille non paulo plus sapuit, quam πολυμῆτις Ὀδύσσευς, qui maluerit in hara grunnire, quam cum illo tot miseris obiici casibus. Ab his mihi non dissentire videtur Homerus, nugarum pater, qui quum mortales omnes subinde δειλοὺς καὶ μοχθηροὺς appellat, tum Ulyssem illum suum sapientis exemplar saepenumero δύστηνον vocat, Paridem nusquam, nec Aiacem, nec Achillem. Quamobrem id tandem? nisi quod ille, vafer et artifex, nihil non Palladis consilio agebat, nimiumque sapiebat, a naturae ductu quam longissime recedens?

Ut igitur inter mortales ii longissime absunt a felicitate, qui sapientiae student, nimirum hoc ipso bis stulti, quod, homines nati quum sint, tamen, obliti conditionis suae, deorum immortalium vitam affectant, et gigantum exemplo, disciplinarum machinis, naturae bellum inferunt, ita quam minime miseri videntur ii, qui ad brutorum ingenium stultitiamque quam proxime accedunt, neque quicquam ultra hominem moliuntur. Age experiamur, num hoc quoque non Stoicis enthymematis, sed crasso quopiam exemplo queamus ostendere. Ac per deos immortales, est ne quicquam felicius isto hominum genere, quos vulgo moriones,

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Again, among human beings he much prefers the unlearned to the learned and great. And Gryllus had a good deal more sense than πολυμῆτις Ὀδύσσευς [Odysseus of many wiles], since he preferred to grunt in a pigsty rather than be exposed with him to so many miserable mishaps. Homer, the father of trifles, seems to me to agree with them: he often calls all mortals δειλοὺς καὶ μοχθηροὺς [wretched and toiling], and he frequently calls his Ulysses, the model of the wise man, δύστηνον [unhappy], but never Paris, or Ajax, or Achilles. And why is that, after all? Surely because Ulysses, crafty and artful, did everything on Pallas' advice and was too wise by half, straying as far as possible from nature's guidance?[7]

So, among mortals, those who devote themselves to wisdom are furthest from happiness, doubly foolish for this very reason: born human, they forget their condition, aspire to the life of the immortal gods, and like the Giants make war on nature with the siege engines of the disciplines. By the same token, those seem least wretched who come closest to the character and folly of the brute beasts and attempt nothing beyond what is human. Come, let us see whether we can prove this too, not with Stoic enthymemes but with some plain, crude example. By the immortal gods, is

6 In Lucian's dialogue The Dream, or The Cock, a cock reveals that he is the reincarnated Pythagoras and recounts his former lives.
7 In Plutarch's dialogue Gryllus, one of Odysseus' men turned into a pig by Circe refuses to be changed back.

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stultos, fatuos, ac bliteos appellant, pulcherrimis, ut equidem opinor, cognominibus? Rem dicam prima fronte stultam fortassis atque absurdam, sed tamen unam multo verissimam. Principio vacant mortis metu, non mediocri per Iovem malo. Vacant conscientiae carnificina. Non territantur manium fabulamentis.	there anything happier than the sort of people commonly called jesters, fools, simpletons and blockheads, the loveliest of names, in my opinion? What I am about to say may seem foolish and absurd at first sight, but it is by far the truest thing of all. First, they are free from the fear of death, and that, by Jupiter, is no small evil. They are free from the torture of conscience. They are not terrified by tales of the dead.
Non expavescunt spectris ac lemuribus, non torquentur metu impendentium malorum, non spe futurorum bonorum distenduntur. In summa, non dilacerantur millibus curarum, quibus haec vita obnoxia est. Non pudescunt, non verentur, non ambiunt, non invident, non amant. Denique si propius etiam ad brutorum animantium insipientiam accesserint, ne peccant quidem auctoribus theologis. Hic mihi iam expendas velim, stultissime sapiens, quot undique solicitudinibus noctes diesque discrucietur animus tuus. Congeras in unum acervum universa vitae tuae incommoda, atque ita demum intelliges, quantis malis meos fatuos subduxerim. Adde huc, quod non solum ipsi perpetuo gaudent, ludunt, cantillant, rident, verum etiam ceteris omnibus quocunque sese verterint, voluptatem, iocum, lusum, risumque adferunt, velut in hoc ipsum a deorum indulgentia dati, ut humanae vitae tristitiam exhilararent.	They do not quake at ghosts and goblins; they are not tormented by fear of evils to come, nor stretched on the rack by hope of future goods. In short, they are not torn apart by the thousand cares to which this life is subject. They feel no shame, no fear, no ambition, no envy, no love. And finally, if they come even closer to the senselessness of the brute animals, they do not even sin, on the authority of the theologians. Now weigh up, I beg you, most foolish wise man, how many anxieties torment your mind from every side, night and day. Pile all the troubles of your life into one heap, and then at last you will understand from how many evils I have rescued my simpletons. Add to this that not only are they themselves always rejoicing, playing, singing and laughing, but wherever they turn they bring pleasure, fun, play and laughter to everyone else, as if the kindness of the gods had given them for this very purpose: to cheer the gloom of human life.
Unde fit, ut quum aliis in alios varius sit affectus, hos omnes ex aequo tanquam suos agnoscant, expetant, pascant, foveant, complectantur, succurrant, si quid acciderit: impune permittant, quicquid vel dixerint, vel fecerint. Adeoque nemo illis nocere cupit, ut ferae quoque belluae ab illorum iniuria temperent, sensu quodam innocentiae naturali. Sunt enim vere sacri diis, praecipue mihi, ideoque non iniuria hunc honorem omnes illis habent.	So it happens that, while people's feelings toward one another vary, everyone alike acknowledges these as their own, seeks them out, feeds them, cherishes them, embraces them, helps them if anything befalls them, and lets them say or do anything with impunity. So little does anyone wish to harm them that even wild beasts refrain from hurting them, out of some natural sense of their innocence. For they are truly sacred to the gods, and especially to me; and so everyone pays them this honor, and rightly.

FOOLS AT COURT

Folly explains that kings love their jesters because fools alone may tell them the truth.

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36 Quid, quod summis etiam regibus adeo sunt in deliciis, ut nonnulli sine his neque prandere, nec ingredi, nec omnino vel horam durare possint. Neque, vero paulo intervallo hos bliteos suis illis tetricis sophis anteponunt,	What's more, they are such favorites even of the greatest kings that some kings cannot dine, or go out, or last even an hour without them. And they prefer these blockheads by a wide margin to those

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quos tamen ipsos aliquot honoris gratia solent alere. Cur autem anteponant, nec obscurum arbitror, nec mirum videri debet, quum sapientes illi nil nisi triste soleant adferre principibus, suaque doctrina freti, non vereantur aliquoties auriculas teneras mordaci radere vero: moriones autem id praestent, quod unum undecunque principes modis omnibus aucupantur, iocos, risus, cachinnos, delicias. Iam accipite et hanc non aspernandam stultorum dotem, quod soli simplices ac veridici sunt. Quid autem veritate laudatius?

Quanquam enim Alcibiadeum apud Platonem proverbium veritatem vino pueritiaeque tribuit, tamen omnis ea laus mihi peculiariter debetur, vel Euripide teste, cuius exstat illud celebre de nobis dictum: μωρὰ γὰρ μωρὸς λέγει. Fatuus, quicquid habet in pectore, id et vultu prae se fert, et oratione promit: at sapientum sunt duae illae linguae, ut idem meminit Euripides, quarum altera verum dicunt, altera, quae pro tempore iudicarint opportuna. Horum est nigrum in candida vertere, et eodem ex ore frigidum pariter et calidum efflare, longeque aliud conditum habere in pectore, aliud sermone fingere. Porro in tanta felicitate tamen hoc nomine principes mihi videntur infelicissimi, quod deest, a quo verum audiant, et assentatores pro amicis habere coguntur.

Sed abhorrent a vero principum aures, dixerit aliquis, et hac ipsa de caussa sapientes istos fugitant, quod vereantur, ne quis forte liberior existat, qui vera magis quam iucunda loqui audeat. Ita quidem res habet, invisa regibus veritas. Sed tamen hoc ipsum mire in fatuis meis usu venit, ut non vera modo, verum etiam aperta convicia cum voluptate audiantur, adeo ut idem dictum, quod, si a sapientis ore proficiscatur, capitale fuerat futurum, a morione profectum, incredibilem voluptatem pariat. Habet enim genuinam quandam delectandi vim veritas, si nihil accedat quod offendat; verum id quidem solis fatuis dii dederunt. Iisdem ferme de caussis hoc hominum genere mulieres gaudere solent impensius, utpote ad voluptatem et nugas natura propensiores.

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gloomy sages of theirs, some of whom they nonetheless maintain for the sake of prestige. Why they prefer them is, I think, no mystery, nor should it seem surprising. Those wise men usually bring princes nothing but gloom, and, relying on their learning, they are not afraid at times to scrape tender little ears with biting truth; whereas the jesters supply the one thing princes hunt for everywhere and by every means: jokes, laughter, guffaws, amusement. Now hear another gift of fools, not to be despised: they alone are frank and truthful. And what is more praiseworthy than truth?

For although the proverb of Alcibiades in Plato assigns truth to wine and to childhood, all that credit is really owed to me, as Euripides himself testifies in his famous saying about us: μωρὰ γὰρ μωρὸς λέγει [a fool speaks folly]. Whatever the simpleton has in his heart he shows on his face and speaks out in words. Wise men, by contrast, have those two tongues the same Euripides mentions: with one they speak the truth, with the other whatever they judge suits the occasion. It is their way to turn black into white, to blow hot and cold from the same mouth, to keep one thing stored in the heart and fashion another in speech. And so, in all their great good fortune, princes seem to me most unfortunate on this account: they have no one from whom to hear the truth, and are forced to take flatterers for friends.[8]

"But princes' ears shrink from the truth," someone will say, "and they avoid those wise men for this very reason: they are afraid that someone may turn out too outspoken and dare to say what is true rather than what is pleasant." That is indeed how things stand: truth is hateful to kings. And yet with my simpletons something remarkable happens. Not only truths but even open insults are heard with pleasure, so that the very same remark which would have been a capital offense from a wise man's mouth gives incredible pleasure coming from a jester. For truth has a certain native power to delight, provided nothing offensive comes with it; but this the gods have given to simpletons alone. For much the same reasons women are especially fond of this sort of person, being by nature more inclined to pleasure and trifles.

8 Plato, Symposium 217e; Euripides, Bacchae 369.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
	Proinde quicquid cum huiusmodi factitarint, etiamsi nonnunquam serium nimis, illae tamen iocum ac lusum interpretantur, ut est ingeniosus, praesertim ad praetexenda commissa sua, sexus ille.	So whatever they may get up to with people of this kind, even if it is sometimes a little too serious, they interpret it as fun and games; for that sex is ingenious, especially at covering up its own misdeeds.

THE WISE MAN'S WRETCHED LIFE

Folly contrasts the carefree jester with the scholar who wastes his life and dies without having lived.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
37	Igitur ut ad fatuorum felicitatem redeam, multa cum iocunditate peracta vita, nullo mortis vel metu, vel sensu, recta in campos Elysios demigrant, et illic pias atque otiosas animas lusibus suis delectaturi. Eamus nunc, et quemvis etiam sapientem cum huius morionis sorte conferamus. Finge quod huic opponas, exemplar sapientiae, hominem qui totam pueritiam atque adolescentiam in perdiscendis disciplinis contriverit, et suavissimam vitae partem perpetuis vigiliis, curis, sudoribus perdiderit, ne in reliqua quidem omni vita vel tantillum voluptatis degustarit, semper parcus, pauper, tristis, tetricus, sibi ipsi iniquus ac durus, aliis gravis et invisus, pallore, macie, valetudine, lippitudine confectus, senio canitieque multo ante diem contracta, ante diem fugiens e vita. Quanquam quid refert, quando moriatur istiusmodi, qui nunquam vixerit? Habetis egregiam illam sapientis imaginem.	So, to return to the happiness of simpletons: having spent their lives in great merriment, with neither fear nor sense of death, they move straight to the Elysian Fields, to delight the pious and idle souls there too with their games. Now let us go and compare any wise man you like with the lot of this jester. Imagine, as his opposite, a model of wisdom: a man who has worn away his whole boyhood and youth mastering the disciplines and lost the sweetest part of life in endless sleepless nights, cares and sweat; who even in all the rest of his life has never tasted a drop of pleasure; always stingy, poor, sad, sour, unfair and harsh to himself, burdensome and hateful to others; worn out by pallor, leanness, ill health, bleary eyes; grown old and gray long before his time, and leaving life before his time. Though what does it matter when such a man dies, who has never lived? There you have that splendid portrait of the wise man.

TWO KINDS OF MADNESS

Folly distinguishes the Furies' destructive madness from her own pleasant delusion, illustrated by the man of Argos.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
38	At hic rursus obganniunt mihi οἱ ἐκ τῆς στοᾶς βάτραχοι. *Nihil*, inquiunt, *miserius insania. Sed insignis stultitia, vel insaniae proxima est, vel ipsa potius insania. Quid enim aliud est insanire, quam errare animo?* Sed isti tota errant via. Age, hunc quoque syllogismum dissipemus, Musis bene fortunantibus. Argute quidem isti. Verum, quemadmodum apud Platonem docet Socrates, ex una Venere secta duas, et ex uno Cupidine dissecto duos faciens: itidem et istos dialecticos decebat insaniam ab insania distinguere, si modo ipsi sani videri vellent. Neque enim protinus omnis insania calamitosa est. Alioqui non dixisset Horatius: *An me ludit amabilis insania?* neque Plato poëtarum, vatum et amantium furorem inter praecipua vitae bona collocasset: nec vates illa laborem Aeneae vocasset insanum.	But here again οἱ ἐκ τῆς στοᾶς βάτραχοι [the frogs of the Stoa] croak at me. *Nothing*, they say, *is more wretched than madness. But conspicuous folly is either next door to madness, or rather is madness itself. For what else is being mad but erring in mind?* But they have wandered off the road entirely. Come, let us demolish this syllogism too, with the Muses' blessing. Clever of them, certainly. But just as Socrates in Plato teaches us to make two Venuses by cutting one in two, and two Cupids by dividing one, so those dialecticians ought to have distinguished madness from madness, if they wanted to seem sane themselves. For not every madness is necessarily a calamity. Otherwise Horace would not

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have said, *Or is a lovely madness playing with me?* Nor would Plato have counted the frenzy of poets, seers and lovers among the chief blessings of life, nor would the prophetess have called Aeneas' labor insane.[9]

Verum est duplex insaniae genus: alterum quod ab inferis dirae ultrices submittunt, quoties, immissis anguibus, vel ardorem belli, vel inexplebilem auri sitim, vel dedecorosum ac nefarium amorem, vel parricidium, incestum, sacrilegium, aut aliam id genus pestem aliquam in pectora mortalium invehunt, sive quum nocentem et conscium animum furiis ac terriculorum facibus agunt. Est alterum, huic longe dissimile, quod videlicet a me proficiscitur, omnium maxime exoptandum. Id accidit, quoties iucundus quidam mentis error simul et anxiis illis curis animum liberat, et multiiuga voluptate delibutum reddit. Atqui hunc mentis errorem ceu magnum quoddam deorum munus, ad Atticum scribens, optat Cicero, nimirum quo tantorum malorum sensu carere posset.

In fact there are two kinds of madness. One is sent up from the underworld by the avenging Furies whenever they let loose their snakes and drive into human hearts the passion for war, or the insatiable thirst for gold, or shameful and unholy love, or parricide, incest, sacrilege, or some other plague of that kind; or when they hound a guilty, conscience-stricken mind with the torches of fury and terror. The other is very different: it comes from me, and is the most desirable thing of all. It occurs whenever a pleasant delusion of the mind both frees the soul from those anxious cares and steeps it in many kinds of pleasure. This is the delusion that Cicero, writing to Atticus, wishes for as a great gift of the gods, so that he might no longer feel such great evils.[10]

Neque perperam sensit Argivus ille, qui hactenus insaniebat, ut totos dies solus desideret in theatro ridens, plaudens, gaudens, quod crederet illic miras agi tragoedias, quum nihil omnino ageretur, quum in ceteris vitae officiis probe sese gereret, *iucundus amicis, Comis in uxorem, posset qui ignoscere servis, Et signo laesae non insanire lagenae.* Hunc ubi cognatorum opera datis pharmacis morbo levasset, sibique iam totus esset redditus, hunc in modum cum amicis expostulans: *Pol, me occidistis amici, Non servastis, ait, cui sic extorta voluptas Et demptus per vim mentis gratissimus error.* Et merito quidem: errabant enim ipsi atque elleboro magis opus habebant, qui tam felicem ac iucundam insaniam, ceu malum aliquod, existimarent potionibus expellendam.

Nor was that man of Argos wrong, who was so far gone in madness that he would sit alone in the theater for days on end, laughing, applauding and rejoicing, because he believed marvelous tragedies were being performed there when nothing at all was being performed. In all the other duties of life he behaved properly: *pleasant to his friends, kind to his wife, a man who could forgive his slaves, and not go mad when the seal of a jar was broken.* When his relatives' efforts and doses of medicine had cured him of his illness and he was wholly himself again, he complained to his friends like this: *"By Pollux, you have killed me, friends, not saved me," he said, "wrenching my pleasure from me so and taking away by force my mind's most welcome delusion."* And rightly too; for they were the ones in error, and more in need of hellebore, who thought so happy and pleasant a madness had to be driven out with potions, like some disease.[11]

Quanquam illud equidem nondum statui, num quivis sensus aut mentis error insaniae nomine sit appellandus. Neque enim, si cui lippienti mulus asinus esse videatur, aut si quis indoctum carmen veluti doctissimum admiretur, is continuo videbitur insanire: verum si quis

Though I myself have not yet decided whether every error of the senses or of the mind should be called madness. If someone with bleary eyes takes a mule for an ass, or someone admires a clumsy poem as most learned, he will not at once be

9 Plato, Symposium 180d and Phaedrus 244–245; Horace, Odes 3.4.5–6; the Sibyl in Virgil, Aeneid 6.135.
10 Cicero, Letters to Atticus 9.11.
11 Horace, Epistles 2.2.128–140; hellebore was the ancient remedy for madness.

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non sensu tantum, sed animi iudicio fallatur, idque praeter usitatum morem ac perpetuo, is demum insaniae censebitur affinis esse, veluti si quis, quoties asinum audierit rudentem, arbitretur, sese miros symphoniscos audire, aut si quis pauperculus, infimi loco natus, Croesum Lydorum regem esse se credat. Sed hoc insaniae genus, si, quemadmodum fere fit, vergat ad voluptatem, non mediocrem delectationem adfert, tum iis, qui eo tenentur, tum illis, quibus est hoc animadversum; nec tamen eodem insaniunt. Nam haec insaniae species multo latius patet, quam vulgus hominum intelligit.	thought mad. But if someone is deceived not only in his senses but in the judgment of his mind, and that beyond what is usual, and constantly, then at last he will be judged close to madness: for instance, if every time he heard an ass braying he thought he was hearing marvelous musicians, or if some poor wretch of the lowest birth believed he was Croesus, king of the Lydians. But this kind of madness, if it tends toward pleasure, as it usually does, brings no small delight both to those who are gripped by it and to those who observe it, though these are not mad in the same way. For this sort of madness extends much more widely than the common run of people realize.
Sed vicissim insanus insanum ridet, ac mutuam sibi voluptatem invicem ministrant. Neque raro fieri videbitis, ut maior insanus, vehementius rideat minorem.	But one madman laughs at another in turn, and they supply each other with pleasure. And you will often see the greater madman laughing hardest at the lesser.

HUNTERS, BUILDERS AND ALCHEMISTS

Folly reviews the happy obsessions of huntsmen, compulsive builders, alchemists and gamblers.

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39 Verum hoc quisque felicior, quo pluribus desipit modis, Stultitia iudice, modo in eo genere insaniae maneat, quod nobis est peculiare, quod quidem usque adeo late patet, ut haud sciam, an ex universa mortalium summa quempiam liceat reperire, qui omnibus horis sapiat, quique non aliquo insaniae genere teneatur. Quanquam hoc tantum interest: qui, cucurbitam quum videt, mulierem esse credit, huic insano nomen ponunt, propterea quod perpaucis id usu veniat. Verum ubi quis uxorem suam, quam cum multis habet communem, eam plusquam Penelopem esse deierat, sibique maiorem in modum plaudit, feliciter errans, hunc nullus insanum appellat, propterea quod passim maritis hoc accidere videant.	Indeed, by Folly's verdict, each person is the happier the more ways he is out of his wits, provided he keeps to the kind of madness that is peculiarly mine. That kind is so widespread that I doubt whether, in the whole sum of mortals, one could find anyone who is wise at all hours and not gripped by some kind of madness. There is only this difference: the man who sees a pumpkin and believes it is a woman is given the name of madman, because this happens to very few. But when a man swears that his wife, whom he shares with many, is more than a Penelope, and congratulates himself enormously, happily mistaken, nobody calls him mad, because they see this happening to husbands everywhere.
Ad hunc ordinem pertinent et isti, qui prae venatu ferarum omnia contemnunt, atque incredibilem animi voluptatem percipere se praedicant, quoties foedum illum cornuum cantum audierint, quoties canum eiulatus. Opinor etiam quum excrementa canum odorantur, illis cinnamomum videri. Deinde quae suavitas, quoties fera lanianda est! Tauros et verveces humili plebi laniare licet, feram nisi a generoso secari nefas. Is nudo capite, inflexis genibus, gladio ad id destinato, (neque enim quovis idem facere fas est,) certis gestibus, certa membra, certo ordine religiose secat.	To this order belong also those who despise everything compared with hunting wild beasts, and declare that they feel incredible delight whenever they hear that ugly blare of horns and the baying of hounds. I even think that when they sniff the dogs' droppings, it smells like cinnamon to them. And then what bliss whenever a beast has to be cut up! Bulls and wethers may be butchered by the common people, but it is sacrilege for game to be carved by anyone but a gentleman. Bareheaded, on bended knee, with a knife reserved for

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Miratur interim, perinde ut in re nova sacra, circumstans tacita turba, tametsi spectaculum hoc plus millies viderit. Porro cui contigerit e bellua nonnihil gustare, is vero existimat, sibi non parum nobilitatis accedere.

Itaque quum isti assidua ferarum insectatione atque esu nihil aliud assequantur, nisi ut ipsi propemodum in feras degenerent, tamen interea regiam vitam agere se putant. Et his simillimum genus eorum, qui insatiabili aedificandi studio flagrant, nunc rotunda quadratis, nunc quadrata rotundis permutantes. Neque vero finis ullus, neque modus, donec ad extremam redactis inopiam, nec ubi habitent, nec quid edant, supersit. Quid tum postea? Interim annos aliquot summa cum voluptate peregerunt. Ad quos mihi quidem proxime videntur accedere, qui novis et arcanis artibus, rerum species vertere moliuntur, ac terra marique quintam quandam essentiam venantur.

Hos adeo lactat mellita spes, ut neque laborum neque impensarum unquam pigeat; miroque ingenio semper aliquid excogitant, quo sese denuo fallant, sibique ipsis gratam faciant imposturam, donec, absumptis omnibus, non sit, quo iam fornaculam instruant. Non desinunt tamen iucunda somniare somnia, ceteros pro viribus ad eandem felicitatem animantes. Quumque iam prorsus omni spe destituuntur, superest tamen una sententia, abunde magnum solatium: *In magnis et voluisse sat est*. Ac tum vitae brevitatem incusant, ut quae magnitudini negotii non suffecerit. Porro, aleatores, nonnihil addubito, num in nostrum collegium sint admittendi. Sed tamen stultum omnino ridiculumque spectaculum est, quoties videmus nonnullos usque adeo addictos, ut, simul atque strepitum talorum audierint, protinus illis cor saliat palpitetque.

Deinde quum, semper illiciente vincendi spe, omnium facultatum naufragium fecerint, in aleae scopulum illisa nave, non paulo formidabiliorem Malea, vixque nudi emerserint, quosvis potius fraudant, quam victorem, ne scilicet viri parum graves habeantur. Quid quum senes

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the purpose (for it is not lawful to do it with just any knife), with set gestures he devoutly cuts set limbs in a set order. Meanwhile the crowd standing round watches in silent wonder, as at some new sacred rite, though they have seen this spectacle more than a thousand times. And whoever gets to taste a bit of the beast is convinced that he has acquired no small share of nobility.

So, although by constantly chasing and eating wild animals they achieve nothing except nearly turning into wild animals themselves, they still think they are living like kings. Very like them are those who burn with an insatiable passion for building, now changing round into square, now square into round. There is no end or limit to it until, reduced to utter poverty, they have nowhere left to live and nothing to eat. What of it? In the meantime they have spent a few years in the greatest pleasure. Next to these, it seems to me, come those who strive by new and secret arts to transmute the species of things, and hunt over land and sea for a certain fifth essence.[12]

Honeyed hope so beguiles them that they never regret any labor or expense. With wonderful ingenuity they are always devising something new by which to deceive themselves again and play a pleasant trick on themselves, until, having spent everything, they have nothing left even to fit out a little furnace. Still they do not stop dreaming pleasant dreams, encouraging others as best they can to the same happiness. And when they are at last stripped of all hope, one saying remains, an abundantly great consolation: *In great things, even to have wished is enough*. And then they blame the shortness of life for not being equal to the greatness of the task. As for gamblers, I rather doubt whether they should be admitted to our fellowship. Still, it is certainly a foolish and ridiculous sight when we see some so addicted that, as soon as they hear the rattle of dice, their hearts leap and pound.[13]

Then, lured on all the while by the hope of winning, they make shipwreck of all their fortunes, their vessel dashed on the rock of dice, a far more fearsome headland than Malea, and they barely come out naked; yet they would rather cheat any-

12 Horace, Epistles 1.1.100; the alchemists sought the "quintessence," a fifth element beyond earth, water, air and fire.
13 Propertius 2.10.6.

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iam et caecutientes, vitreis etiam oculis lusitant? Postremo quum iam iusta chiragra contudit articulos, vicarium etiam mercede conducunt, qui pro se talos in pyrgum mittat? Suavis quidem res, nisi quod hic ludus plerumque solet in rabiem evadere, iamque ad furias, non ad me, pertinere.	one than the winner, for fear, of course, of being thought men of little honor. And what about when, old now and half blind, they go on playing in spectacles? Or when, at last, well-earned gout has crushed their knuckles, and they even hire a substitute to throw the dice into the box for them? A delightful business indeed, except that this game usually turns into rage, and then it belongs to the Furies, not to me.

SAINTS, RELICS AND PARDONS

Folly mocks those who trust in tales of wonders, saints' images, pardons and magic prayers.

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40 Ceterum illud hominum genus haud dubie totum est nostrae farinae, qui miraculis ac prodigiosis gaudent mendaciis vel audiendis vel narrandis, nec ulla satietas talium fabularum, quum portentosa quaedam, de spectris, de lemuribus, de larvis, de inferis, de id genus millibus miraculorum commemorantur: quae quo longius absunt a vero, hoc et creduntur lubentius, et iucundiore pruritu titillant aures. Atque haec quidem non modo ad levandum horarum taedium mire conducunt, verum etiam ad quaestum pertinent, praecipue sacrificis et concionatoribus.	But that sort of person is beyond doubt entirely of our making who delights in miracles and monstrous lies, whether hearing or telling them, and can never have enough of such tales when marvels are related about specters, goblins, ghosts, the underworld, and thousands of wonders of that kind. The further these are from the truth, the more readily they are believed and the more pleasantly they tickle the ears. And these things are not only wonderfully good for relieving the tedium of the hours; they also bring profit, especially to priests and preachers.
His rursum adfines sunt ii, qui sibi stultam quidem, sed tamen iucundam persuasionem induerunt, futurum, ut, si ligneum aut pictum aliquem Polyphemum Christophorum aspexerint, eo die non sint perituri, aut qui sculptam Barbaram praescriptis verbis salutarit, sit incolumis e praelio rediturus, aut si quis Erasmum certis diebus, certis cereolis, certisque preculis convenerit, brevi sit dives evasurus. Iam vero Georgium etiam Herculem invenerunt, quemadmodum et Hippolytum alterum. Huius equum, phaleris ac bullis religiosissime adornatum, tantum non adorant, ac subinde novo quopiam munusculo demerentur; per huius aeream galeam deierare, plane regium habetur. Nam quid dicam de iis, qui sibi fictis scelerum condonationibus suavissime blandiuntur, ac Purgatorii spatia veluti clepsydris metiuntur, secula, annos, menses, dies, horas, tanquam e tabula mathematica, citra ullum errorem dimetientes?	Next to these are those who have talked themselves into a belief that is foolish, certainly, but pleasant: that if they look at a wooden or painted Christopher, as big as Polyphemus, they will not die that day; or that whoever greets a carved Barbara with the prescribed words will come back safe from battle; or that if one calls on Erasmus on certain days, with certain little candles and certain little prayers, he will soon be rich. And now they have even found a Hercules in George, just as they found a second Hippolytus. They all but worship his horse, most devoutly decked out with trappings and studs, and keep winning his favor with some new little gift; to swear by his bronze helmet is thought an oath fit for a king. And what am I to say of those who flatter themselves most sweetly with counterfeit pardons for their crimes, and measure out the time in Purgatory as if by water-clock, calculating centuries, years, months, days and hours without any error, as if from a mathematical table?[14]

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aut de iis, qui, magicis quibusdam notulis ac preculis, quas pius aliquis impostor, vel animi caussa, vel ad quaestum excogitavit, freti, nihil sibi non pollicentur, opes, honores, voluptates, saturitates, valetudinem perpetuo prosperam, vitam longaevam, senectam viridem, denique proximum Christo apud superos consessum, quem tamen nolint, nisi admodum sero contingere, hoc est, quum huius vitae voluptates invitos eos ac mordicus retinentes tamen deseruerint, tum succedant illae coelitum deliciae. Hic mihi puta negociator aliquis, aut miles, aut iudex, abiecto ex tot rapinis unico nummulo, universam vitae Lernam semel expurgatam putat, totque periuria, tot libidines, tot ebrietates, tot rixas, tot caedes, tot imposturas, tot perfidias, tot proditiones existimat velut ex pacto redimi, et ita redimi, ut iam liceat ad novum scelerum orbem de integro reverti.

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Or of those who, relying on certain magic little signs and prayers devised by some pious impostor for fun or for profit, promise themselves everything: wealth, honors, pleasures, plenty, unbroken good health, long life, a green old age, and finally a seat next to Christ among the blessed, though they would rather not get it until very late. That is, when the pleasures of this life have deserted them, unwilling as they are and clinging on with their teeth, then let those heavenly delights take over. Imagine, I pray you, some merchant, or soldier, or judge, who throws down a single coin out of all his plunder and thinks the whole Lerna of his life cleansed once and for all. He supposes that so many perjuries, so many lusts, so many drunken bouts, so many brawls, so many murders, so many frauds, so many breaches of faith, so many betrayals are bought off as if by contract, and bought off in such a way that he may now start a whole new round of crimes afresh.[15]

Quid autem stultius iis, imo quid felicius, qui, septem illis sacrorum psalmorum versiculis cotidie recitatis, plus quam summam felicitatem sibi promittunt? Atque hos magicos versiculos daemon quispiam, facetus quidem ille, sed futilis magis quam callidus, Divo Bernardo creditur indicasse, sed arte circumventus miser. Et haec tam stulta, ut me ipsam propemodum pudeat, tamen approbantur; idque non a vulgo modo, verum etiam a religionis professoribus. Quid iam? nonne eodem fere pertinet, quum singulae regiones suum aliquem peculiarem vindicant Divum: quumque in singulos singula quaedam partiuntur, singulis suos quosdam culturae ritus attribuunt, ut hic in dentium cruciatu succurrat, ille parturientibus dexter adsit, alius rem furto sublatam restituat: hic in naufragio prosper affulgeat, ille gregem tueatur: atque item de ceteris; nam omnia percensere longissimum fuerit.

And who is more foolish, or rather, who is happier, than those who promise themselves more than supreme happiness by reciting every day those seven little verses of the sacred Psalms? These magic verses some demon, witty, no doubt, but more frivolous than clever, is believed to have revealed to Saint Bernard; but the poor devil was outwitted. And these things, so foolish that I am almost ashamed of them myself, are nonetheless approved, not only by the common people but even by those who profess the religious life. What next? Isn't it much the same when particular regions each claim some special saint of their own, and when people assign particular tasks to particular saints and attribute to each his own rites of worship? So one helps with toothache, another stands by women in childbirth, another restores stolen goods, this one shines out favorably in a shipwreck, that one protects the flock, and so on with the rest, for to list them all would take far too long.[16]

Sunt, qui singuli pluribus in rebus valeant, praecipue deipara virgo, cui vulgus hominum plus prope tribuit, quam filio.

Some saints have power in many areas at once, above all the Virgin Mother of God, to whom the

14 Saint Christopher was painted as a giant on church walls; Barbara was invoked against sudden death and Erasmus (Elmo) for wealth. George is "another Hippolytus" because, like that hero, he is never without his horse.
15 Lerna, the marsh of the Hydra, was proverbial for a mass of evils.
16 In the legend, a devil boasted to Saint Bernard that he knew seven Psalm verses that would save anyone who said them daily; Bernard replied that he would recite the whole Psalter.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
		common people attribute almost more than to her Son.

WHAT PEOPLE PRAY FOR

Folly notes that votive offerings thank saints for every rescue except rescue from folly.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
41	Verum ab his divis quid tandem petunt homines, nisi quod ad stultitiam attinet? Agedum inter tot anathemata, quibus templorum quorundam parietes omnes, ac testudinem ipsam refertam conspicitis, vidistisne unquam, qui stultitiam effugerit, qui vel pilo sit factus sapientior? Alius enatavit incolumis. Alius ab hoste perfossus vixit. Alius e praelio, pugnantibus ceteris, non minus feliciter quam fortiter aufugit. Alius in crucem subactus, favore divi cuiuspiam furibus amici, decidit, ut nonnullos etiam male divitiis onustos pergeret exonerare. Alius perfracto carcere fugit. Alius irato medico a febre revaluit. Alii potum venenum, alvo soluta, remedio, non exitio fuit, idque non admodum laeta uxore, quae operam et impensam luserit. Alius, everso plaustro, equos incolumes domum abegit. Alius oppressus ruina vixit. Alius a marito deprehensus elusit.	But what do people ask of these saints, after all, except what has to do with folly? Come now, among all the votive offerings you see crammed over every wall of certain churches, and even the vaulting itself, have you ever seen any for someone who escaped folly, or became a hair's breadth wiser? One man swam to safety. Another was run through by an enemy and lived. Another ran away from the battle while the rest were fighting, no less luckily than bravely. Another, strung up on the gallows, fell down by the favor of some saint who is a friend to thieves, so that he could go on relieving a few of those unhappily overloaded with riches. Another broke out of prison and escaped. Another recovered from a fever, to his doctor's annoyance. For another, a poisoned drink loosened his bowels and proved a cure, not his death, to the displeasure of his wife, who had wasted her effort and expense. Another, when his cart overturned, drove his horses home unharmed. Another was buried under a collapsing building and lived. Another, caught by a husband, slipped away.
	Nullus pro depulsa stultitia gratias agit. Adeo suavis quaedam res est nihil sapere, ut omnia potius deprecentur mortales, quam Moriam. Sed quid ego hoc superstitionum pelagus ingredior?	Nobody gives thanks for being rid of folly. Knowing nothing is such a sweet thing that mortals will pray to be spared anything rather than Moria. But why am I launching out on this ocean of superstitions?
	Non, mihi si linguae centum sint, oraque centum, Ferrea vox, omneis fatuorum evolvere formas, Omnes stultitiae percurrere nomina possim: usque adeo omnis omnium Christianorum vita istiusmodi delirationibus undique scatet: quas ipsas tamen sacrifici non gravatim et admittunt et alunt, non ignari quantum hinc lucelli soleat accrescere. Inter haec si quis odiosus sapiens exoriatur, succinatque id, quod res est: *non male peribis, si bene vixeris: peccata redimis, si nummulo addideris odium malefactorum, tum lachrimas, vigilias, precationes, ieiunia; ac totam vitae rationem commutaris; divus hic tibi favebit, si vitam illius aemulaberis:* haec, inquam, atque id genus alia si sapiens ille obganniat, vide a quanta felicitate repente mortalium animos in quem tumultum retraxerit!	*Not if I had a hundred tongues, a hundred mouths, a voice of iron, could I unfold all the forms of simpletons, or run through all the names of folly*: so thoroughly does the whole life of all Christians everywhere teem with ravings of this kind. Yet the priests are quite willing to allow and nourish them, knowing well how much profit tends to come of it. If, in the middle of all this, some odious wise man were to rise up and chime in with the plain truth: *You will not die badly if you live well; you redeem your sins if to your coin you add hatred of wrongdoing, then tears, vigils, prayers and fasts, and change your whole way of life; this saint will favor you if you imitate his life*; if, I

LATIN	ENGLISH
	say, that wise man were to grumble out these and similar things, see from what great happiness into what turmoil he would suddenly drag men's minds back![17]
Ad hoc collegium pertinent, qui vivi, qua funeris pompa velint efferri, tam diligenter statuunt, ut nominatim etiam praescribant, quot taedas, quot pullatos, quot cantores, quot luctus histriones velint adesse, perinde quasi futurum sit, ut aliquis huius spectaculi sensus ad ipsos sit rediturus, aut ut pudescant defuncti, nisi cadaver magnifice defodiatur, haud alio studio, quam si aediles creati, ludos aut epulum edere studeant.	To this fellowship belong those who, while still alive, settle so carefully the funeral procession with which they want to be carried out that they even prescribe by name how many torches, how many mourners in black, how many singers, how many hired actors of grief they want there, as if some sense of the spectacle were going to come back to them, or as if the dead would be ashamed unless their corpse were buried in style. They go about it as eagerly as if they had been elected aediles and were keen to put on games or a public banquet.

PRIDE OF BIRTH AND TALENT

Folly mocks those proud of their pedigree, looks or skills, and the self-love of artists and performers.

LATIN	ENGLISH
42 Equidem tametsi propero, tamen haud possum istos silentio praetercurrere, qui quum nihil ab infimo cerdone differant, tamen inani nobilitatis titulo mirum quam sibi blandiuntur: alius ad Aeneam, alius ad Brutum, alius ad Arcturum genus suum refert: ostendunt undique sculptas et pictas maiorum imagines: numerant proavos atque atavos, et antiqua cognomina commemorant, quum ipsi non multum absint a muta statua, pene iis ipsis, quae ostentant, signis deteriores: et tamen hac tam suavi Philautia felicem prorsum vitam agunt; neque desunt aeque stulti, qui hoc belluarum genus, perinde ut deos, suspiciunt. Sed quid ego de uno aut altero genere loquor, quasi vero non passim haec Philautia plurimos ubique miris modis felicissimos efficiat?	Though I am in a hurry, I cannot pass over in silence those who, though no different from the lowest cobbler, flatter themselves amazingly on an empty title of nobility. One traces his family back to Aeneas, another to Brutus, another to Arthur. They display carved and painted portraits of their ancestors everywhere; they count up their great-grandfathers and great-great-grandfathers and recite ancient family names, though they themselves are not much different from mute statues, and almost worse than the very images they show off. And yet with this so sweet Self-Love they lead a perfectly happy life; nor is there any lack of people just as foolish who look up to this kind of beast as if they were gods. But why am I talking about one or two kinds, as if this Self-Love did not everywhere make a great many people wonderfully happy in wonderful ways?[18]
quum hic, quavis simia deformior, sibi plane Nireus videtur: alius, simul atque tres lineas circino duxerit, prorsum Euclidem sese putat: hic, ὄνος πρὸς λύραν, et quo deterius nec ille sonat, quo mordetur gallina marito, tamen alterum Hermogenem esse se credit. Est autem illud longe suavissimum insaniae genus, quo nonnulli, quicquid ulli suorum dotis adest, eo non aliter, atque suo,	Here is one, uglier than any ape, who sees himself as a perfect Nireus; another, as soon as he has drawn three lines with a compass, thinks himself a very Euclid; this one, ὄνος πρὸς λύραν [an ass at the lyre], with a voice worse than the cock's when he pecks his hen, nevertheless believes he is a second Hermogenes. But by far the sweetest kind

17 A parody of Virgil, Aeneid 6.625–627.
18 Brutus, a legendary Trojan, was held to be the founder of Britain.

LATIN

gloriantur. Qualis erat ille bis beatus apud Senecam dives, qui, narraturus historiolam quampiam, servos ad manum habebat, qui nomina suggererent, non dubitaturus vel in pugilum certamen descendere, homo alioqui adeo imbecillus, ut vix viveret, hac re fretus, quod multos haberet domi servos egregie robustos. Porro de artium professoribus quid attinet commemorare?

quando peculiaris est horum omnium Philautia: adeo ut reperias citius, qui velit agello paterno, quam ingenio, cedere: verum praecipue histrionum, cantorum, oratorum ac poëtarum; quorum quo quisque est indoctior, hoc sibi placet insolentius, hoc sese magis iactat ac dilatat. Et inveniunt similes labra lactucas; imo, quo quicquam est ineptius, hoc plures admiratores nanciscitur; ut pessima quaeque semper plurimis arrident, propterea quod maxima pars hominum, ut diximus, Stultitiae obnoxia est. Proinde si quis est imperitior, et sibi ipsi multo iucundior est, et pluribus admirationi, quid est quod is veram eruditionem malit, primum magno constaturam, deinde reddituram et putidiorem et timidiorem, postremo multo paucioribus placituram?

ENGLISH

of madness is the one that makes some people boast of any gift belonging to any of their household just as if it were their own. Such was that doubly blessed rich man in Seneca, who, whenever he was going to tell some little story, kept slaves at hand to prompt him with the names. He would not have hesitated even to enter a boxing match, though he was otherwise so feeble he could barely stay alive, relying on the fact that he had many exceptionally sturdy slaves at home. And what need is there to mention the professors of the arts?[19]

Self-Love is the special property of all of them, so much so that you would sooner find a man willing to give up his little family farm than his talent; but above all of actors, singers, orators and poets. The more ignorant each of them is, the more insolently he admires himself, the more he boasts and puffs himself up. And like lips find like lettuce: indeed, the sillier a thing is, the more admirers it wins, just as the worst things always please the most people, because the greater part of mankind, as we said, is subject to Folly. So if the less skilled man is both far more pleasing to himself and admired by more people, why should he prefer true learning, which will first cost him a great deal, then make him more fastidious and more timid, and finally please far fewer?[20]

NATIONAL VANITIES

Folly lists the flattering self-images of nations and cities, from the English to the Germans.

LATIN

43 Iam vero video, naturam, ut singulis mortalibus suam, ita singulis nationibus ac pene civitatibus communem quandam insevisse Philautiam: atque hinc fieri, ut Britanni praeter alia formam, musicam, et lautas mensas proprie sibi vindicent: Scoti nobilitate et regiae affinitatis titulo, neque non dialecticis argutiis sibi blandiantur: Galli morum civilitatem sibi sumant: Parisienses theologicae scientiae laudem, omnibus prope submotis, sibi peculiariter arrogent: Itali bonas litteras et eloquentiam asserant, atque hoc nomine sibi suavissime blandiantur omnes, quod soli mortalium barbari non sint; quo quidem in genere felicitatis Romani primas tenent, ac veterem illam Romam adhuc iucundissime somniant: Veneti nobilitatis opinione sunt felices: Graeci, tanquam disciplinarum auctores, veteribus illis

ENGLISH

Now I see that nature has implanted in each mortal his own Self-Love, and in each nation, and almost in each city, a sort of shared one. Hence the English claim as especially theirs, among other things, good looks, music and fine dining. The Scots flatter themselves on their nobility and their claim of royal kinship, and on their dialectical subtleties too. The French take good manners for themselves. The Parisians arrogate to themselves, almost to the exclusion of everyone else, the glory of theological learning. The Italians lay claim to good letters and eloquence, and on this score they all flatter themselves most sweetly that they alone of mortals are not barbarians; in this kind of hap-

19 Hermogenes Tigellius was a famous singer mentioned by Horace; the rich man is Calvisius Sabinus in Seneca, Letters 27.
20 The proverb (Adages) comes from the donkey eating thistles: everyone finds what suits his taste.

LATIN	ENGLISH
laudatorum heroum titulis sese venditant: Turcae totaque illa vere barbarorum colluvies etiam religionis laudem sibi vindicat, Christianos perinde uti superstitiosos irridens.	piness the Romans hold first place, still dreaming most pleasantly of that ancient Rome. The Venetians are happy in their belief in their own nobility. The Greeks, as founders of the disciplines, sell themselves on the old titles of those celebrated heroes. The Turks, and the whole motley crowd of peoples we count as the real barbarians, even claim the glory of religion for themselves, laughing at Christians as superstitious.
At multo etiam suavius Iudaei etiamdum Messiam suum constanter exspectant, ac Mosen suum hodieque mordicus tenent. Hispani bellicam gloriam nulli concedunt: Germani corporum proceritate et magiae cognitione sibi placent.	Sweeter still, the Jews go on steadfastly waiting for their Messiah, and to this day hold on to their Moses with their teeth. The Spaniards yield military glory to no one; the Germans are pleased with themselves for their height and their knowledge of magic.

IN PRAISE OF FLATTERY

Folly defends flattery, Self-Love's sister, as the honey that sweetens all human life.

LATIN	ENGLISH
44 Ac ne singula persequar, videtis opinor, quantum ubique voluptatis pariat singulis et universis mortalibus Philautia, cui prope par est Assentatio soror. Nihil enim aliud Philautia, quam quum quis ipse sibi palpatur. Idem si alteri facias, κολακία fuerit. At hodie res quaedam infamis est adulatio, sed apud eos, qui rerum vocabulis magis, quam rebus ipsis commoventur. Existimant, cum adulatione fidem male cohaerere: quod multo secus sese habere, vel brutorum animantium exemplis poterant admoneri. Quid enim cane adulantius? At rursum quid fidelius? Quid sciuro blandius? At hoc quid est homini magis amicum? Nisi forte vel asperi leones, vel immites tigres, vel irritabiles pardi magis ad vitam hominum conducere videntur. Quanquam est omnino perniciosa quaedam adulatio, qua nonnulli, perfidiosi et irrisores, miseros in perniciem adigunt.	But, not to go through every case, you see, I think, how much pleasure Self-Love produces everywhere, for mortals one by one and all together. Almost her equal is her sister Flattery. For Self-Love is simply a person stroking himself; do the same to someone else and it becomes κολακία [flattery]. Nowadays, it is true, flattery is in disrepute, but only among those who are moved more by the names of things than by the things themselves. They think good faith goes badly with flattery; that the opposite is true they could have learned even from the example of brute animals. For what is more fawning than a dog? And yet what is more faithful? What is more caressing than a squirrel? And yet what is friendlier to man? Unless perhaps fierce lions, savage tigers or irritable leopards seem more useful to human life. There is, admittedly, an altogether pernicious kind of flattery, by which some treacherous mockers drive poor wretches to ruin.
Verum haec mea ab ingenii benignitate candoreque quodam proficiscitur, multoque virtuti vicinior est, quam ea, quae huic opponitur, asperitas, ac morositas inconcinna, ut ait Horatius, gravisque. Haec deiectiores animos erigit, demulcet tristes, exstimulat languentes, expergefacit stupidos, aegrotos levat, feroces mollit, amores conciliat, conciliatos retinet. Pueritiam ad capessenda studia litterarum allicit, senes exhilarat, principes citra offensam sub imagine laudis et admonet	But mine springs from a kindly nature and a certain candor, and is much closer to virtue than its opposite, harshness, and that moroseness which, as Horace says, is awkward and disagreeable. Mine lifts up downcast spirits, soothes the sad, rouses the sluggish, wakes up the dull, relieves the sick, softens the fierce, brings lovers together and keeps them together. It entices boys to take up the study of letters, cheers up old men, and, under the

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et docet. In summa, facit, ut quisque sibi ipse sit iucundior et charior; quae quidem felicitatis pars est vel praecipua. Quid autem officiosius, quam quum mutuum muli scabunt? Ut ne dicam interim, hanc esse magnam illius laudatae eloquentiae partem, maiorem medicinae, maximam poëticae: denique hanc esse totius humanae consuetudinis mel et condimentum.

ENGLISH

guise of praise, admonishes and instructs princes without offense. In short, it makes everyone more pleasing and dearer to himself, and that is surely the chief part of happiness. And what is more obliging than mules scratching each other? Not to mention for now that this is a large part of that much-praised eloquence, a larger part of medicine, and the largest of poetry; in short, that it is the honey and seasoning of all human society.[21]

HAPPINESS LIES IN OPINION

Folly argues that happiness depends on illusion, not on things, so being deceived is no misfortune.

LATIN

45 Sed falli, inquiunt, miserum est. Imo non falli miserrimum. Nimium enim desipiunt, qui in rebus ipsis felicitatem hominis sitam esse existimant. Ex opinionibus ea pendet. Nam rerum humanarum tanta est obscuritas varietasque, ut nihil dilucide sciri possit; (quemadmodum recte dictum est ab Academicis meis, inter philosophos quam minimum insolentibus,) aut si quid sciri potest, id non raro officit etiam vitae iucunditati. Postremo sic sculptus est hominis animus, ut longe magis fucis, quam veris capiatur.

Cuius rei si quis experimentum expositum et obvium quaerat, conciones ac templa petat, in quibus si quid serium narratur, dormitant, oscitant, nauseant omnes: quod si clamator ille, lapsa sum, declamator dicere volebam, ita ut saepe faciunt, anilem aliquam fabellam exordiatur, expergiscuntur, eriguntur, inhiant omnes. Item si quis sit divus fabulosior et poëticus, (quodsi exemplum requiris, finge huius generis Georgium aut Christophorum aut Barbaram), videbitis hunc longe religiosius coli, quam Petrum aut Paulum aut ipsum etiam Christum. Verum haec non huius sunt loci. Iam quanto minoris constat haec felicitatis accessio! quandoquidem res ipsas aliquoties magno negotio pares oportet, vel levissimas, uti grammaticen: at opinio facillime sumitur, quae tamen tantundem aut amplius etiam ad felicitatem conducat.

Age si quis putribus vescatur salsamentis, quorum alius nec odorem ferre possit, et tamen huic ambrosiam sapiant, quaeso quid interest ad felicitatem? Contra si

ENGLISH

"But to be deceived," they say, "is wretched." On the contrary: not to be deceived is most wretched of all. For those who think human happiness lies in things themselves are utterly foolish. It depends on opinions. Human affairs are so obscure and so various that nothing can be known clearly, as my Academics rightly said, the least arrogant of the philosophers; or, if anything can be known, it not infrequently spoils the pleasure of life. Finally, the human mind is so made that it is caught far more by disguises than by truths.[22]

If anyone wants a ready, obvious proof of this, let him go to sermons and churches. If anything serious is being said, everyone dozes, yawns, feels faintly sick. But if the bawler up there (a slip of the tongue: I meant to say the declaimer) starts on some old wives' tale, as they often do, everyone wakes up, sits up straight and gapes. Likewise, if there is some saint of a more legendary and poetic kind (if you want an example, imagine a George, a Christopher or a Barbara), you will see him worshipped far more devoutly than Peter or Paul, or even Christ himself. But this is not the place for that. Now see how much less this addition to happiness costs! The things themselves sometimes have to be acquired with great effort, even the most trivial, such as grammar. But an opinion is picked up with the greatest ease, and it does just as much for happiness, or even more.

Come now: suppose someone feeds on rotten salt fish whose smell another man could not even bear,

21 Horace, Epistles 1.18.6; "mules scratch each other" is a proverb in the Adages for mutual flattery.
22 The skeptical philosophers of Plato's later Academy, such as Carneades, held that nothing can be known with certainty.

LATIN	ENGLISH
acipenser alicui nauseam sapiat, quid referet ad vitae beatitudinem? Si cui sit uxor egregie deformis, quae tamen marito vel cum ipsa Venere certare posse videatur, nonne perinde fuerit, ac si vere formosa foret? Si quis tabulam minio lutoque male oblitam, suspectet ac demiretur, persuasum habens, Apellis aut Zeuxidis esse picturam, nonne felicior etiam fuerit eo, qui eorum artificum manum magno emerit, fortassis minus ex eo spectaculo voluptatis percepturus? Novi ego quendam mei nominis, qui novae nuptae gemmas aliquot adulterinas dono dedit, persuadens, ut erat facundus nugator, eas non modo veras ac nativas esse, verum etiam singulari atque inaestimabili precio.	and yet to him it tastes of ambrosia. What difference, I ask you, does that make to his happiness? Or suppose sturgeon turns someone's stomach: what will that matter to the blessedness of his life? If a man has a wife who is remarkably ugly, but who seems to her husband fit to compete with Venus herself, is it not just the same as if she were really beautiful? If someone gazes up in wonder at a panel badly smeared with red lead and yellow, convinced that it is a painting by Apelles or Zeuxis, will he not be even happier than the man who has paid a fortune for the work of those artists and will perhaps get less pleasure from looking at it? I knew a man of my own name who gave his new bride some fake jewels as a present. Being a fluent joker, he persuaded her that they were not only real and natural but of rare and priceless value.[23]
Quaeso, quid intererat puellae, quum vitro non minus iucunde pasceret et oculos et animum, nugas, perinde ut eximium aliquem thesaurum, conditas apud sese servaret? Maritus interim et sumptum effugiebat, et uxoris errore fruebatur, nec eam tamen sibi minus habebat devinctam, quam si magno empta donasset. Num quid interesse censetis inter eos, qui in specu illo Platonico variarum rerum umbras ac simulacra demirantur: modo nihil desiderent, neque minus sibi placeant: et sapientem illum, qui specum egressus, veras res aspicit? Quod si Mycillo Lucianico dives illud et aureum somnium perpetuo somniare licuisset, nihil erat, cur aliam optaret felicitatem.	Tell me, what did it matter to the girl? She feasted her eyes and her mind on glass no less pleasurably, and kept those trinkets stored away at home as if they were some extraordinary treasure. Meanwhile the husband both escaped the expense and enjoyed his wife's mistake, and yet he kept her no less devoted to him than if he had given her costly gifts. Do you think there is any difference between the people in Plato's famous cave, who marvel at the shadows and images of various things (provided they want for nothing and are no less pleased with themselves), and that wise man who has left the cave and looks at the real things? If Lucian's Micyllus had been allowed to dream that rich and golden dream of his forever, he would have had no reason to wish for any other happiness.[24]
Aut nihil igitur interest, aut si quid interest, potior etiam stultorum conditio: primum quod iis sua felicitas minimo constat, id est, sola persuasiuncula; deinde, quod ea fruuntur cum plurimis communiter.	So either there is no difference, or, if there is any, the condition of fools is actually better. First, their happiness costs them very little: just a scrap of self-persuasion. Second, they enjoy it in common with a great many others.

FOLLY'S GIFTS FOR EVERYONE

Folly contrasts her universal generosity with the selective gifts of the other gods.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
46	Porro nullius boni iucunda sine socio possessio. Quis enim nescit, quanta sapientum paucitas, si modo	Besides, no good thing is pleasant to possess without a companion. And who does not know how few wise men there are, if indeed any is to be

23 Folly's Greek name, Moria, echoes More's Latin name, Morus; the anecdote is generally taken to be about Thomas More himself.

LATIN	ENGLISH
quisquam inveniatur? quanquam ex tot seculis Graeci septem omnino numerant, quos me hercle, si quis accuratius excutiat, dispeream, si vel semisapientem inveniet, imo si vel trientem viri sapientis. Proinde quum inter multas Bacchi laudes illud habeatur, ut est, primarium, quod animi curas eluat, idque ad exiguum modo tempus, (nam simulatque villum edormieris, protinus albis, ut aiunt, quadrigis recurrunt animi molestiae): quanto meum beneficium quum plenius tum praesentius, quae perpetua quadam ebrietate mentem gaudiis, deliciis, tripudiis expleo, idque nullo negotio? Neque quemquam omnino mortalem mei muneris expertem esse sino, quum reliquae numinum dotes aliae ad alios perveniant.	found at all? Out of all those centuries the Greeks count only seven. And, so help me, if anyone examined them more closely, may I perish if he finds even one half-wise man among them, or even a third of a wise man. Among the many praises of Bacchus, the chief one, and rightly, is that he washes away the cares of the mind, though only for a short time; for as soon as you have slept off your drop of wine, the troubles of the mind come racing straight back, as they say, with a team of white horses. How much fuller and more immediate, then, is my gift! I fill the mind with joys, delights and dancing in a kind of perpetual drunkenness, and with no trouble at all. Nor do I let a single mortal go without my gift, whereas the gifts of the other gods go some to some and some to others.
Non ubivis nascitur generosum et lene merum, quod curas abigat, quod cum spe divite manet. Paucis contigit formae gratia, Veneris munus; paucioribus eloquentia, Mercurii donum. Non ita multis obtigerunt opes, dextro Hercule. Imperium non cuivis concedit Iupiter Homericus. Saepenumero Mavors neutris favet copiis. Complures ab Apollinis tripode tristes discedunt. Saepe fulminat Saturnius. Phoebus aliquando iaculis pestem immittit. Neptunus plures exstinguit, quam servat. Ut interim Veioves istos, Plutones, Atas, Poenas, Febres, atque id genus, non Deos, sed carnifices commemorem. Ego sum una illa stultitia, quae omneis ex aequo tam parata beneficentia complector.	Not everywhere grows the noble, mellow wine that drives away cares and flows with rich hope. Few have been granted the grace of beauty, the gift of Venus; fewer still eloquence, the gift of Mercury. Not so many have come into wealth with Hercules on their side. The Homeric Jupiter does not grant power to just anyone. Mars often favors neither army. Many go away sad from Apollo's tripod. The son of Saturn often hurls his thunderbolts. Phoebus sometimes sends plague with his arrows. Neptune drowns more people than he saves. I say nothing of those Vejoveses, Plutos, Ates, Punishments, Fevers and the like, who are not gods but executioners. I alone am that Folly who embraces everyone equally with such ready kindness.[25]

NO TEMPLE NEEDED

Folly says she needs no sacrifices or temples, since the whole world worships her in its conduct.

LATIN	ENGLISH
47 Nec vota moror, nec irascor, exposcens piamina, si quid cerimoniarum fuerit praetermissum. Nec coelum terrae misceo, si quis, reliquis invitatis Diis, me domi relinquat nec admittat ad nidorem illum victimarum. Nam ceterorum deorum tanta in his est morositas, ut prope maius sit operae pretium, atque adeo tutius, illos negligere, quam colere: quemadmodum sunt et homines nonnulli tam difficiles et ad laedendum irritabiles, ut	I do not wait for vows, nor do I grow angry and demand expiation if some point of ritual has been left out. Nor do I throw heaven and earth into confusion if someone invites the other gods, leaves me at home and does not let me share the savor of the sacrifices. The other gods are so touchy about these things that it is almost more worthwhile,

24 Plato's allegory of the cave is in the Republic, Book 7. Micyllus is the poor cobbler of the same dialogue of Lucian's, who dreams that he is rich.

25 Vejovis was an archaic Roman god seen as a baleful counterpart of Jupiter; Ate is the Greek goddess of ruinous delusion.

LATIN

praestiterit, eos prorsum alienissimos habere, quam familiares. At nemo, inquiunt, Stultitiae sacrificat, neque templum statuit. Equidem demiror, ut dixi, nonnihil hanc ingratitudinem. Verum hoc quoque pro mea facilitate boni consulo, quanquam ne haec quidem desiderare possum.

Quid enim est cur tusculum aut molam, aut hircum, aut suem requiram, quum mihi mortales omnes ubique gentium eum cultum persolvant, qui vel a Theologis maxime probari solet? Nisi forte Dianae debeam invidere, quod illi humano sanguine litatur. Ego me tum religiosissime coli puto, quum passim, ut faciunt omnes, animo complectuntur, moribus exprimunt, vita repraesentant. Qui quidem Divorum cultus nec apud Christianos admodum frequens est. Quanta turba eorum, qui deiparae virgini cereolum affigunt, idque in meridie, quum nihil est opus! rursum quam pauci, qui eandem vitae castimonia, modestia, coelestium rerum amore studeant aemulari! Nam is demum verus est cultus longeque coelitibus gratissimus. Praeterea cur templum desiderem, quum orbis hic universus templum mihi sit, ni fallor, pulcerrimum? Neque vero desunt mystae, nisi ubi desunt homines.

Nec iam usque adeo stulta sum, ut saxeas ac coloribus fucatas imagines requiram, quae cultui nostro nonnunquam officiunt, quum a stupidis, et pinguibus istis, signa pro divis ipsis adorantur. Nobis interim usu venit, quod solet iis, qui a vicariis suis extruduntur. Mihi tot statuas erectas puto, quot sunt mortales, vivam mei imaginem prae se ferentes, etiamsi nolint. Itaque nihil est quod reliquis diis invideam, si aliis in angulis terrarum alii colantur, idque statis diebus; quemadmodum Rhodi Phoebus, in Cypro Venus, Argis Iuno, Athenis Minerva, in Olympo Iupiter, Tarenti Neptunus, Lampsaci Priapus, modo mihi communiter orbis omnis longe potiores victimas assidue praebeat.

ENGLISH

and certainly safer, to neglect them than to worship them; just as some people are so difficult and so quick to take offense that you would do better to keep them as total strangers than as friends. "But nobody," they say, "sacrifices to Folly or builds her a temple." As I said, I am somewhat amazed at this ingratitude myself. But being easy-going, I take this too in good part, though in fact I could not even feel the lack of such things.

Why should I demand a pinch of incense or a salted cake, a goat or a pig, when all mortals everywhere in the world pay me the kind of worship that even the theologians usually approve most highly? Unless perhaps I ought to envy Diana because she is appeased with human blood. I consider myself most devoutly worshipped when people everywhere, as they all do, embrace me in their hearts, express me in their conduct and represent me in their lives. This kind of worship of the saints is not exactly common among Christians either. What a crowd of people fix a little candle before the Virgin Mother of God, and at midday too, when there is no need! And how few, on the other hand, strive to imitate her in purity of life, modesty and love of heavenly things! Yet that, after all, is true worship, and by far the most pleasing to those in heaven. Besides, why should I want a temple, when this whole world is my temple, and, unless I am mistaken, the most beautiful one there is? Nor do I lack initiates, except where there are no human beings.

Nor am I so foolish as to require images of stone daubed with paint, which sometimes get in the way of our worship, when dull, thick-witted people adore the statues instead of the saints themselves. Then the same thing would happen to me as to those who are pushed out by their own deputies. I reckon I have as many statues set up as there are mortals, for every one of them carries a living image of me, even against his will. So I have no reason to envy the other gods if they are worshipped some in one corner of the earth and some in another, and on fixed days at that: Phoebus at Rhodes, Venus in Cyprus, Juno at Argos, Minerva at Athens, Jupiter on Olympus, Neptune at Tarentum, Priapus at Lampsacus. All I ask is that the whole world together should constantly offer me far better victims.

Folly's Followers

Chapters 48–60
The professions and estates: teachers, poets, lawyers, philosophers, theologians, monks, princes, courtiers, bishops, cardinals and popes.

CHAPTER 48

LATIN

48 Atque si cui videor haec audacius quam verius dicere, agedum paulisper ipsas hominum vitas inspiciamus, quo palam fiat, et quantum mihi debeant, et quanti me faciant, maximi pariter ac minimi. At non quorumlibet vitam recensebimus; nam id quidem perlongum: verum insignium tantum, unde reliquos facile sit aestimare. Quid enim attinet, de vulgo plebeculaque commemorare, quae citra controversiam tota mea est? tot enim undique stultitiae formis abundat, tot in dies novas comminiscitur, ut nec mille Democriti ad tantos risus suffecerint: quanquam illis ipsis Democritis rursum alio Democrito foret opus. Quin etiam incredibile sit dictu, quos ludos, quas delicias homunculi quotidie praebeant superis. Nam hi quidem horas illas sobrias et antemeridianas iurgiosis consultationibus ac votis audiendis impartiunt.

Ceterum ubi iam nectare madent, neque lubet quicquam serium agere, tum, qua parte coelum quam maxime prominet, ibi consident ac pronis frontibus, quid agitent homines, speculantur. Nec est aliud spectaculum illis suavius. Deum immortalem, quod theatrum est illud! quam varius stultorum tumultus! Nam ipsa nonnunquam in Deorum poëticorum ordinibus considere soleo. Hic deperit in mulierculam, et quominus adamatur, hoc amat impotentius. Ille dotem ducit, non uxorem. Ille sponsam suam prostituit. Alius zelotypus, velut Argus, observat. Hic in luctu, papae! quam stulta dicit facitque! conductis etiam velut histrionibus, qui luctus fabulam peragant. Ille flet ad novercae tumulum. Hic, quidquid undecunque potest corradere, id totum ventriculo donat, paulo post fortiter esuriturus. Hic somno et otio nihil putat felicius. Sunt, qui alienis obeundis negotiis sedulo tumultuantur, sua negligunt.

ENGLISH

And if anyone thinks that I am saying all this more boldly than truly, come, let us take a brief look at the lives of men themselves. Then it will become plain how much they owe me and how highly they value me, the greatest and the least alike. But we will not review the life of just anybody, for that would take far too long; only those of distinguished people, from whom it will be easy to judge the rest. What is the point of talking about the common crowd and the little people, who are indisputably mine, every one of them? They abound in so many forms of folly on every side, and invent so many new ones every day, that a thousand Democrituses would not be enough for all the laughter; and those Democrituses would in turn need yet another Democritus. It is incredible, in fact, what sport and amusement these little men provide every day for the gods above. The gods give their sober morning hours to quarrelsome deliberations and to hearing prayers.

But once they are soaked in nectar and have no wish to do anything serious, they sit down where heaven juts out furthest and lean forward to watch what men are up to. There is no spectacle they enjoy more. Immortal God, what a theater that is! What a varied commotion of fools! For I myself sometimes take my seat among the ranks of the poets' gods. This man is dying of love for some woman, and the less he is loved in return, the more helplessly he loves. That one marries a dowry, not a wife. That one prostitutes his own bride. Another, in his jealousy, keeps watch like Argus. This one is in mourning, and goodness, what foolish things he says and does! He even hires people, like actors, to play out the drama of grief. That one weeps at his stepmother's grave. This one gives everything he can scrape together from anywhere

LATIN

Est qui versuris atque aere alieno divitem se esse putat, mox decocturus. Alius nihil arbitratur felicius, quam si ipse pauper haeredem locupletet. Hic ob exiguum, idque incertum lucellum, per omnia maria volitat, undis ac ventis vitam committens, nulla pecunia reparabilem. Ille mavult bello divitias quaerere, quam tutum otium exigere domi. Sunt qui captandis orbis senibus putant quam commodissime ad opes perveniri. Neque desunt, qui idem malint deamandis beatis aniculis aucupari. Quorum utrique tum demum egregiam de se voluptatem diis spectatoribus praebent, quum ab iis ipsis, quos captant, arte deluduntur. Est omnium stultissimum ac sordidissimum negotiatorum genus, quippe qui rem omnium sordidissimam tractent, idque sordidissimis rationibus; qui quum passim mentiantur, peierent, furentur, fraudent, imponant, tamen omnium primos sese faciunt, propterea quod digitos habeant auro revinctos.

Nec desunt adulatores fraterculi, qui mirentur istos ac venerabiles palam appellent, nimirum, ut ad ipsos aliqua male partorum portiuncula redeat. Alibi videas Pythagoricos quosdam, quibus usque adeo omnia videntur esse communia, ut quicquid usquam incustoditum nacti fuerint, id, velut haereditate obvenerit, aequo animo tollant. Sunt qui votis tantum divites sunt, et iucunda quaedam sibi fingunt somnia, idque ad felicitatem satis esse putant. Nonnulli foris divites haberi gaudent, domi gnaviter esuriunt. Hic festinat quicquid habet profundere, ille per fas nefasque congerit. Hic candidatus ambit populares honores, ille ad focum semet oblectat. Bona pars lites nunquam finiendas agitat, et hinc atque hinc certatim contendunt, ut prorogatorem iudicem et collusorem ditent advocatum. Hic rebus novandis studet, ille magnum quiddam molitur.

ENGLISH

to his belly, and will soon go bravely hungry. This one thinks nothing happier than sleep and idleness. There are those who bustle about busily in other people's affairs and neglect their own.

There is one who thinks himself rich on loans and debts, and will soon go bankrupt. Another thinks nothing happier than to live poor himself and make his heir rich. This one, for a tiny and uncertain profit, flits across every sea, entrusting to waves and winds a life that no money can buy back. That one prefers to seek riches in war rather than spend a safe and leisurely life at home. Some think that the most convenient road to wealth is courting childless old men. Nor are there lacking those who prefer to hunt the same game by making love to rich old women. Both kinds give the gods who watch them particularly fine entertainment when they are cleverly outwitted by the very people they are angling for. The most foolish and the most sordid of all are the merchants, since they handle the most sordid thing of all, and by the most sordid methods. They lie, perjure themselves, steal, cheat and deceive at every turn, and yet they consider themselves the first of all men, because their fingers are ringed with gold.

Nor are there lacking flattering friars to admire them and call them "venerable" in public, no doubt so that some little share of their ill-gotten gains may come back to them. Elsewhere you may see certain Pythagoreans, so convinced that all things are held in common that whatever they find unguarded anywhere they calmly carry off, as if it had come to them by inheritance. There are those who are rich only in wishes; they invent pleasant dreams for themselves and think that is enough for happiness. Some delight in being thought rich abroad, while at home they starve industriously. This one hastens to squander whatever he has, that one heaps up wealth by fair means or foul. This one is a candidate canvassing for public office, that one amuses himself by his own fireside. A good many keep lawsuits going that will never end, and both sides compete eagerly to enrich the judge who keeps adjourning the case and the advocate who is in collusion. This one is eager for revolution, that one is plotting some grand enterprise.[1]

1 The Pythagoreans were credited with the saying that among friends all things are held in common.

LATIN	ENGLISH
Est qui Hierosolymam, Romam, aut divum Jacobum adeat, ubi nihil est illi negotii, domi relictis cum uxore liberis. In summa, si mortalium innumerabiles tumultus e Luna, quemadmodum Menippus olim, despicias, putes te muscarum aut culicum videre turbam inter se rixantium, bellantium, insidiantium, rapientium, ludentium, lascivientium, nascentium, cadentium, morientium. Neque satis credi potest, quos motus, quas tragoedias ciat tantulum animalculum, tamque mox periturum. Nam aliquoties vel levis belli, seu pestilentiae procella multa simul millia rapit ac dissipat.	There is one who goes off to Jerusalem, Rome or St. James, where he has no business at all, leaving his wife and children at home. In short, if you were to look down from the Moon, as Menippus once did, on the countless commotions of mortals, you would think you were seeing a swarm of flies or gnats, quarreling among themselves, fighting, plotting, robbing, playing, frolicking, being born, falling and dying. It is scarcely to be believed what upheavals, what tragedies so tiny a creature stirs up, and one so soon to perish. For sometimes the storm of even a minor war or plague sweeps away and scatters many thousands at once.[2]

SCHOOLMASTERS

Folly describes grammarians tyrannizing their pupils and quarreling over words, yet happy in their delusions.

LATIN	ENGLISH
49 Sed ipsa stultissima sim, planeque digna, quam multis cachinnis rideat Democritus, si pergam popularium stultitiarum et insaniarum formas enumerare. Ad eos accingar, qui sapientiae speciem inter mortales tenent, et aureum illum ramum, ut aiunt, aucupantur; inter quos Grammatici primas tenent, genus hominum profecto, quo nihil calamitosius, nihil afflictius, nihil aeque diis invisum foret, nisi ego miserrimae professionis incommoda dulci quodam insaniae genere mitigarem. Neque enim πέντε κατάραις, id est, quinque tantum diris obnoxii sunt isti, quemadmodum indicat epigramma Graecum, verum sexcentis, ut qui semper famelici sordidique in ludis illis suis, in ludis dixi, imo in φροντιστηρίοις vel pistrinis potius ac carnificinis inter puerorum greges consenescant laboribus, obsurdescant clamoribus, foetore paedoreque contabescant.	But I should be the greatest fool of all, and richly deserve Democritus' guffaws, if I went on listing the forms of popular folly and madness. I shall turn to those who have a reputation for wisdom among mortals and go hunting for that golden bough, as they say. Among them the grammarians hold first place: a race of men than whom nothing would be more wretched, more afflicted or more hated by the gods, if I did not soften the hardships of their most miserable profession with a sweet kind of madness. For they are subject not to πέντε κατάραις, that is, to just five curses, as the Greek epigram has it, but to six hundred. Always hungry and squalid in those schools of theirs (schools, did I say? rather φροντιστηρίοις [thinking-shops], or better still treadmills and torture chambers), among herds of boys they grow old with toil, go deaf with the noise, and waste away in stench and filth.[3]
Tamen meo beneficio fit, ut sibi primi mortalium esse videantur: adeo sibi placent, dum pavidam turbam minaci vultu voceque territant, dum ferulis, virgis, lorisque conscindunt miseros, dumque modis omnibus suo arbitratu saeviunt, asinum illum Cumanum imitantes. Interim sordes illae merae mundiciae videntur, paedor amaricinum olet, miserrima illa servitus regnum esse putatur, adeo ut tyrannidem suam nolint cum	Yet thanks to me they seem to themselves the foremost of mortals. They are so pleased with themselves as they terrify the frightened crowd with a threatening face and voice, as they cut the poor wretches to pieces with canes, rods and straps, and as they rage in every possible way at their whim, imitating that famous ass of Cumae. Mean-

2 St. James is the pilgrimage shrine of Santiago de Compostela. In Lucian's Icaromenippus the Cynic Menippus flies up to the Moon and looks down on human affairs.
3 A Greek epigram (by Palladas) jokes that the grammarian's lot is the five curses packed into the opening line of the Iliad; the "thinking-shop" is Socrates' school in Aristophanes' Clouds.

LATIN

Phalaridis aut Dionysii imperio commutare. Sed longe etiam feliciores sunt, nova quadam doctrinae persuasione. Siquidem quum [plerique] mera deliramenta pueris inculcent, tamen dii boni! quem non illi Palaemonem, quem non Donatum prae sese contemnunt? idque nescio quibus praestigiis mire efficiunt, ut stultis materculis et idiotis patribus tales videantur, quales ipsi se faciunt.

Iam adde et hoc voluptatis genus, quoties istorum aliquis Anchisae matrem, aut voculam vulgo incognitam, in putri quapiam charta deprehenderit, puta bubsequam, bovinatorem aut manticulatorem, aut si quis vetusti saxi fragmentum, mutilis notatum litteris, alicubi effoderit: o Iupiter! quae tum exultatio, qui triumphi, quae encomia, perinde quasi vel Africam devicerint, vel Babylonas ceperint. Quid autem quum frigidissimos et insulsissimos versiculos suos passim ostentant, neque desunt qui mirentur, iam plane Maronis animam in suum pectus demigrasse credunt. At nihil omnium suavius, quam quum ipsi inter sese mutua talione laudant ac mirantur, vicissimque scabunt. Quod si quis alius verbulo lapsus sit, idque forte fortuna hic oculatior deprehenderit, Ἡράκλεις, quae protinus tragoediae, quae digladiationes, quae convicia, quae invectivae! Male propitios habeam omneis Grammaticos, si quid mentior.

Novi quendam πολυτεχνότατον, Graecum, Latinum, mathematicum, philosophum, medicum, καὶ ταῦτα βασιλικόν, iam sexagenarium, qui ceteris rebus omissis, annis plus viginti se torquet ac discruciat in grammatica, prorsus felicem se fore ratus, si tamdiu liceat vivere, donec certo statuat, quomodo distinguendae sint octo partes orationis, quod hactenus nemo Graecorum aut Latinorum ad plenum praestare valuit. Perinde quasi res sit bello quoque vindicanda, si quis coniunctionem faciat dictionem ad adverbiorum ius pertinentem.

ENGLISH

while their filth seems to them pure elegance, the stench smells of marjoram, and that most wretched servitude is taken for a kingdom; so much so that they would not exchange their tyranny for the rule of Phalaris or Dionysius. But they are far happier still because of a curious conviction of their own learning. For though most of them cram the boys with sheer drivel, yet, good gods, what Palaemon, what Donatus do they not look down on compared with themselves? And by some sort of conjuring trick they marvelously manage to seem to foolish mothers and unlearned fathers exactly what they make themselves out to be.[4]

Add to this another kind of pleasure. Whenever one of them discovers in some moldy document the name of Anchises' mother, or some little word unknown to ordinary people (say bubsequa, bovinator or manticulator), or digs up somewhere a fragment of an ancient stone marked with mutilated letters: O Jupiter! What exultation then, what triumphs, what eulogies, as if they had conquered Africa or captured Babylon! And what about when they show off their utterly frigid and insipid little verses everywhere, and there are people to admire them? Then they believe that Virgil's soul has migrated straight into their own breasts. But nothing is sweeter than when they praise and admire one another, returning like for like, and scratch each other's backs in turn. And if someone else slips on a single little word, and one of these sharper-eyed men happens to catch it, Ἡράκλεις [Heracles!], what tragedies at once, what sword fights, what abuse, what invectives! May all the grammarians be against me if I am lying.[5]

I know a man who is πολυτεχνότατον [master of very many arts], a Greek scholar, a Latinist, a mathematician, a philosopher, a physician, καὶ ταῦτα βασιλικόν [and a royal one at that], now sixty years old. Leaving everything else aside, he has for more than twenty years been tormenting and torturing himself over grammar. He is convinced that he will be perfectly happy if he lives long enough to settle for certain how the eight parts of speech are to be distinguished, something

4 The ass of Cumae put on a lion's skin and terrorized the locals until he was found out. Phalaris and Dionysius were notorious Sicilian tyrants; Remmius Palaemon and Aelius Donatus were famous Roman grammarians.
5 Rare archaic Latin words: bubsequa, "cowherd"; bovinator, "wrangler"; manticulator, "pickpocket."

LATIN

ENGLISH

that no one among the Greeks or the Latins has yet managed to do completely. As if it were a matter to be decided even by war, if someone makes a conjunction of a word that belongs under the jurisdiction of adverbs.[6]

Et hac gratia, quum totidem sint grammaticae quot grammatici, imo plures, quandoquidem Aldus meus unus plus quinquies grammaticam dedit: hic nullam omnino quantumvis barbare aut moleste scriptam praetermittit, quam non evolvat excutiatque, nemini non invidens, si quid quantumlibet inepte moliatur in hoc genere, misere timens, ne quis forte gloriam hanc praeripiat, et pereant tot annorum labores. Utrum insaniam hanc vocare mavultis, an stultitiam! Nam mea quidem haud magni refert, modo fateamini meo beneficio fieri, ut animal omnium alioqui longe miserrimum, eo felicitatis evehatur, ut sortem suam neque cum Persarum regibus cupiat permutare.

And so, since there are as many grammars as there are grammarians, or rather more (my friend Aldus alone has brought out a grammar more than five times), this man passes over none, however barbarously or tediously written, without unrolling and scrutinizing it. He envies anyone who attempts anything in this field, however inept, and is wretchedly afraid that someone may snatch this glory from him first, and the labor of so many years be lost. Would you rather call this madness or folly? It hardly matters to me, so long as you admit that it is my doing that a creature otherwise by far the most wretched of all is raised to such a height of happiness that it would not wish to exchange its lot even with the kings of Persia.[7]

POETS, RHETORICIANS AND AUTHORS

Folly mocks poets, rhetoricians and writers who chase fame, praise one another and plagiarize.

LATIN

ENGLISH

50 Minus mihi debent poëtae, tametsi vel ex professo meae sunt factionis, quippe liberum genus, ut habet proverbium, quorum omne studium non alio pertinet, quam ad demulcendas stultorum aures, idque meris nugamentis, ac ridiculis fabulis. Et tamen his freti dictu mirum, ut quum sibi polliceantur immortalitatem, et diis parem vitam, tum aliis eandem promittant. Huic ordini prae ceteris familiares Φιλαυτία καὶ Κολακία, nec ab ullo mortalium genere colar neque simplicius, neque constantius.

The poets owe me less, though they openly belong to my party. They are a free race, as the proverb says, and their whole effort aims at nothing but soothing the ears of fools, and that with sheer trifles and ridiculous tales. And yet, relying on these, marvelous to say, they promise themselves immortality and a life equal to the gods', and promise the same to others as well. This order is on closer terms than any other with Φιλαυτία καὶ Κολακία [Self-Love and Flattery], and no race of mortals worships me more simply or more faithfully.

Porro rhetores, quanquam nonnihil illi quidem praevaricantur, colluduntque cum philosophis, tamen hos quoque nostrae factionis esse, quum alia multa, tum illud in primis arguit, quod praeter alias nugas, tam accurate, tam multa de iocandi ratione conscripserunt: atque adeo stultitiam ipsam inter facetiarum species numerat, quisquis is fuit, qui ad Herennium dicendi artem scripsit: quodque apud Quintilianum, huius ordinis longe principem, caput est de risu vel Iliade prolixius:

Then the rhetoricians. Although they do play a bit of a double game and collude with the philosophers, they too belong to our party. Many things prove it, but above all the fact that, among their other trifles, they have written so carefully and at such length about the art of joking. Indeed, whoever it was who wrote the art of speaking addressed to Herennius counts folly itself among the kinds of wit; and Quintilian, by far the chief of this

6 Usually identified as Thomas Linacre (c. 1460–1524), royal physician and author of Latin grammars.
7 Aldus Manutius (c. 1450–1515), the Venetian scholar-printer, who published Erasmus's Adages in 1508.

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tantumque stultitiae tribuunt, ut saepenumero, quod nullis argumentis dilui possit, risu tamen eludatur. Nisi si quis hoc arbitretur ad stultitiam non pertinere, ridiculis dictis excitare cachinnos, idque arte. Huius farinae sunt et isti, qui libris edendis famam immortalem aucupantur. Hi quum omnes mihi plurimum debent, tum praecipue qui meras nugas chartis illinunt.

Nam qui erudite ad paucorum doctorum iudicium scribunt, quique nec Persium nec Laelium iudicem recusant, mihi quidem miserandi magis, quam beati videntur, ut qui sese perpetuo torqueant: addunt, mutant, adimunt, reponunt, repetunt, recudunt, ostendunt, nonum in annum premunt, nec unquam sibi satisfaciunt, ac futile praemium, nempe laudem, eamque perpaucorum, tanti emunt, tot vigiliis, somnique rerum omnium dulcissimi tanta iactura, tot sudoribus, tot crucibus. Adde nunc valetudinis dispendium, formae perniciem, lippitudinem, aut etiam caecitatem, paupertatem, invidiam, voluptatum abstinentiam, senectutem praeproperam, mortem praematuram, et si qua sunt alia eiusmodi. Tantis malis sapiens ille redimendum existimat, ut ab uno aut altero lippo probetur.

At meus ille scriptor, quanto delirat felicius, dum nulla lucubratione, verum utcunque visum est animo, quicquid in calamum incidit, vel somnia sua, statim litteris prodit, levi duntaxat chartarum iactura, non ignarus, futurum, ut, quo nugaciores nugas scripserit, hoc a pluribus, id est, stultis et indoctis omnibus probetur. Quid enim est negotii, treis illos doctos, si tamen ea legerint, contemnere? Aut quid valebit tam paucorum sapientum calculus in tam immensa reclamantium turba? Sed magis etiam sapiunt, qui aliena pro suis edunt, et alieno magnoque partam labore gloriam verbis in se transmovent, hoc videlicet freti, quod arbitrentur futurum, ut etiam si maxime coarguantur plagii, tamen aliquanti temporis usuram sint interim lucrifacturi.

ENGLISH

order, has a chapter on laughter longer than the Iliad. They attribute so much to folly that what cannot be refuted by any argument is often dodged by a laugh. Unless perhaps someone thinks that raising guffaws with funny sayings, and by art at that, has nothing to do with folly. Of the same stamp are those who hunt for immortal fame by publishing books. They all owe me a great deal, but especially those who smear sheer trifles over their pages.[8]

For those who write learnedly for the judgment of a few scholars, and would not refuse even Persius or Laelius as their judge, seem to me more to be pitied than happy, since they torture themselves without end. They add, change, cut, restore, revise, recast, show their work around, keep it back till the ninth year, and are never satisfied with themselves. And a worthless reward, namely praise, and the praise of very few at that, they buy at so high a price: so many sleepless nights, such loss of sleep, the sweetest of all things, so much sweat, so many torments. Add now the damage to their health, the ruin of their looks, bleary eyes or even blindness, poverty, envy, abstinence from pleasure, early old age, premature death, and anything else of that kind. That wise man thinks it worth paying for with such great evils, just to win the approval of one or two bleary-eyed scholars.[9]

But my kind of writer: how much more happily he raves! He burns no midnight oil. Just as the fancy takes him, he at once publishes whatever drops from his pen, even his dreams, at no greater cost than a little paper. He knows perfectly well that the more trifling the trifles he writes, the more people will approve of them, that is, all the fools and the unlearned. What trouble is it to disregard those three scholars, if indeed they even read it? And what weight will the vote of so few wise men carry against so vast a crowd shouting the other way? But wiser still are those who publish other people's work as their own, and with mere words transfer to themselves the glory won by someone else's great labor. They rely, of course, on the belief that even if they are convicted of plagiarism,

8 The Rhetorica ad Herennium is an anonymous Roman handbook once attributed to Cicero; Quintilian treats laughter in his Training of the Orator 6.3.

9 The satirist Lucilius said he did not care to be read by the learned Persius but wanted Laelius as a reader (Cicero, On the Orator 2.25); Horace advises keeping a work back until the ninth year (Art of Poetry 388).

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they will meanwhile have enjoyed the profit of it for some time.

Videre est operae pretium, quam hi sibi placent, quum vulgo laudantur, quum digito ostenduntur in turba, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ δεινὸς ἐκεῖνος, quum apud bibliopolas prostant, quum in omnium paginarum frontibus leguntur tria nomina, praesertim peregrina, ac magicis illis similia. Quae, per Deum immortalem! quid aliud sunt quam nomina? deinde quam a paucis cognoscenda, si mundi vastitatem respicias: tum a quanto paucioribus laudanda, ut sunt etiam indoctorum diversa palata. Quid? quod ea ipsa nomina non raro confinguntur, aut e priscorum libris adoptantur, quum alius sese Telemachum, alius Sthenelum aut Laertem: hic Polycratem, ille Thrasymachum sese nominari gaudet; ut nihil iam referat, etiam si chamaeleonti aut cucurbitae, sive, quemadmodum solent philosophi loqui, alpha aut beta librum inscribas.

It is worth seeing how pleased they are with themselves when the crowd praises them, when they are pointed out with a finger in a throng, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ δεινὸς ἐκεῖνος [that's the famous genius], when they are on display in the booksellers' shops, when on the title page of every book three names can be read, preferably foreign ones that sound like magic spells. And by immortal God, what are they but names? Then, consider how few will even know them, if you look at the vastness of the world; and how many fewer still will praise them, since even the unlearned have differing tastes. What is more, these very names are often made up, or borrowed from the books of the ancients. One delights in calling himself Telemachus, another Sthenelus or Laertes, this one Polycrates, that one Thrasymachus. So it no longer matters whether you put Chameleon or Gourd on your book, or, as the philosophers like to say, alpha or beta.

Illud autem lepidissimum, quum mutuis epistolis, carminibus, encomiis sese vicissim laudant, stulti stultos, indoctos indocti. Hic illius suffragio discedit Alcaeus, ille huius Callimachus, ille huic est M. Tullio superior, hic illi Platone doctior. Nonnunquam etiam antagonistam quaerunt, cuius aemulatione famam augeant. Hinc *Scinditur incertum studia in contraria vulgus*, donec uterque dux re bene gesta victor discedit, uterque triumphum agit. Rident haec sapientes, ut, veluti sunt, stultissima. Quis enim negat? Sed interim meo beneficio suavem vitam agunt, ne cum Scipionibus quidem suos triumphos commutaturi. Quanquam docti quoque interim, dum haec magna cum animi voluptate rident et aliena fruuntur insania, non paulum mihi debent et ipsi, quod inficiari non possunt, nisi sint omnium ingratissimi.

But the most delightful thing of all is when they praise one another in turn with letters, poems and encomiums, fools praising fools and the unlearned the unlearned. This one leaves the field an Alcaeus by that one's vote, and that one a Callimachus by this one's. To this one, that one is superior to Cicero; to that one, this one is more learned than Plato. Sometimes they even look for an opponent, so as to increase their fame by the rivalry. Hence *the fickle crowd is split into opposing factions*, until each leader comes off the victor after a successful campaign, and each celebrates a triumph. The wise laugh at all this as utterly foolish, which it is. Who denies it? But meanwhile, thanks to me, these people lead a pleasant life, and would not exchange their triumphs even for those of the Scipios. And yet the learned too, while they laugh at all this with great delight and enjoy other people's madness, owe me no small debt themselves, and they cannot deny it unless they are the most ungrateful of all men.

LAWYERS AND LOGICIANS

Folly mocks lawyers piling up glosses and dialecticians wrangling over nothing.

LATIN

ENGLISH

51 Inter eruditos Iureconsulti sibi vel primum vindicant locum, neque quisquam alius aeque sibi placet, dum

Among the learned, the lawyers claim even first place for themselves, and no one else is so pleased

LATIN

Sisyphi saxum assidue volvunt, ac sexcentas leges eodem spiritu contexunt, nihil refert quam ad rem pertinentes, dumque glossematis glossemata, opiniones opinionibus cumulantes, efficiunt ut studium illud omnium difficillimum esse videatur. Quicquid enim laboriosum, idem protinus et praeclarum existimant. Adiungamus his dialecticos ac sophistas, hominum genus quovis aere Dodonaeo loquacius, ut quorum unusquivis cum vicenis dilectis mulieribus garrulitate decertare possit, feliciores tamen futuri, si tantum linguaces essent, non etiam rixosi, adeo ut de lana caprina pertinacissime digladientur, et nimium altercando plerumque veritatem amittant. Hos tamen sua philautia beatos reddit, dum tribus instructi syllogismis, incunctanter audent quavis de re cum quovis manum conserere. Ceterum pertinacia reddit invictos, etiamsi Stentorem opponas.

ENGLISH

with himself. All the while they keep rolling the stone of Sisyphus, stringing together six hundred laws in a single breath, no matter how little to the point; and by heaping glosses on glosses and opinions on opinions they make their study seem the most difficult of all. For whatever is laborious they immediately consider splendid as well. Let us add to them the dialecticians and sophists, a race of men more talkative than any bronze of Dodona, so that any one of them could compete in chatter with twenty picked women. They would be happier, though, if they were merely talkative and not also quarrelsome; as it is, they fight tooth and nail over goat's wool, and by too much wrangling they generally lose sight of the truth. Still, their self-love makes them blissful, as, armed with three syllogisms, they unhesitatingly dare to cross swords with anyone on any subject. And their obstinacy makes them invincible, even if you set Stentor against them.[10]

NATURAL PHILOSOPHERS

Folly ridicules philosophers who claim to measure the heavens and see quiddities while knowing nothing.

LATIN

52 Sub hos prodeunt philosophi, barba pollioque verendi, qui se solos sapere praedicant, reliquos omnes mortales, umbras volitare. Quam vero suaviter delirant, quum innumerabiles aedificant mundos, dum solem, dum lunam, stellas, orbes, tanquam pollice filove metiuntur, dum fulminum, ventorum, eclipsium ac ceterarum inexplicabilium rerum caussas reddunt, nihil usquam haesitantes, perinde quasi naturae rerum architectrici fuerint a secretis, quasive e deorum consilio nobis advenerint: quos interim natura cum suis coniecturis magnifice ridet. Nam nihil apud illos esse comperti, vel illud satis magnum est argumentum, quod singulis de rebus inexplicabilis inter ipsos est digladiatio.

Ii, quum nihil omnino sciant, tamen omnia se scire profitentur: quumque se ipsos ignorent, neque fossam aliquoties, aut saxum obvium videant, vel quia lippiunt plerique, vel quia peregrinantur animi, tamen ideas, universalia, formas separatas, primas materias,

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After them come the philosophers, venerable for their beards and cloaks, who proclaim that they alone are wise and that all other mortals are flitting shadows. How delightfully they rave when they build countless worlds, when they measure the sun, the moon, the stars and the spheres as if with thumb and thread, when they give the causes of thunderbolts, winds, eclipses and other inexplicable things, never hesitating for a moment! It is as though they had been private secretaries to Nature, the architect of the universe, or had come to us straight from the council of the gods. Meanwhile Nature has a grand laugh at them and their conjectures. For that they have nothing certain is proved well enough by this alone: on every single question there is endless strife among them.

Though they know nothing at all, they claim to know everything. Though they do not know themselves, and sometimes cannot see a ditch or a stone in their path (either because most of them are bleary-eyed or because their minds are wan-

10 A proverb from Erasmus's Adages: the bronze vessels at the oracle of Dodona rang on endlessly. Stentor is the loud-voiced herald of the Iliad.

LATIN	ENGLISH
quidditates, ecceitates, [formalitates, instantia] videre se praedicant, res adeo tenues, ut neque Lynceus, opinor, possit perspicere. Tum vero praecipue profanum vulgus aspernantur, quoties triquetris et tetragonis circulis, atque huiusmodi picturis mathematicis, aliis super alias inductis, et in labyrinthi speciem confusis, praeterea litteris velut in acie dispositis, ac subinde alio atque alio repetitis ordine, tenebras offundunt imperitioribus. Neque desunt ex hoc genere qui futura quoque praedicant consultis astris, ac miracula plus quam magica polliceantur, et inveniunt homines fortunati, qui haec quoque credant.	dering), yet they proclaim that they see ideas, universals, separate forms, prime matters, quiddities, haecceities, [formalities, instants]: things so fine that not even Lynceus, I think, could make them out. They look down on the profane crowd most of all when they pour darkness over the less expert with their triangles, squares and circles and such mathematical figures, drawn one on top of another and jumbled into the shape of a labyrinth, and with letters too, drawn up as if in battle array and repeated over and over in different orders. Nor are there lacking some of this kind who also foretell the future by consulting the stars, and promise marvels beyond magic; and they find lucky people who believe this too.

THE THEOLOGIANS

Folly turns warily to the theologians and their absurd scholastic questions about God and the sacraments.

LATIN	ENGLISH
53 Porro Theologos silentio transire fortasse praestiterit, καὶ ταύτην Καμαρίναν μὴ κινεῖν, nec hanc anagyrim tangere, utpote genus hominum mire superciliosum atque irritabile, ne forte turmatim sexcentis conclusionibus adoriantur, et ad palinodiam adigant; quod si recusem, protinus haereticam clamitent. Nam illico solent hoc terrere fulmine, si cui sunt parum propitii.	As for the theologians, it might be better to pass them over in silence, καὶ ταύτην Καμαρίναν μὴ κινεῖν [and not stir up this Camarina], and not to touch this stinking weed. They are a remarkably haughty and touchy race of men, and they might attack me in squadrons with six hundred conclusions and force me to recant; and if I refused, they would at once shout "Heretic!" For this is the thunderbolt they usually terrify people with when they are not well disposed toward them.[11]
Sane quanquam non alii sunt, qui minus libenter agnoscant meam in se beneficentiam, tamen hi quoque non mediocribus nominibus obstricti sunt, dum, felices sua Philautia, perinde quasi ipsi tertium incolant coelum, ita reliquos mortaleis omneis, ut humi reptantes pecudes, e sublimi despiciunt, ac prope commiserantur, dum tanto magistralium definitionum, conclusionum, corollariorum, propositionum explicitarum et implicitarum agmine septi sunt, tot exuberant κρησφυγέτοις, ut nec Vulcaniis vinculis sic possint irretiri, quin elabantur distinctionibus, quibus nodos omneis adeo facile secant, ut non Tenedia bipennis melius: tot nuper excogitatis vocabulis ac prodigiosis vocibus scatent.	Now although no one is less willing to acknowledge my kindness to them, these men too are bound to me by no small debts. Happy in their self-love, as if they themselves dwelt in the third heaven, they look down from on high on all other mortals as on cattle crawling on the ground, and almost pity them. They are fenced about by such an army of magisterial definitions, conclusions, corollaries, and explicit and implicit propositions; they abound in so many κρησφυγέτοις [bolt-holes] that not even Vulcan's chains could ensnare them so tightly that they would not slip out by means of distinctions. With these they cut through every knot so easily that the axe of Tenedos could not do it better. And they teem with so many newly devised terms and monstrous words![12]

11 Two proverbs from the Adages: draining the marsh of Camarina brought disaster on the town, and the anagyris is a shrub that stinks all the worse when touched.

LATIN

Praeterea dum arcana mysteria suo explicant arbitratu, qua ratione conditus ac digestus sit mundus; per quos canales labes illa peccati in posteritatem derivata sit: quibus modis, qua mensura, quantulo tempore in virginis utero sit absolutus Christus: quemadmodum in synaxi accidentia subsistant sine domicilio. Sed haec protrita. Illa demum magnis et illuminatis, ut vocant, theologis digna putant; ad haec, si quando incidunt, expergiscuntur: num quod instans in generatione divina? num plures in Christo filiationes? num possibilis propositio: Pater Deus odit filium? num Deus potuerit suppositare mulierem, num Diabolum, num asinum, num cucurbitam, num silicem? Tum quemadmodum cucurbita fuerit concionatura, editura miracula, figenda cruci? et quid consecrasset Petrus, si consecrasset eo tempore, quo corpus Christi pendebat in cruce?

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Then too, they explain hidden mysteries as they please: by what plan the world was created and set in order; through what channels the stain of sin has been passed down to posterity; by what means, in what measure and in how short a time Christ was completed in the Virgin's womb; how in the Eucharist accidents subsist without a dwelling place. But these are commonplaces. What they consider worthy of great and "illuminated" theologians, as they call them, and what wakes them up if ever it comes up, is this: Is there any instant in the divine generation? Are there several filiations in Christ? Is the proposition "God the Father hates the Son" possible? Could God have taken the person of a woman, or of the Devil, or of an ass, or of a gourd, or of a flint? And then, how would the gourd have preached, worked miracles and been nailed to the cross? And what would Peter have consecrated if he had consecrated at the time when Christ's body was hanging on the cross?

et num eodem tempore Christus homo dici potuerit: et num post resurrectionem edere aut bibere fas sit futurum, iam nunc famem sitimque praecaventes? Sunt innumerabiles λεπτολεσχίαι, his quoque multo subtiliores, de notionibus, relationibus, de formalitatibus, de quidditatibus, ecceitatibus, quas nemo possit oculis assequi, nisi tam Lynceus, ut ea quoque per altissimas tenebras videat, quae nusquam sunt. Adde nunc his γνώμας, illas, adeo παραδόξους, ut illa Stoicorum oracula, quae paradoxa vocant, crassissima prae his videantur et circumforanea, velut: levius esse crimen, homines mille iugulare, quam semel in die Dominico calceum pauperi consuere; et: potius esse committendum, ut universus orbis pereat una cum victu et vestitu, quod aiunt, suo, quam unicum quantumlibet leve mendaciolum dicere.

and whether at that same time Christ could have been called a man; and whether after the resurrection we shall be allowed to eat and drink, as they take precautions against hunger and thirst already now? There are countless λεπτολεσχίαι [subtle hair-splittings] subtler still than these, about notions, relations, formalities, quiddities and haecceities, which nobody could follow with his eyes unless he were such a Lynceus that he could see, through the deepest darkness, even things that exist nowhere. Add to these their γνώμας [maxims], so παραδόξους [paradoxical] that the Stoic oracles called paradoxes seem utterly crude and commonplace beside them. For example: that it is a lighter offense to murder a thousand men than to stitch a poor man's shoe once on the Lord's Day; and that one should rather let the whole world perish, with its food and clothing, as they say, than tell a single little lie, however slight.

COULD THE APOSTLES PASS THE EXAM?

Folly imagines the apostles failing the scholastic theologians' tests on faith, grace and the sacraments.

LATIN

Iam has subtilissimas subtilitates subtiliores etiam reddunt tot scholasticorum viae, ut citius e labyrinthis

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These most subtle subtleties are made subtler still by the many ways of the scholastics, so that you

12 Vulcan trapped Mars and Venus in an unbreakable net; the "axe of Tenedos," a proverb from the Adages, stands for summary decisiveness.

LATIN

temet explices, quam ex involucris Realium, Nominalium, Thomistarum, Albertistarum, Occanistarum, Scotistarum, et nondum omneis dixi sectas, sed praecipuas duntaxat: in quibus omnibus tantum est eruditionis, tantum difficultatis, ut existimem ipsis apostolis alio spiritu opus fore, si cogantur hisce de rebus cum hoc novo theologorum genere conserere manus. Paulus fidem praestare potuit; at idem quum ait: *Fides est substantia rerum sperandarum, argumentum non apparentium*, parum magistraliter definivit. Idem ut charitatem optime praestitit, ita parum dialectice vel dividit, vel finit, in priore ad Corinthios epistola, cap. decimo tertio.

Ac pie quidem illi consecrabant synaxim, et tamen rogati de termino a quo, et termino ad quem, de transsubstantiatione, de modo quo corpus idem sit in diversis locis, de differentia, qua corpus Christi est in coelo, qua fuit in cruce, qua in sacramento synaxeos, quo puncto fiat transubstantiatio, quum oratio per quam ea fit, ut quantitas discreta sit in fluxu, non pari, sicut opinor, respondissent acumine, quo Scotidae disserunt haec ac definiunt. Noverant illi Iesu matrem; sed quis eorum tam philosophice demonstravit, quomodo fuerit ab Adae macula praeservata, quam nostri theologi? Petrus accepit claves, et accepit ab eo, qui non committat indigno; et tamen an intellexerit, nescio, certe nusquam attigit subtilitatem, quomodo scientiae clavem habeat is quoque, qui scientiam non habeat.

Baptizabant illi passim, et tamen nusquam docuerunt, quae sit caussa formalis, materialis, efficiens, et finalis baptismi; nec characteris delebilis et indelebilis apud hos ulla mentio. Adorabant quidem illi, sed in spiritu, nihil aliud sequentes, quam illud evangelicum: *spiritus est Deus, et eos, qui adorant eum, in spiritu et veritate oportet adorare*. Verum haud apparet eis tum fuisse revelatum, una eademque adoratione adorandam imagunculam carbone delineatam in pariete, et Christum ipsum, si modo duobus sit porrectis digitis, intonsa coma, et in umbone,

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could sooner find your way out of a labyrinth than out of the tangles of the Realists, Nominalists, Thomists, Albertists, Occamists and Scotists; and I have not named all the sects, only the main ones. In all of them there is so much learning and so much difficulty that I think the apostles themselves would need another spirit if they were forced to engage this new breed of theologians on these questions. Paul could display faith; but when he says, *Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the proof of things not seen*, his definition was hardly magisterial. And though he practiced charity superbly, he divides and defines it with little dialectical skill in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, chapter thirteen.[13]

They consecrated the Eucharist devoutly, to be sure. But suppose they had been asked about the terminus a quo and the terminus ad quem; about transubstantiation; about how the same body can be in different places; about the difference between the way Christ's body is in heaven, the way it was on the cross and the way it is in the sacrament of the Eucharist; about the point at which transubstantiation takes place, given that the words by which it takes place, being a discrete quantity, are in flux. They would not, I think, have answered with the same acuteness with which the Scotists discuss and define these things. They knew the mother of Jesus; but which of them demonstrated as philosophically as our theologians how she was preserved from the stain of Adam? Peter received the keys, and received them from one who would not entrust them to an unworthy man; and yet whether he understood, I do not know. Certainly he never touched on the subtle question of how even a man who does not have knowledge can have the key of knowledge.

They baptized everywhere, and yet they never taught what the formal, material, efficient and final causes of baptism are, nor do they ever mention the delible and indelible character. They worshipped, indeed, but in spirit, following nothing but that saying of the Gospel: *God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth*. But it does not appear to have been revealed to them at the time that one and the same adoration

13 The followers of Thomas Aquinas, Albert the Great, William of Ockham and Duns Scotus; Realists and Nominalists disputed whether universals really exist. The definition of faith is from Hebrews 11:1, then ascribed to Paul.

LATIN

qui adhaeret occipitio, treis habeat notas. Quis enim haec percipiat nisi triginta sex annos totos in physicis et ultramundanis Aristotelis et Scoticis contriverit! Idemtidem inculcant Apostoli gratiam; at iidem nusquam distinguunt, quid intersit inter gratiam gratis datam, et gratiam gratificantem.

Hortantur ad bona opera, nec discernunt opus operans et opus operatum. Passim inculcant charitatem, nec secernunt infusam ab acquisita, nec explicant, accidensne sit, an substantia, creata res an increata. Detestantur peccatum; at emoriar, si potuerunt scientifice definire, quid sit illud, quod peccatum vocamus, nisi forte Scotistarum spiritu fuerunt edocti. Nec enim adduci possum, ut credam Paulum, e cuius unius eruditione licet omneis aestimare, toties damnaturum fuisse quaestiones, disceptationes, genealogias, et, ut ipse vocat, λογομαχίας, si eas percalluisset argutias, praesertim quum omnes illius temporis contentiones pugnaeque rusticanae fuerint et crassae, si cum magistrorum nostrorum plus quam Chrysippeis subtilitatibus conferantur.

Quanquam homines modestissimi, si quid forte scriptum sit ab apostolis indolatius parumque magistraliter, non damnant quidem, sed commode interpretantur: hoc videlicet honoris, partim antiquitati, partim apostolico nomini deferentes. Et hercle parum aequum erat, res tantas ab illis requirere, de quibus ex praeceptore suo ne verbum quidem unquam audissent. Idem si eveniat in Chrysostomo, Basilio, Hieronymo, tum sat habent adscribere: non tenetur. Et illi quidem confutarunt ethnicos philosophos ac Iudaeos, suapte natura pertinacissimos, sed vita magis ac miraculis, quam syllogismis, tum eos quorum nemo fuerit idoneus, vel unicum Scoti Quodlibetum ingenio consequi.

Nunc quis ethnicus, quis haereticus non continuo cedat tot tenuissimis subtilitatibus, nisi tam crassus, ut non

ENGLISH

is to be paid to a little image sketched in charcoal on a wall and to Christ himself, provided it has two fingers raised, uncut hair, and three rays in the halo stuck to the back of its head. For who could grasp these things unless he had spent thirty-six whole years on the physics and metaphysics of Aristotle and Scotus? The apostles drive home grace again and again; yet they never distinguish between grace freely given and grace that makes acceptable.

They urge good works, but they do not distinguish between opus operans and opus operatum. They constantly drive home charity, but do not separate infused charity from acquired, nor explain whether it is an accident or a substance, a created or an uncreated thing. They detest sin; but may I die if they could define scientifically what it is that we call sin, unless perhaps they had been taught by the spirit of the Scotists. For I cannot be brought to believe that Paul, from whose learning alone we may judge all the rest, would so often have condemned questions, disputes, genealogies and what he himself calls λογομαχίας [battles of words], if he had been well versed in these subtleties; especially since all the disputes and fights of that time were rustic and crude compared with the more-than-Chrysippean subtleties of our masters.[14]

Yet these most modest men, if anything happens to have been written by the apostles rather roughly and unmagisterially, do not condemn it, but interpret it kindly, paying this honor partly to antiquity and partly to the apostolic name. And, by Hercules, it would hardly have been fair to demand such great matters of the apostles, when they had never heard a single word about them from their teacher. If the same thing happens in Chrysostom, Basil or Jerome, the theologians are content to write in the margin: "Not binding." Those Fathers did refute the pagan philosophers and the Jews, who are by nature most obstinate; but they did it by their lives and miracles rather than by syllogisms, and they refuted men none of whom would have had the wit to grasp even a single Quodlibet of Scotus.[15]

Now what pagan, what heretic would not give way at once to so many exquisitely fine subtleties? Un-

14 Chrysippus was the hair-splitting Stoic logician. "Our masters" (magistri nostri) was the formal title of doctors of theology.
15 A Quodlibet was a scholastic disputation on any question whatever; Scotus's Quodlibetal Questions were notoriously difficult.

LATIN

assequatur, aut tam impudens, ut exsibilet, aut iisdem instructus laqueis, ut iam par sit pugna, perinde quasi magnum cum magno committas, aut si gladio fortunato pugnet aliquis cum eo, cui gladius sit fortunatus: tum enim nihil aliud quam tela Penelopes retexeretur. Ac meo quidem iudicio saperent Christiani, si pro pinguibus istis militum cohortibus, per quas iam olim ancipiti Marte belligerantur, clamosissimos Scotistas, et pertinacissimos Occanistas, et invictos Albertistas una cum tota sophistarum manu mitterent in Turcas et Saracenos: spectarent, opinor, et conflictum omnium lepidissimum, et victoriam non ante visam. Quis enim usque adeo frigidus, quem istorum non inflamment acumina? Quis tam stupidus, ut tales non excitent aculei?

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less he is so dense that he cannot follow them, or so impudent that he hisses them off the stage, or armed with the same snares, so that the fight is evenly matched, as if you pitted a giant against a giant, or as if a man with a charmed sword fought another whose sword was charmed too. For then it would be nothing but Penelope's web, woven and unwoven. In my judgment the Christians would be wise, instead of those fat troops of soldiers with whom they have long been waging war with uncertain fortune, to send against the Turks and Saracens the most clamorous Scotists, the most obstinate Occamists and the invincible Albertists, together with the whole band of sophists. They would witness, I think, the most delightful battle ever fought and a victory never seen before. Who is so cold that these men's subtleties would not set him on fire? Who so dull that such stings would not rouse him?

Quis tam oculatus, ut haec illi non maximas offundant tenebras? Verum haec omnia videor vobis propemodum ioco dicere. Nec mirum sane, quum sint et inter ipsos Theologos melioribus instituti litteris, qui ad has frivolas, ut putant, Theologorum argutias nauseent. Sunt, qui velut sacrilegii genus exsecrentur, summamque ducant impietatem, de rebus tam arcanis, et adorandis magis, quam explicandis, tam illoto ore loqui, tam prophanis Ethnicorum argutiis disputare, tam arroganter definire, ac divinae theologiae maiestatem tam frigidis, imo sordidis verbis simul et sententiis conspurcare. At interim ipsi felicissime sibi placent, imo plaudunt, adeo ut his suavissimis naeniis nocte dieque occupatis ne tantulum quidem otii supersit, ut evangelium aut Paulinas epistolas vel semel liceat evolvere.

Who so sharp-sighted that they would not plunge him into the thickest darkness? But you think I am saying all this half in jest. And no wonder, since even among the theologians themselves there are men educated in better letters who are sickened by what they consider the trivial quibbles of the theologians. There are some who curse it as a kind of sacrilege and consider it the height of impiety to speak with such unwashed mouths about things so hidden, things to be adored rather than explained; to dispute about them with the profane quibbles of the pagans, to define them so arrogantly, and to defile the majesty of divine theology with such cold, indeed sordid, words and ideas. But meanwhile the theologians are blissfully pleased with themselves, and even applaud themselves; and they are so busy with these delightful trifles night and day that they have not the least bit of leisure left to open the Gospel or the epistles of Paul even once.

GUARDIANS OF ORTHODOXY

Folly mocks theologians who reshape Scripture, judge heresies and dispute bad Latin as matters of faith.

LATIN

Atque interim dum haec nugantur in scholis, existimant sese universam ecclesiam, alioqui ruituram, non aliter syllogismorum fulcire tibicinibus, quam Atlas coelum humeris sustinet apud poetas. Iam illud quantae felicitatis esse putatis, dum arcanas litteras, perinde

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And while they play these games in the schools, they believe they are propping up the whole Church, which would otherwise collapse, with the props of their syllogisms, just as Atlas holds up the sky on his shoulders in the poets. Now think how

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quasi cereae sint, pro libidine formant ac reformant, dum conclusiones suas, quibus iam aliquot scholastici subscripserunt, plusquam Solonis leges videri postulant, et vel pontificiis decretis anteponendas, dumque veluti censores orbis ad palinodiam trahunt, si quid usquam cum explicitis et implicitis illorum conclusionibus non ad amussim quadrarit, ac non secus atque ex oraculo pronuntiant: Haec propositio scandalosa est, haec parum reverentialis, haec haeresim olet, haec male tinnit; ut iam nec baptismus, nec evangelium, nec Paulus aut Petrus, nec sanctus Hieronymus aut Augustinus, imo nec ipse Thomas Ἀριστοτελικώτατος, Christianum efficiat, nisi baccalauriorum calculus accesserit; tanta est in iudicando subtilitas.

Quis enim sensurus erat, eum Christianum non esse, qui diceret has duas orationes, *matula putes*, et *matula putet*, item *ollam fervere*, et *ollam fervere*, pariter esse congruas, nisi sapientes illi docuissent? Quis tantis errorum tenebris liberasset ecclesiam, quos ne lecturus quidem unquam quisquam fuerat, nisi magnis sigillis isti prodidissent? Verum an non felicissimi, dum haec agunt? praeterea dum inferorum res omneis sic examussim depingunt, tanquam in ea republica complures annos sint versati? praeterea dum pro arbitrio novos orbes fabricantur, addito denique latissimo illo pulcerrimoque, ne scilicet deesset, ubi felices animae commode vel spatiari, vel convivium agitare, vel etiam pila ludere possent.

His atque id genus bis mille nugis horum capita adeo distenta differtaque sunt, ut arbitrer nec Iovis cerebrum aeque gravidum fuisse, quum ille Palladem parturiens Vulcani securim imploraret. Quare nolite mirari, si videtis caput illorum tot fasciis tam diligenter obvinctum in publicis disputationibus; alioquin enim plane dissilirent. Illud ipsa quoque nonnunquam ridere soleo, quum ita demum maxime sibi videntur theologi, si quam maxime barbare spurceque loquantur, quumque adeo balbutiunt, ut a nemine nisi balbo possint intelligi, acumen appellant, quod vulgus non assequatur. Negant enim e dignitate sacrarum litterarum esse, si grammaticorum legibus parere cogantur. Mira vero

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much happiness this brings them. They shape and reshape the sacred Scriptures as they please, as if they were made of wax. They demand that their conclusions, once a few scholastics have signed them, should count for more than the laws of Solon and be preferred even to papal decrees. Like censors of the world, they force a recantation of anything anywhere that does not square exactly with their explicit and implicit conclusions, and pronounce as if from an oracle: "This proposition is scandalous; this one insufficiently reverential; this smells of heresy; this has a bad ring." So now neither baptism nor the Gospel, neither Paul nor Peter, neither St. Jerome nor Augustine, not even Thomas himself, Ἀριστοτελικώτατος [the most Aristotelian], can make a man a Christian unless the bachelors' vote is added. So great is their subtlety in judging!

Who would have realized that a man was no Christian if he said that these two expressions, *matula putes* and *matula putet*, and likewise *ollam fervere* and *ollam fervere*, are equally correct, if those wise men had not taught us? Who would have freed the Church from such darkness of error, errors that nobody would ever even have read about if these men had not published them under great seals? Are they not supremely happy while they do these things? And when they describe everything in hell so precisely, as if they had spent many years in that commonwealth? And when they fabricate new spheres at will, adding at last that broadest and most beautiful one, so that the blessed souls should not lack a place where they can comfortably stroll, or hold banquets, or even play ball?[16]

With these and two thousand other trifles of the kind their heads are so stretched and stuffed that I doubt whether even Jupiter's brain was so pregnant when, in labor with Pallas, he begged for Vulcan's axe. So do not be surprised if you see their heads so carefully bound up with so many bands at public disputations; otherwise they would simply burst. I myself sometimes laugh at this too: the theologians think themselves at their very best when they speak most barbarously and foully; and when they stammer so badly that no one but a stammerer can understand them, they call it

16 Matula putes, "chamber pot, you stink," versus matula putet, "the chamber pot stinks"; the second pair, "the pot boils," differs only in vowel quantity (fervēre / fervĕre), which the print does not show.

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maiestas theologorum, si solis illis fas est mendose loqui, quanquam hoc ipsum habent cum multis cerdonibus commune.	acuteness, because the common herd cannot follow it. For they say it is beneath the dignity of sacred letters to be forced to obey the laws of the grammarians. What a wonderful majesty the theologians have, if they alone are allowed to speak incorrectly! Though they share this very privilege with plenty of cobblers.
Postremo iam diis proximos sese ducunt, quoties quasi religiose Magistri Nostri salutantur, in quo quidem nomine tale quiddam subesse putant, quale est apud Iudaeos τετραγράμματον. Itaque nefas aiunt esse Magister Noster secus quam maiusculis scribere litteris. Quod si quis praepostere Noster Magister dixerit, is semel omnem Theologici nominis perverterit maiestatem.	Finally, they consider themselves next to the gods whenever they are greeted, almost reverently, as "Our Masters." They think this title contains something like the τετραγράμματον [the four-letter name of God] among the Jews. So they say it is sacrilege to write Magister Noster in anything but capital letters. And if anyone were to say it backwards, Noster Magister, he would at a stroke overturn the whole majesty of the theological title.

MONKS AND FRIARS

Folly describes monks who glory in ignorance, rules, habits and names rather than in charity.

LATIN	ENGLISH
54 Ad horum felicitatem proxime accedunt ii, qui se vulgo religiosos ac monachos appellant, utroque falsissimo cognomine, quum et bona pars istorum longissime absit a religione, et nulli magis omnibus locis sint obvii. Iis non video quid possit esse miserius, nisi ego multis modis succurrerem. Etenim quum hoc hominum genus omnes sic exsecrentur, ut fortuitum etiam occursum ominosum esse persuasum sit, tamen ipsi sibi magnifice blandiuntur. Primum summam existimant pietatem, si usque adeo nihil attigerint litterarum, ut ne legere quidem possint. Deinde quum psalmos suos, numeratos quidem illos, at non intellectos, asininis vocibus in templis derudunt, tum vero se putant divorum aures multa voluptate demulcere. Et sunt ex his nonnulli, qui sordes ac mendicitatem magno vendunt, proque foribus magno mugitu panem efflagitant, imo in.	Closest to the happiness of these men come those who commonly call themselves members of religious orders and monks, though both names are utterly false: a good part of them are as far as possible from religion, and no one is more often met with everywhere. I do not see what could be more wretched than they are, if I did not come to their aid in many ways. For though everyone so detests this kind of man that even meeting one by chance is thought to bring bad luck, they flatter themselves magnificently. First, they consider it the height of piety to have had so little to do with letters that they cannot even read. Next, when they bray out their psalms in church with asses' voices, counting them, to be sure, but not understanding them, they think they are soothing the ears of the saints with great delight. And there are some among them who sell their squalor and beggary at a high price, and bellow for bread before people's doors; indeed, in[17]
nullis diversoriis, vehiculis, navibus non obturbant, non mediocri profecto reliquorum mendicorum iactura. Atque ad eum modum homines suavissimi, sordibus, inscitia, rusticitate, impudentia, apostolos (ut aiunt) nobis referunt. Quid autem iucundius, quam quod omnia faciunt ex praescripto, quasi mathematicis utentes	every inn, carriage and ship they make a nuisance of themselves, to the no small loss, surely, of the other beggars. In this way these most charming men, with their filth, ignorance, boorishness and shamelessness, recreate the apostles for us (as they say). And what is more delightful than the

17 Monachus, "monk," comes from Greek monos, "alone."

LATIN

rationibus, quas praeterire piaculum sit? Quot nodos habeat calceus, quo colore cingula, vestis quot discriminibus varieganda, qua materia, quotque culmis latum cingulum, qua specie et quot modiorum capax cuculla, quot digitis latum capillitium, quot dormiendum horas. Atque haec quidem aequalitas in tanta corporum et ingeniorum varietate quam sit inaequalis, quis non perspicit? Et tamen his nugis non alios modo per se nauci faciunt, verum invicem alii alios contemnunt, atque homines apostolicam charitatem professi, ob aliter cinctam vestem, ob colorem paulo fusciorem, omnia miris tragoediis miscent.

Ex his videas quosdam adeo rigide religiosos, ut summa veste, non nisi cilicina utantur, intima Milesia; alios contra, qui superne linei sint, intime lanei: rursum alios, qui pecuniae contactum ceu aconitum horreant, nec a vino interim, nec a mulierum contactu temperantes. Denique mirum omnibus studium, ne quid in ratione vitae conveniat: nec illud studio est, ut Christo similes sint, sed ut inter se dissimiles. Porro magna felicitatis pars est in cognomentis, dum hi funigeros appellari se gaudent, et inter hos alii Coletas, alii Minores: alii Minimos: alii Bullistas. Rursum hi Benedictinos, illi Bernardinos, hi Brigidenses, illi Augustinenses: hi Guilhelmitas, illi Iacobitas, quasi vero parum sit, dici Christianos.

Horum magna pars in tantum suis nititur cerimoniis et hominum traditiunculis, ut putet unum coelum parum dignum esse tantis meritis praemium, haud cogitantes futurum, ut Christus contemptis his omnibus, suum illud sit exacturus praeceptum, nempe charitatis. Alius ostentabit aqualiculum, omni piscium genere distentum. Alius psalmorum centum effundet modios. Alius ieiuniorum myriadas annumerabit, et toties unico prandio pene disruptam imputabit alvum. Alius tantum cerimoniarum acervum proferet, quantum vix septem onerariis navibus vehi possit. Alius gloriabitur sexaginta annos nunquam attactam pecuniam, nisi digitis duplici chirotheca munitis. Alius cucullam ingeret, adeo sordidam et crassam, ut nullus nauta suo dignetur corpore. Commemorabit alius se plusquam undecim

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way they do everything by rule, as if following mathematical calculations that it would be a sin to depart from? How many knots the shoe should have, what color the girdle, how many variations on the habit, of what material and how many straws wide the belt, of what shape and how many bushels' capacity the cowl, how many fingers wide the tonsure, how many hours of sleep. Yet who does not see how unequal this equality is, given such variety of bodies and minds? And over these trifles they not only think others worthless compared with themselves, but despise one another; and men who profess apostolic charity throw everything into an extraordinary uproar over a habit belted differently or a color a little darker.

Among them you may see some so rigidly religious that they wear nothing but haircloth on top and fine Milesian wool underneath; others, on the contrary, who are linen outside and wool inside; others again who shrink from touching money as if it were aconite, while not refraining from wine, or from touching women. In short, they all take wonderful pains that nothing in their way of life should agree. Their aim is not to be like Christ, but to be unlike one another. And a large part of their happiness lies in their names. Some delight in being called Cord-wearers, and among these some are Colettines, others Minors, others Minims, others Bullists. Then some are Benedictines, others Bernardines, these Bridgettines, those Augustinians, these Williamites, those Jacobins, as though it were not enough to be called Christians.[18]

A great many of them rely so heavily on their ceremonies and petty human traditions that they think a single heaven hardly a worthy reward for such great merits. It never occurs to them that Christ will scorn all this and demand his own commandment, the commandment of charity. One will show off his paunch, stuffed with every kind of fish. Another will pour out a hundred bushels of psalms. Another will count up myriads of fasts, and claim credit for a belly that a single meal a day has so often nearly burst. Another will produce such a heap of ceremonies that seven merchant ships could hardly carry them. Another will boast that for sixty years he never touched

18 The "Cord-wearers" are the Franciscans and related orders, which wore a knotted cord; the Jacobins were the Dominicans of Paris.

LATIN	ENGLISH
lustris spongiae vitam egisse, semper eidem affixum loco. Alius raucam assiduo cantu vocem adducet, alius lethargum solitudine contractum, alius linguam iugi silentio torpentem.	money except with his fingers protected by two pairs of gloves. Another will thrust forward a cowl so filthy and coarse that no sailor would think it fit to wear. Another will relate that for more than fifty-five years he has lived the life of a sponge, always fixed to the same spot. Another will bring a voice gone hoarse from constant chanting, another a lethargy contracted in solitude, another a tongue numbed by unbroken silence.

CHRIST'S VERDICT ON THE MONKS

Folly imagines Christ at the judgment rejecting the monks' boasts and asking only about charity.

LATIN	ENGLISH
At Christus, interpellatis nunquam alioqui finiendis gloriis, Undenam hoc, inquiet, novum Iudaeorum genus? Unicam ego legem vere meam agnosco, de qua sola nihil audio. Et olim palam nulloque parabolarum utens involucro, paternam haereditatem pollicitus sum, non cucullis, preculis, aut inediis, sed charitatis officiis. Nec eos agnosco, qui sua facta nimis agnoscunt: isti qui me quoque sanctiores videri volunt, Abraxasiorum coelos, si libet, occupent, aut ab his sibi novum exstrui coelum iubeant, quorum traditiunculas meis praeceptis anteposuerunt. Quum haec audient, et videbunt nautas et aurigas sibi praeferri, quibus putatis vultibus sese mutuo contuebuntur? Sed interim spe sua felices sunt, non absque meo beneficio.	But Christ will interrupt these boasts, which would otherwise never end, and say: "Where does this new race of Jews come from? I recognize only one law as truly mine, and of that alone I hear nothing. Long ago, openly and with no veil of parables, I promised my Father's inheritance not to cowls, little prayers or fasts, but to works of charity. Nor do I acknowledge those who acknowledge their own deeds too well. Let these men, who want to seem holier even than I am, take over the heavens of the Abraxasians, if they like, or order a new heaven to be built for them by those whose petty traditions they have preferred to my commandments." When they hear this, and see sailors and carters preferred to themselves, with what faces, do you think, will they look at one another? But meanwhile they are happy in their hope, and not without my help.[19]

THE PREACHING FRIARS

Folly parodies the friars' sermons, their absurd openings, grammar lessons on the Trinity and theatrical delivery.

LATIN	ENGLISH
Atque hos quidem, quanquam a republica semotos, nemo tamen audet contemnere, praecipue mendicantes, propterea quod omnia omnium arcana teneant, ex confessionibus quas vocant: quae tamen prodere nefas habent, nisi si quando poti, fabulis amoenioribus delectare se volunt, sed coniecturis modo rem indicant, tacitis interim nominibus. Quod si quis hos crabrones irritarit, tum in popularibus concionibus probe ulciscuntur sese, et obliquis dictis hostem notant, adeo tecte, ut nemo non intelligat, nisi qui nihil intelligit: nec	Yet no one dares to despise these men, cut off as they are from public life, and especially the mendicants, because they hold everyone's secrets through what they call confessions. They consider it a sin to reveal these, of course, except now and then when they have been drinking and want to amuse themselves with some livelier stories; but even then they only hint at the matter by conjecture and keep the names quiet. And if anyone stirs up these hornets, they take thorough revenge in

19 The Gnostic Basilides taught that there were 365 heavens, whose ruler he called Abraxas.

LATIN

prius oblatrandi finem faciunt, quam in os offam obieceris. Age vero, quem tu mihi comoedum, quem circulatorem spectare malis, quam istos in concionibus suis rhetoricantes omnino ridicule, sed tamen suavissime imitantes ea, quae rhetores de dicendi ratione tradiderunt?

Deum immortalem, ut gesticulantur, ut apte commutant vocem, ut cantillant, ut iactant sese, ut subinde alios atque alios vultus induunt, ut omnia clamoribus miscent! Atque hanc orandi artem ceu rem arcanam fraterculus fraterculo per manus tradit. Eam tametsi mihi non est fas scire, tamen utcunque coniecturis sequar. Primo loco invocant, id quod a poetis mutuo sumpserunt: deinde dicturi de charitate, a Nilo Aegypti fluvio sumunt exordium, aut crucis mysterium enarraturi, a Babylonio dracone Bel feliciter auspicantur: aut de ieiunio disputaturi, a duodecim zodiaci signis principium faciunt: aut de fide verba facturi, diu de quadratura circuli proloquuntur.

Audivi ipsa quendam eximie stultum, erravi, doctum volebam dicere, qui, in concione celeberrima divinae triadis mysterium explicaturus, quo et doctrinam suam non vulgarem ostentaret, et theologicis satisfaceret auribus, nova prorsus ingressus est via, nimirum a litteris, syllabis, et oratione, tum a concordia nominis et verbi, adiectivi nominis et substantivi, mirantibus iam plerisque, ac nonnullis Horatianum illud apud se mussitantibus: Quorsum haec tam putida tendunt? Tandem huc rem deduxit, ut in grammaticorum rudimentis sic expressum ostenderet totius Triadis simulacrum, ut nemo mathematicorum in pulvere posset evidentius depingere. Atque in hac oratione θεολογότατος ille totos octo menses ita desudarat, ut hodie quoque magis caecutiat quam talpae, nimirum tota luminum acie ad ingenii cuspidem avocata. Verum haud poenitet hominem caecitatis, ac parvo quoque putat emptam eam gloriam.

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their public sermons, and brand their enemy with oblique remarks, so covertly that everyone understands except those who understand nothing. Nor do they stop barking until you throw a sop into their mouths. Come now, what comic actor, what mountebank would you rather watch than these men speechifying in their sermons, quite ridiculously and yet most delightfully, as they imitate what the rhetoricians have taught about the art of speaking?

Immortal God, how they gesticulate, how aptly they change their voices, how they sing-song, how they toss themselves about, how they put on one face after another, how they throw everything into confusion with their shouting! And this art of preaching is handed down from friar to friar like some secret mystery. Though it is not lawful for me to know it, I shall nevertheless follow it as best I can by guesswork. First they make an invocation, which they have borrowed from the poets. Next, if they are going to speak about charity, they begin with the Nile, the river of Egypt; or, if they are going to expound the mystery of the Cross, they make a happy start with Bel, the dragon of Babylon; or, if they are going to discourse on fasting, they begin with the twelve signs of the zodiac; or, if they are to speak on faith, they hold forth at length on squaring the circle.

I myself heard one exceptionally foolish man (a slip: I meant to say learned) who was to explain the mystery of the Holy Trinity in a very crowded sermon. To show off his uncommon learning and satisfy theological ears, he set off on an entirely new road. He started from letters, syllables and the sentence, and then from the agreement of noun and verb, and of adjective and substantive. Most of the audience were already marveling, and some were muttering to themselves that line of Horace: What is all this stale stuff driving at? At last he brought the matter round to showing that the image of the whole Trinity is expressed in the rudiments of grammar more clearly than any mathematician could draw it in the sand. That θεολογότατος [most theological] man had sweated over this sermon for eight whole months, so that today he is blinder than a mole, no doubt because the whole sharpness of his eyesight was drawn off into the point of his wit. But the man does not re-

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gret his blindness, and thinks that glory cheaply bought.

Auditus est a nobis alius quidam octogenarius, adeo theologus, ut in hoc Scotum ipsum renatum putes. Is explicaturus mysterium nominis Iesu, mira subtilitate demonstravit in ipsis litteris latere, quicquid de illo dici possit. Etenim quod tribus duntaxat inflectitur casibus, id manifestum esse simulacrum divini ternionis. Deinde quod prima vox Iesus, desinat in s, secunda Iesum in m, tertia Iesu in u, in hoc ἄῤῥητον subesse mysterium; nempe tribus litterulis indicantibus, eum esse summum, medium, et ultimum. Restabat mysterium his quoque retrusius, mathematica ratione. Iesus sic in duas aequales diffidit portiones, ut scilicet penthemimeres in medio resideret.

We heard another, a man of eighty, so thoroughly a theologian that you would think Scotus himself reborn in him. He was to explain the mystery of the name of Jesus, and demonstrated with marvelous subtlety that whatever can be said of him lies hidden in the very letters. For the fact that it is declined in only three cases is a clear image of the divine Trinity. Then the fact that the first form, Jesus, ends in s, the second, Jesum, in m, and the third, Jesu, in u, conceals an ἄῤῥητον [ineffable] mystery: the three little letters show that he is summum, medium and ultimum, the highest, the middle and the last. There remained a mystery hidden even deeper than these, by mathematical reasoning. He divided Jesus into two equal portions, so that a penthemimeris was left in the middle.[20]

Deinde docuit eam litteram apud Hebraeos esse ש, quam illi Syn appellent; porro syn, Scotorum, opinor lingua, peccatum sonat: atque hinc palam declarari, Iesum esse, qui peccata tolleret mundi. Hoc tam novum exordium sic inhiantes admirati sunt omnes, praecipue theologi, ut parum abfuerit, quin illis acciderit, quod olim Niobae, quum mihi propemodum evenerit, quod ficulno illi Priapo, qui magno suo malo Canidiae Saganaeque nocturna sacra spectavit. Nec iniuria profecto: nam quando similem ἔφοδον commentus est Demosthenes ille Graius, aut Cicero Latinus? Illis vitiosum habebatur prooemium, quod a re foret alienius: quasi vero non ad istum modum exordiantur et subulci, natura videlicet magistra.

Next he taught that this letter among the Hebrews is ש, which they call Syn; and syn, in the language of the Scots, I believe, means sin. From this, he said, it is plainly declared that Jesus is the one who takes away the sins of the world. Everyone gaped in admiration at this so novel opening, especially the theologians, so that they very nearly suffered the fate of Niobe long ago, while I very nearly suffered that of the fig-wood Priapus who, to his great misfortune, watched the nocturnal rites of Canidia and Sagana. And not without reason: when did the Greek Demosthenes or the Latin Cicero ever devise a similar ἔφοδον [approach]? They regarded an introduction as faulty if it was too remote from the subject; as if swineherds did not begin in just this way, with nature as their teacher, of course.[21]

At hi docti praeambulum suum, (sic enim vocant,) ita demum eximie rhetoricum fore ducunt, si nusquam quicquam habeat cum reliquo argumento confine, ut auditor interim admirans, illud secum murmuret: *quo nunc se proripit ille*? Tertio loco ceu narrationis vice nonnihil ex evangelio, sed cursim ac velut obiter interpretantur, quum id solum fuerit agendum. Quarto loco, iam nova sumpta persona, quaestionem movent theologalem, aliquoties οὔτε γῆς, οὔτε οὐρανοῦ

But these learned men think that their preamble (as they call it) will be outstandingly rhetorical only if it has nothing anywhere that borders on the rest of the argument, so that the listener, marveling all the while, mutters to himself: *where is he dashing off to now?* In the third place, by way of narration, they expound a little of the Gospel, but hastily and in passing, when that alone should have been their business. In the fourth place, now

20 Penthemimeris, "two and a half," is a metrical term; here it means the middle letter s of the five-letter IESUS.
21 Niobe was turned to stone. In Horace (Satires 1.8) a fig-wood statue of Priapus, watching the witches Canidia and Sagana, splits with a loud crack and sends them fleeing.

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ἁπτόμενον. Atque id quoque ad artem arbitrantur pertinere. Hic demum Theologicum attollunt supercilium, doctores solennes, doctores subtiles, doctores subtilissimos, doctores seraphicos, [doctores cherubicos], doctores sanctos, doctores irrefragabiles, magnifica nomina auribus inculcantes. Tum syllogismos, maiores, minores, conclusiones, corollaria, suppositiones frigidissimas, ac plusquam scholasticas nugas apud imperitum vulgus iactitant. Superest iam quintus actus, in quo summum artificem praestare convenit.

Hic mihi stultam aliquam et indoctam fabulam, ex Speculo opinor historiali, aut gestis Romanorum in medium adferunt, et eandem interpretantur allegorice, tropologice, et anagogice. Atque ad hunc quidem modum Chimaeram suam absolvunt, qualem nec Horatius unquam assequi potuit, quum scriberet: *Humano capiti* etc. Sed audierunt a nescio quibus, ingressum orationis sedatum minimeque clamosum esse oportere: itaque principio sic exordiuntur, ut nec ipsi vocem propriam exaudiant, quasi referat dici, quod nullus intelligat. Audierunt, nonnunquam ad concitandos affectus exclamationibus utendum esse: proinde presse alioqui loquentes, subinde repente vocem tollunt furioso plane clamore, etiam quum nihil opus. Iures elleboro homini opus esse, perinde quasi nihil referat, ubi clames.

Praeterea quoniam audierunt oportere sermonem in progressu fervescere, in singulis partibus, principiis utcunque sane recitatis, mox mira vocis contentione utuntur, etiamsi res sit frigidissima, atque ita denique desinunt, ut spiritu defectos credas. Postremo didicerunt, apud Rhetores de risu fieri mentionem, eoque student et ipsi iocos quosdam aspergere, ὦ φίλη Ἀφροδίτη! quam plenos gratiarum, quamque in loco, ut plane ὄνον πρὸς τὴν λύραν esse dicas. Mordent quoque nonnunquam, sed ita, ut titillent magis quam vulnerent. Nec unquam verius adulantur, quam quum maxime παῤῥησιάζεσθαι videri student. Denique tota actio est eiusmodi, ut iures eos a

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taking on a new character, they raise some theological question, often οὔτε γῆς, οὔτε οὐρανοῦ ἁπτόμενον [touching neither earth nor heaven]. And this too they think belongs to the art. Here at last they raise the theological eyebrow and drum magnificent names into people's ears: solemn doctors, subtle doctors, most subtle doctors, seraphic doctors, [cherubic doctors,] holy doctors, irrefutable doctors. Then they toss about before the unlearned crowd syllogisms, majors and minors, conclusions, corollaries, utterly frigid suppositions and more than scholastic trifles. There remains the fifth act, in which one ought to show supreme artistry.[22]

Here they bring out some foolish, ignorant tale, from the Mirror of History, I think, or the Deeds of the Romans, and interpret it allegorically, tropologically and anagogically. And so they complete their Chimaera, a monster such as not even Horace could ever achieve when he wrote: *To a human head* etc. But they have heard from someone or other that the beginning of a speech should be calm and not at all noisy. So they begin so softly that they cannot even hear their own voices, as though there were any point in saying what nobody can understand. They have heard that exclamations should sometimes be used to stir the emotions. So, though otherwise speaking low, every now and then they suddenly raise their voices in a downright frenzied shout, even when there is no need for it. You would swear the man needed hellebore, as if it made no difference where you shout.[23]

Moreover, since they have heard that a speech should warm up as it goes along, in each section they recite the opening somehow or other and then strain their voices amazingly, even if the matter is utterly cold, and end up so that you would think them completely out of breath. Lastly, they have learned that the rhetoricians mention laughter, so they too take pains to sprinkle in a few jokes. ὦ φίλη Ἀφροδίτη [O dear Aphrodite]! How full of grace they are, and how apt to the occasion! You would call it a perfect case of ὄνον πρὸς τὴν λύραν [an ass at the lyre]. Sometimes they bite as

22 Honorific titles of scholastic theologians: Henry of Ghent was the "solemn," Duns Scotus the "subtle," Bonaventure the "seraphic" and Alexander of Hales the "irrefutable" doctor.

23 Vincent of Beauvais's Speculum historiale and the Gesta Romanorum were popular medieval story collections. Horace's Art of Poetry opens with a painter joining a human head to a horse's neck.

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fori circulatoribus didicisse, a quibus longe vincuntur. Quanquam utrique alteris usque adeo sunt similes, ut nemo dubitet, quin aut hi ab illis, aut illi ab his rhetoricen suam didicerint.	well, but in such a way that they tickle rather than wound. And they never flatter more truly than when they are most eager to be seen παῤῥησιάζεσθαι [to speak their minds freely]. In short, their whole delivery is such that you would swear they had learned it from the mountebanks in the marketplace, who are far better at it. And yet the two are so alike that no one doubts that either these learned their rhetoric from those, or those from these.
Et tamen inveniunt hi quoque mea nimirum opera, qui, quum hos audiunt, Demosthenes meros ac Cicerones audire se putant. Quod genus sunt praecipue mercatores ac mulierculae: quorum auribus unice placere student, quod illi nonnullam praedae portiunculam de rebus male partis soleant impertiri, si commode fuerint palpati: illae quum aliis multis de caussis huic ordini favent, tum praecipue, quod in horum sinus soleant effundere, si quid in maritos stomachantur. Videtis opinor, quantopere mihi debeat hoc hominum genus, quum ceremoniolis et nugis deridiculis clamoribusque tyrannidem quandam inter mortales exerceant, et Paulos atque Antonios sese credant.	And yet these men too, thanks to me of course, find people who, when they hear them, think they are listening to veritable Demostheneses and Ciceros. These are chiefly merchants and simple women, and it is their ears that the preachers are especially eager to please. The merchants, if they have been properly flattered, usually hand out some small share of their ill-gotten loot. The women favor this order for many other reasons, but especially because they like to pour into the friars' bosoms whatever grievances they have against their husbands. You see, I think, how much this kind of man owes me, since with their petty ceremonies, ridiculous trifles and shouting they wield a kind of tyranny among mortals, and believe themselves to be Pauls and Anthonys.[24]

KINGS AND PRINCES

Folly describes the true burdens of a prince and how real princes ignore them for pleasure.

LATIN	ENGLISH
55 Verum ego istos histriones, tam ingratos beneficiorum meorum dissimulatores quam improbos simulatores pietatis, libenter relinquo. Iamdudum enim iuvat de regibus ac principibus aulicis, a quibus simplicissime colar, et, ut dignum est, ingenuis ingenue nonnihil attingere. Qui quidem si vel semunciam sani cordis haberent, quid esset horum vita tristius aut aeque fugiendum?	But I gladly leave these play-actors, who are as ungrateful in concealing my favors as they are shameless in faking piety. For I have long wanted to say a little about kings and courtly princes, who worship me with complete sincerity, and to speak frankly, as is only right, of such frank and open-hearted people. If they had even half an ounce of good sense, what life would be gloomier than theirs, or more to be avoided?
Neque enim existimabit vel periurio parricidioque parandum imperium, quisquis secum perpenderit, quam ingens onus sustineat humeris, qui vere principem agere velit: eum, qui rerum gubernacula susceperit, publicum, non privatum negotium gerere; nihil nisi de commodis publicis oportere cogitare; a legibus, quarum ipse et auctor et exactor est, nec latum digitum discedere:	No one would think a throne worth winning even by perjury and the murder of his own kin, if he weighed how vast a burden rests on the shoulders of anyone who wants to play the prince in earnest. He would reflect that whoever has taken the helm of affairs conducts public business, not private; that he must think of nothing but the common

24 St. Anthony of Egypt (died AD 356), the founding figure of Christian monasticism.

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officialium omnium et magistratuum integritatem sibi praestandam esse: sese esse unum omnium oculis expositum, qui vel, ceu sidus salutare, morum innocentia maximam rebus humanis salutem possit adferre, vel, veluti cometa letalis, summam perniciem invehere:

aliorum vitia neque perinde sentiri, neque tam late manare; principem eo loco esse, ut, si quid vel leviter ab honesto deflexerit, gravis protinus ad quam plurimos homines vitae pestis serpat: tum, quod multa secum adferat principum fortuna, quae soleant a recto deducere, quod genus deliciae, libertas, adulatio, luxus, hoc acrius enitendum ac sollicitius advigilandum, necubi vel deceptus cesset in officio: postremo, ut insidias, odia, ceteraque vel pericula vel metus omittam, capiti imminere verum illum regem, qui paulo post ab eo sit etiam de minimo quoque commisso rationem exacturus, idque tanto severius, quanto praestantius gessit imperium.

Haec, inquam, atque huiusmodi plurima, si princeps secum perpenderet, perpenderet autem si saperet, is nec somnum, nec cibum opinor iucunde capere posset. At nunc meo munere, has omnes curas diis permittunt, ipsi sese molliter curant, neque quenquam ad aurem admittunt, nisi qui iucunda loqui norit, ne quid animo sollicitudinis oboriatur. Se probe principis partes omneis implesse credunt, si venentur assidue, si bellos alant caballos, si suo commodo vendiderint magistratus ac praefecturas, si quotidie novae rationes excogitentur, quibus civium opes attenuent et in suum converrant fiscum, verum id apposite repertis titulis, ut, etiamsi sit iniquissimum, aliquam tamen aequitatis speciem prae se ferat. Addunt data opera nonnihil adulationis, quo populares animos utcunque sibi devinciant.

Fingite mihi nunc, quales sunt nonnunquam, hominem legum ignarum, publicorum commodorum pene hostem, privatis intentum commoditatibus, addictum voluptatibus, osorem eruditionis, osorem libertatis ac veri, nihil minus quam de reipublicae salute cogitantem, sed omnia sua libidine, suisque utilitatibus metientem:

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good; that he must not depart a finger's breadth from the laws of which he is both author and enforcer; that he must answer for the integrity of every official and magistrate; that he alone is set before the eyes of all, and can either, like a beneficent star, bring the greatest blessing to human affairs by the blamelessness of his life, or, like a deadly comet, bring the utmost ruin;

that the vices of other men are neither felt so much nor spread so widely, whereas a prince stands in such a place that if he swerves even slightly from what is right, a grievous plague on life at once creeps out to a great many people; then, that a prince's fortune brings with it many things that tend to lead a man off the straight path, such as pleasures, freedom, flattery and luxury, so that he must strive all the harder and keep watch all the more anxiously, lest he be deceived and somewhere fail in his duty; and finally, to say nothing of plots, hatreds and all the other dangers and fears, that over his head hangs that true King who will soon call him to account for even the smallest offense, and all the more severely the more powerful the rule he held.

If a prince weighed these things, I say, and many more like them, and he would weigh them if he were wise, he could not, I think, enjoy either his sleep or his food. But as it is, thanks to my gift, they leave all these cares to the gods and take tender care of themselves. They admit no one to their ear except those who know how to say pleasant things, so that no anxiety may spring up in their minds. They believe they have amply fulfilled every part of a prince's role if they hunt constantly, keep fine horses, sell magistracies and governorships to their own profit, and every day think up new schemes for draining the citizens' wealth and sweeping it into their own treasury. They do this, though, under aptly invented titles, so that even the most unjust measure wears some show of fairness. They deliberately add a little flattery as well, to bind the people's hearts to themselves one way or another.

Now picture for me a man such as princes sometimes are: ignorant of the laws, almost an enemy of the public good, intent on his private advantage, given over to pleasures, a hater of learning, a hater of freedom and truth, thinking of nothing less than the welfare of the state, and measuring

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deinde addite huic torquem auream, omnium virtutum cohaerentium consensum indicantem; tum coronam gemmis insignitam, quae quidem admoneat eum heroicis omnibus virtutibus oportere ceteris antecellere: praeterea sceptrum, iustitiae et undecunque incorrupti pectoris symbolum; postremo purpuram, eximiae cuiusdam in rempublicam charitatis indicium: haec gestamina si princeps cum sua vita conferret, equidem futurum arbitror, ut plane pudescat ornatus sui, vereaturque, ne quis nasutus interpres totum hunc tragicum cultum in risum iocumque vertat.	everything by his own desire and his own profit. Then put on him a golden chain, which signifies the harmony of all the virtues linked together; then a crown studded with gems, to remind him that he must surpass all others in every heroic virtue; besides that, a scepter, symbol of justice and of a heart uncorrupted on every side; and lastly the purple, a sign of an extraordinary love for the commonwealth. If a prince compared these trappings with his own life, I truly think he would be thoroughly ashamed of his finery, and would fear that some sharp-nosed interpreter might turn this whole tragic costume into laughter and a joke.

COURTIERS

Folly mocks noble courtiers whose days pass in sleep, feasting, gambling and display.

LATIN	ENGLISH
56 Iam quid de proceribus aulicis commemorem? quorum plerisque quum nihil sit addictius, servilius, insulsius, abiectius, tamen omnium rerum primos sese videri volunt; hac una in re tamen modestissimi, quod contenti, aurum, gemmas, purpuram, reliquaque virtutum ac sapientiae insignia corpore circumferre, rerum ipsarum studium omne concedunt aliis. Hoc abunde felices sibi videntur, quod regem herum vocare liceat, quod tribus verbis salutare didicerint, quod norint civiles titulos subinde inculcare, serenitatem, dominationem, et magnificentiam: quod egregie perfricuerint faciem, quod festiviter adulentur. Nam hae sunt artes, quae vere nobilem et aulicum deceant. Ceterum si vitae rationem omnem propius inspicias, nimirum meros Phaeacas invenies, sponsos Penelopes; reliquum carmen agnoscitis, quod Echo vobis melius referet quam ego.	Now what shall I say of the nobles of the court? Though most of them are as servile, slavish, witless and abject as anything could be, they still want to seem first in everything. In one respect, however, they are the most modest of men: content to carry about on their bodies gold, gems, purple and the other emblems of virtue and wisdom, they leave all concern for the things themselves to others. They think themselves abundantly happy that they may call the king "master," that they have learned to greet him in three words, that they know how to keep dropping the courtly titles, "Serenity," "Lordship" and "Magnificence," that they have rubbed every trace of shame from their faces, and that they flatter charmingly. For these are the arts that befit a true nobleman and courtier. But if you look more closely at their whole way of life, you will find nothing but Phaeacians, suitors of Penelope; you know the rest of the poem, which Echo will repeat for you better than I can.[25]
Dormitur in medios dies; ibi sacrificulus mercenarius ad lectum paratus, qui propemodum cubantibus adhuc sacrum expedite peragat. Mox ad ientaculum; quo vix peracto, iam interpellat prandium. Sub id alea, latrunculi, sortes, scurrae, moriones, scorta, lusus, inficetiae. Interim una aut altera merenda. Rursum coena; post hanc repotia, non una per Iovem. Atque ad hunc modum	They sleep till midday. There a hired priestling stands ready at the bedside to rattle through Mass for them while they are still practically lying down. Then off to breakfast; hardly is that over when lunch is calling. After it come dice, chess, lots, jesters, fools, prostitutes, games and crude jokes. Meanwhile a snack or two. Then supper

25 Horace, *Epistles* 1.2.27–29: "we are mere numbers, born to eat up the crops, suitors of Penelope, good-for-nothings, courtiers of Alcinous" (king of the pleasure-loving Phaeacians).

LATIN	ENGLISH
citra ullum vitae taedium elabuntur horae, dies, menses, anni, secula. Ipsa nonnunquam saginatior abeo, si quando viderim illos μεγαλοῤῥοῦντας, dum inter nymphas una quaeque hoc sibi videtur diis propior, quo caudam longiorem trahit, dum procerum alius alium cubito protrudit, quo Iovi vicinior esse videatur, dum sibi quisque hoc magis placet, quo graviorem catenam collo baiulat, ut robur etiam, non opes tantum ostentent.	again; after it, drinking bouts, and not just one, by Jupiter. And in this way, without the slightest weariness of life, hours, days, months, years and ages slip away. I myself sometimes go away quite fattened when I have watched these people μεγαλοῤῥοῦντας [putting on grand airs]: the ladies, each of whom thinks herself the nearer to the gods the longer the train she drags; the nobles, elbowing one another aside to seem closer to Jupiter; and each man the more pleased with himself the heavier the chain he carries round his neck, so as to show off his strength as well as his wealth.

BISHOPS

Folly contrasts the meaning of bishops' vestments with their real concern for money.

LATIN	ENGLISH
57 Ac principum quidem institutum summi pontifices, cardinales et episcopi iam pridem gnaviter aemulantur, ac prope superant. Porro si quis perpendat, quid linea vestis admoneat, niveo candore insignis, nempe vitam undiquaque inculpatam: quid sibi velit mitra bicornis, utrumque fastigium eodem cohibente nodo, puta novi pariter ac veteris instrumenti absolutam scientiam: quid manus chirothecis communitae, puram et ab omni rerum humanarum contagio immunem sacramentorum administrationem: quid pedum, nimirum crediti gregis vigilantissimam curam: quid praelata crux, videlicet omnium humanorum affectuum victoriam: haec, inquam, atque id genus multa, si quis perpendat, nonne tristem ac sollicitam vitam egerit? Ac nunc belle faciunt, quum sese pascunt. Ceterum ovium curam aut ipsi Christo mandant, aut in fratres, quos vocant, ac vicarios reiiciunt.	Popes, cardinals and bishops have long been busily imitating the ways of princes, and they nearly outdo them. Suppose someone considered what the linen vestment, conspicuous for its snowy whiteness, signifies: a life blameless in every respect. What the two-horned miter means, both its peaks held by the same knot: a perfect knowledge of the New and Old Testaments alike. What the gloved hands signify: an administration of the sacraments pure and untouched by any contagion of human affairs. What the crozier means: the most watchful care of the flock entrusted to them. What the cross carried before them means: victory over all human passions. If anyone considered these and many such things, I say, would he not lead a gloomy and anxious life? As it is, they do very nicely, feeding themselves. As for the care of the sheep, they either leave it to Christ himself or shift it onto those they call Brothers, and onto vicars.
Neque vel nominis sui recordantur, quid sonet episcopi vocabulum, nempe laborem, curam, sollicitudinem. Verum in irretiendis pecuniis plane Episcopos agunt, οὐδ' ἀλαοσκοπίη.	They do not even remember their own title, or what the word "bishop" means, namely labor, care and solicitude. But when it comes to netting money, they really do play the bishop, οὐδ' ἀλαοσκοπίη [and keep no blind watch].[26]

26 Greek *episkopos* means "overseer"; the Greek tag is Homer's phrase for keeping a sharp lookout.

CARDINALS

Folly imagines cardinals reflecting on what their robes signify, and concludes none would want the office.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
58	Ad eundem modum Cardinales si cogitent, sese in Apostolorum locum successisse, eadem ab ipsis requiri, quae illi praestiterunt, deinde, non dominos esse, sed administratores spiritalium dotium, de quibus omnibus sint paulo post exactissime reddituri rationem; imo si vel in cultu paulisper philosophentur, atque ita secum cogitent: Quid sibi vult hic vestitus candor? nonne summam et eximiam vitae innocentiam? quid interior purpura? nonne flagrantissimum in Deum amorem? quid rursus exterior, sinuosa capacitate diffluens, ac totam etiam reverendissimi complectens mulam, quanquam una vel camelo contegendo suffecerit? nonne charitatem latissime sese pandentem ad subveniendum omnibus, hoc est, ad docendum, exhortandum, consolandum, increpandum, admonendum, componenda bella, resistendum improbis principibus, et vel sanguinem libenter impendendum gregi Christiano, non solum opes? quanquam quorsum omnino opes, pauperum Apostolorum vicem gerentibus?	In the same way, suppose the cardinals considered that they have succeeded to the place of the apostles, and that the same things are required of them as the apostles performed; and then that they are not lords but stewards of spiritual gifts, for all of which they will very soon have to render the strictest account. Or suppose they did even a little philosophizing about their dress, and reasoned with themselves like this: "What does the whiteness of this garment mean? Is it not the highest and most outstanding purity of life? What does the purple underneath mean? Is it not the most burning love of God? And what of the outer robe, flowing out in such ample folds that it covers even the whole mule of His Most Reverend Lordship, though it would be enough by itself to cover a camel? Does it not mean charity, spreading itself as widely as possible to help everyone: that is, to teach, exhort, console, rebuke, admonish, settle wars, resist wicked princes, and gladly spend for the Christian flock even their blood, and not just their wealth? Though what use is wealth at all to those who stand in the place of the poor apostles?"
	Haec si perpenderent, inquam, nec eum locum ambirent et libenter relinquerent, aut certe vitam plane laboriosam, atque sollicitam agerent, cuiusmodi veteres illi vixerunt apostoli.	If they weighed these things, I say, they would not canvass for that position, and would gladly give it up; or at least they would lead a thoroughly laborious and anxious life, such as those apostles of old lived.

POPES

Folly describes how wisdom would strip popes of wealth, and condemns popes who wage war.

	LATIN	ENGLISH
59	Iam summi pontifices, qui Christi vices gerunt, si conentur eiusdem vitam aemulari, nempe paupertatem, labores, doctrinam, crucem, vitae contemptum, si vel papae, id est, patris nomen, vel sanctissimi cognomen cogitent, quid erit in terris afflictius? aut quis eum locum omnibus emat facultatibus: emptum, gladio, veneno, omnique vi tueatur? Quantum his abstulerit commoditatum, si semel incessiverit sapientia? sapientia dixi? imo vel mica salis illius, cuius meminit Christus. Tantum opum, tantum honorum, tantum ditionis, tantum victoriarum, tot officia, tot dispensationes, tot vectigalia, tot indulgentias, tantum equorum, mulorum,	Now the popes, who stand in Christ's place: if they tried to imitate his life, that is, his poverty, labors, teaching, cross and contempt for life, if they thought about the name "pope," which means "father," or about the title "Most Holy," what would be more afflicted on earth? Who would buy that position with his whole fortune, or, once he had bought it, defend it with sword, poison and every kind of violence? How many comforts it would take from them, if Wisdom once laid hold of them! Wisdom, did I say? No, even a single grain of that salt Christ speaks of. It would take away all that

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satellitum, tantum voluptatum. Videtis quantas nundinas, quantam messem, quantum bonorum pelagus paucis sim complexa. In quorum locum inducet vigilias, ieiunia, lacrymas, orationes, conciones, studia, suspiria, milleque id genus miseros labores.

Neque vero negligendum illud, futurum, ut tot scriptores, tot copistae, tot notarii, tot advocati, tot promotores, tot secretarii, tot mulotribae, tot equisones, tot mensarii, tot lenones, (pene mollius quiddam addideram, sed vereor ne durius sit auribus;) in summa, tam ingens hominum turba, quae Romanam sedem onerat, lapsa sum, honorat sentiebam, ad famem adigatur. Inhumanum quidem hoc, et abominandum facinus, at multo magis detestandum, ipsos etiam summos ecclesiae principes ac vera mundi lumina ad peram et baculum revocari. At nunc fere, si quid laboris est, id Petro et Paulo relinquunt, quibus abunde satis est otii: porro si quid splendoris aut voluptatis, id sibi sumunt.

Atque ita fit mea quidem opera, ut nullum pene hominum genus vivat mollius minusque sollicitum, ut qui abunde Christo satisfactum existiment, si mystico ac pene scenico ornatu, cerimoniis, beatitudinum, reverentiarum, sanctitatum titulis, et benedictionibus, ac maledictionibus episcopos agant. Priscum et obsoletum, nec horum omnino temporum, miracula edere: docere populum, laboriosum: sacras interpretari litteras, scholasticum: orare, otiosum: lacrymas fundere, miserum ac muliebre: egere, sordidum: vinci, turpe, parumque dignum eo, qui vix reges etiam summos ad pedum beatorum admittit oscula: denique mori, inamabile: tolli in crucem, infame. Restant sola haec, arma ac benedictiones dulces, quarum meminit Paulus, atque harum quidem sunt sane quam benigni, interdictiones, suspensiones, aggravationes, redaggravationes, anathematizationes, ultrices picturae ac fulmen illud terrificum, quo solo nutu mortalium animas vel ultra tartara mittunt.

Quod ipsum tamen sanctissimi in Christo patres, et Christi vicarii, in nullos torquent acrius, quam in eos, qui

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wealth, all those honors, all that dominion, all those victories, so many offices, so many dispensations, so many taxes, so many indulgences, so many horses, mules and guards, so many pleasures. You see what markets, what a harvest, what an ocean of good things I have packed into a few words. In their place it would bring in vigils, fasts, tears, prayers, sermons, studies, sighs and a thousand wretched labors of that kind.

Nor should we overlook the fact that so many scribes, copyists, notaries, advocates, promoters, secretaries, muleteers, grooms, bankers and pimps (I almost added something "softer," but I fear it might be too hard on your ears), in short, that whole vast crowd of people who load (a slip; I meant "laud") the Roman see, would be driven to starvation. That would indeed be an inhuman and abominable deed. But far more detestable would be to call the very highest princes of the Church, the true lights of the world, back to the wallet and the staff. As things are, whatever labor there is they mostly leave to Peter and Paul, who have plenty of leisure; whatever splendor or pleasure there is, they take for themselves.

And so it comes about, by my doing, that hardly any class of people lives more softly or with fewer cares. For they think they have abundantly satisfied Christ if they play the bishop with mystical and almost theatrical finery, with ceremonies, with titles of Beatitude, Reverence and Holiness, with blessings and curses. To work miracles is old-fashioned and obsolete, not at all suited to these times; to teach the people is laborious; to interpret Holy Scripture is scholastic; to pray is a waste of time; to shed tears is wretched and soft; to be poor is sordid; to be defeated is shameful, and hardly worthy of one who scarcely admits even the greatest kings to kiss his blessed feet; and, finally, to die is unattractive, and to be raised on a cross disgraceful. All that remains are weapons and those sweet blessings Paul mentions; and of these they are generous indeed: interdicts, suspensions, aggravations, re-aggravations, anathemas, avenging pictures, and that terrifying thunderbolt with which, by a mere nod, they send the souls of mortals even beyond Tartarus.[27]

And yet these most holy fathers in Christ and vicars of Christ hurl that thunderbolt at no one

LATIN

instigante diabolo, patrimonia Petri minuere atque arrodere conantur. Cuius quum haec vox sit in Evangelio: *Reliquimus omnia, et sequuti sumus te*, tamen huius patrimonium appellant agros, oppida, vectigalia, portoria, ditiones. Pro quibus dum zelo Christi accensi, ferro ignique dimicant, non absque plurimo Christiani sanguinis dispendio, tum demum Ecclesiam Christi sponsam sese credunt apostolice defendere, fortiter profligatis, ut vocant, hostibus: quasi vero ulli sint hostes ecclesiae perniciosiores, quam impii pontifices, qui et silentio Christum sinunt abolescere, et quaestuariis legibus alligant, et coactis interpretationibus adulterant, et pestilente vita iugulant.

Porro quum Christiana Ecclesia sanguine sit condita, sanguine confirmata, sanguine aucta, nunc perinde quasi Christus perierit, qui more suo tueatur suos, ita ferro rem gerunt: quumque bellum res sit adeo immanis, ut feras, non homines, deceat, adeo insana, ut poetae quoque fingant a furiis immitti, adeo pestilens, ut universam morum luem simul invehat, adeo iniusta, ut a pessimis latronibus optime soleat administrari, adeo impia, ut nihil cohaereat cum Christo, tamen omnibus omissis, hoc tantum agunt. Hic videas etiam decrepitos senes, iuvenilis animi robur praestare, nec offendi sumptibus, nec fatigari laboribus, nec deterreri quicquam, si leges, si religionem, si pacem, si res humanas omneis sursum ac deorsum misceant.

Neque desunt adulatores eruditi, qui istam manifestariam insaniam, zelum, pietatem, fortitudinem appellent, excogitata via, qua fieri potest, ut quis letale ferrum stringat, adigatque in fratris sui viscera, manente nihilominus charitate illa summa, quam ex Christi praecepto debet proximo Christianus.

ENGLISH

more fiercely than at those who, at the devil's prompting, try to diminish and nibble away the patrimony of Peter. Though Peter's words in the Gospel are *We have left everything and followed you*, they still call his patrimony lands, towns, taxes, tolls and dominions. While they fight for these with fire and sword, ablaze with zeal for Christ, and not without great loss of Christian blood, they believe they are defending the Church, the bride of Christ, in true apostolic fashion, having bravely routed the "enemies," as they call them. As if the Church had any enemies more pernicious than impious popes, who let Christ fade away through their silence, bind him with money-making laws, adulterate him with forced interpretations, and slaughter him with their pestilent lives!

Moreover, though the Christian Church was founded on blood, strengthened by blood and enlarged by blood, now they conduct its business with the sword, as if Christ had perished, who protects his own in his own way. War is a thing so monstrous that it befits wild beasts, not men; so mad that the poets even imagine it is sent by the Furies; so pestilential that it brings with it a general plague on morals; so unjust that it is usually best conducted by the worst of brigands; so impious that it has nothing in common with Christ. Yet they neglect everything else and do this alone. Here you may see even decrepit old men showing the vigor of youth, undeterred by expense, unwearied by toil, frightened of nothing, even if they turn laws, religion, peace and all human affairs upside down.

Nor is there any lack of learned flatterers to call this manifest madness zeal, piety and fortitude. They have devised a way by which a man can draw his deadly sword and plunge it into his brother's vitals while still keeping that supreme charity which, by Christ's command, a Christian owes his neighbor.

WARRIOR BISHOPS AND PRIESTS

Folly mocks German prince-bishops and priests who fight for tithes and pass every duty on to others.

LATIN

60 Equidem incerta sum adhuc, utrum his rebus exemplum dederint, an potius hinc sumpserint episcopi quidam Germanorum, qui simplicius, etiam omisso cultu, omissis

ENGLISH

For my part I am still not sure whether certain German bishops set the example for all this or rather took it from here. These men, more

27 Romans 16:18 warns against those who "by sweet words and blessings deceive the hearts of the simple."

LATIN

benedictionibus, aliisque id genus cerimoniis, plane satrapas agunt, adeo, ut propemodum ignavum parumque decorum episcopo putent, alibi, quam in acie, fortem animam deo reddere. Iam vero vulgus sacerdotum, nefas esse ducens, a praesulum suorum sanctimonia degenerare, euge quam militariter pro iure decimarum, ensibus, iaculis, saxis, omnique armorum vi belligerantur, quam hic oculati, si quid ex veterum litteris possint elicere, quo plebeculam territent, et plus quam decimas deberi convincant. At interim non venit in mentem, quam multa passim legantur de officio, quod illi vicissim praestare populo debeant.

Nec saltem admonet eos vertex rasus, sacerdotem omnibus huius mundi cupiditatibus liberum esse oportere, neque quicquam nisi coelestia meditari. Sed homines suaves, se suo officio probe perfunctos aiunt, si preculas illas suas utcunque permurmurarint, quas mehercle demiror, si quis Deus vel audiat, vel intelligat, quum ipsi fere nec audiant, nec intelligant, tum quum eas ore perstrepunt. Verum hoc quidem sacerdotibus est cum profanis commune, ut ad emolumenti messem vigilent omnes, neque quisquam ibi leges ignoret: ceterum si quid sarcinae, id prudenter in alienos humeros reiiciunt, et aliis alii tanquam pilam per manus tradunt. Siquidem laici quoque principes, quemadmodum partes administrandi regni vicariis delegant, et vicarius item vicario tradit, ita pietatis studium omne plebi modestiae caussa relinquunt.

Plebs in eos reiicit, quos ecclesiasticos vocant, perinde quasi ipsis cum ecclesia nihil omnino sit commercii, quasi baptismi votis nihil prorsus sit actum. Rursus sacerdotes, qui sese vocant seculares, quasi mundo initiati, non Christo, in regulares onus hoc devolvunt, regulares in monachos, monachi laxiores in arctiores, omnes simul in mendicantes, mendicantes in Carthusienses, apud quos solos sepulta latet pietas, et adeo latet, ut vix unquam liceat conspicere. Itidem pontifices, in messe pecuniaria diligentissimi, labores illos nimium apostolicos in episcopos relegant, episcopi in pastores, pastores in vicarios, vicarii in fratres mendicantes. Hi rursum in eos retrudunt, a quibus ovium lana tondetur.

ENGLISH

straightforwardly, drop even the vestments, the blessings and other such ceremonies and simply play the satrap, so much so that they think it almost cowardly and unbecoming for a bishop to give back his brave soul to God anywhere but on the battlefield. Now the common run of priests think it a sin to fall short of their prelates' holiness. Bravo! How soldierly they wage war for their right to tithes, with swords, javelins, stones and every kind of armed force! How sharp-eyed they are here, if they can squeeze something out of the writings of the ancients to frighten the poor common folk and prove that more than tithes are owed! But meanwhile it never occurs to them how much is to be read everywhere about the duty that they, in turn, owe the people.

Not even their shaven crown reminds them that a priest ought to be free of all the desires of this world and think of nothing but heavenly things. But these charming men say they have duly discharged their office if they have mumbled through those little prayers of theirs somehow. And I am amazed, by Hercules, if any god either hears or understands them, since they themselves hardly hear or understand them even while they are making a din of them with their mouths. Yet priests have this in common with the laity: they are all wide awake when it comes to the harvest of profit, and no one is ignorant of the laws on that point. But if there is any burden, they prudently shift it onto other people's shoulders, and pass it from hand to hand like a ball. For just as lay princes delegate parts of the government of their realms to deputies, and each deputy hands it on to another, so they leave all the pursuit of piety to the common people, out of modesty.

The common people push it onto those they call ecclesiastics, as if they themselves had nothing whatever to do with the Church, as if their baptismal vows had accomplished nothing at all. The priests who call themselves secular, as though they were consecrated to the world and not to Christ, roll the burden onto the regulars; the regulars onto the monks; the laxer monks onto the stricter; all of them together onto the mendicants; the mendicants onto the Carthusians, among whom alone piety lies buried, and so deeply buried that it can hardly ever be seen. Likewise the popes, most diligent in the harvest of money, con-

LATIN	ENGLISH
	sign those all-too-apostolic labors to the bishops, the bishops to the parish priests, the parish priests to their vicars, the vicars to the mendicant friars. And these in turn shove them back onto those who shear the sheep's wool.[28]
Verum non est huius instituti, pontificum ac sacerdotum vitam excutere, ne cui videar satyram texere, non encomium recitare, neve quis existimet bonos principes a me taxari, dum malos laudo. Sed haec ideo paucis attigi, quo palam fieret, nullum esse mortalem, qui suaviter vivere possit, nisi meis initiatus sit sacris, meque propitiam habeat.	But it is not my purpose here to scrutinize the lives of popes and priests, in case anyone should think I am weaving a satire rather than delivering an encomium, or suppose that I am censuring good princes while praising bad ones. I have touched on these matters briefly only to make it plain that no mortal can live pleasantly unless he is initiated into my rites and has me on his side.

28 The Carthusians were a strictly enclosed order of monks living as hermits in near-total silence.

Folly and Christ

Chapters 61–68
Folly cites her authorities, classical and scriptural, and ends with the folly of the Cross and the ecstasy of the blessed.

CHAPTER 61

	LATIN	ENGLISH
61	Nam id quo pacto fieri queat, quum ipsa etiam Rhamnusia, rerum humanarum fortunatrix, mecum adeo consentiat, ut sapientibus istis semper fuerit inimicissima, contra stultis etiam dormientibus omnia commoda adduxerit? Agnoscitis Timotheum illum, cui hinc etiam cognomen et proverbium ἡ εὕδοντος κύρτος αἱρεῖ. Rursum aliud: γλαῦξ ἵπταται. Contra in sapientes quadrant illa, ἐν τετράδι γεννηθέντες, et: equum habet Seianum et: aurum Tolosanum. Sed desino παροιμιάζεσθαι, ne videar Erasmi mei commentaria suppilasse. Ergo, ut ad rem: amat fortuna parum cordatos, amat audaciores, et quibus illud placet: πᾶς ἐῤῥίφθω κύβος. At sapientia timidulos reddit, ideoque vulgo videtis, sapientibus istis cum paupertate, cum fame, cum fumo rem esse, neglectos, inglorios, invisos vivere: stultos affluere nummis, admoveri Reipublicae gubernaculis, breviter, florere modis omnibus.	For how could it be otherwise, when even the Rhamnusian herself, who dispenses human fortunes, agrees with me so completely that she has always been bitterly hostile to these wise men, while she brings every good thing to fools even in their sleep? You know that Timotheus, who earned from this both a nickname and a proverb: ἡ εὕδοντος κύρτος αἱρεῖ [the sleeper's net makes the catch]. And another: γλαῦξ ἵπταται [the owl is flying]. The wise, on the other hand, are fitted by sayings like ἐν τετράδι γεννηθέντες [born on the fourth day], "he has the horse of Seius," and "gold of Toulouse." But I will stop παροιμιάζεσθαι [spouting proverbs], or I shall seem to have pilfered my Erasmus's commentaries. So, to the point. Fortune loves the not-too-sensible; she loves the bolder sort, and those who like the motto πᾶς ἐῤῥίφθω κύβος [let every die be thrown]. Wisdom, though, makes men timid. And so you commonly see these wise men wrestling with poverty, hunger and smoke, living neglected, inglorious and disliked, while fools roll in money, are put at the helm of the state, and, in short, flourish in every way.[1]
	Etenim si quis beatum existimet principibus placuisse viris, et inter meos illos ac gemmeos deos versari, quid inutilius sapientia, imo quid apud hoc hominum genus damnatius? Si divitiae parandae sunt, quid tandem lucri facturus est negotiator, si, sapientiam secutus, periurio offendetur, si in mendacio deprehensus erubescet, si anxios illos de furtis atque usuris sapientum scrupulos, vel tantuli faciet? Porro si quis honores atque opes ambiat ecclesiasticas, ad eas vel asinus, vel bubalus citius penetrabit, quam sapiens. Si voluptate ducaris, puellae, maxima huius fabulae pars, stultis toto pectore sunt addictae, sapientem haud secus ac scorpium horrent	Indeed, if anyone thinks it bliss to have pleased great princes and to move among those jeweled gods of mine, what is more useless than wisdom? What, indeed, is more condemned among that sort of people? If riches are to be made, what profit will a merchant ever turn if, following wisdom, he balks at perjury, blushes when caught in a lie, or cares a jot for those anxious scruples of the wise about theft and usury? Again, if anyone is after ecclesiastical honors and wealth, an ass or a buffalo will get there sooner than a wise man. If pleasure

1 Rhamnusia is Nemesis, here Fortune; Timotheus, an Athenian general, was painted asleep while Fortune netted cities for him, while Seius's horse and the gold of Toulouse brought ruin to everyone who owned them.

LATIN	ENGLISH
fugiuntque. Denique quicunque paulo festivius ac laetius vivere parant, sapientem inprimis excludunt, ac quodvis animal potius admittunt.	is what draws you, the girls, who are the greatest part of this play, are devoted heart and soul to fools, and they shudder at a wise man and flee him just as they would a scorpion. In short, whoever sets out to live a little more merrily and cheerfully shuts out the wise man first of all, and would sooner let in any animal.
Breviter, quoquo te vertas, apud pontifices, principes, iudices, magistratus, amicos, hostes, maximos, minimos, omnia praesentibus nummis parantur: quos uti contemnit sapiens, ita illum sedulo fugere consueverunt. Sed quum laudum mearum nullus sit modus neque finis, tamen oratio aliquando finem habeat necesse est. Itaque desinam dicere, sed si prius ostendero paucis, non deesse magnos auctores, qui me litteris suis pariter ac factis illustrarint, ne cui forte stulte mihi soli videar placere, neve legulei calumnientur, me nihil allegare. Ad ipsorum igitur exemplum allegabimus, hoc est, οὐδὲν πρὸς ἔπος.	In short, wherever you turn, among popes, princes, judges, magistrates, friends and enemies, the greatest and the least, everything is bought with ready cash. And just as the wise man despises cash, cash has made a habit of carefully avoiding him. But although there is no limit or end to my praises, a speech must nevertheless end some time. So I will stop speaking, but only after I have briefly shown that there is no lack of great authors who have made me famous by their writings as well as their deeds. Otherwise someone might think I am foolishly pleased with myself alone, or the pettifogging lawyers might object that I cite no authorities. So, following their example, we will cite, that is, οὐδὲν πρὸς ἔπος [nothing to the point].

THE CLASSICAL AUTHORITIES

Folly cites Horace, Homer and Cicero, who says the world is full of fools.

LATIN	ENGLISH
62 Principio illud omnibus vel notissimo proverbio persuasum est, ubi res abest, ibi simulationem esse optimam. Eoque recte statim traditur hic versus pueris: *Stultitiam simulare loco, sapientia summa est*. Vos iam ipsi coniicite, quam ingens sit bonum Stultitia, cuius etiam fallax umbra et imitatio sola tantum laudis meretur a doctis. Sed multo candidius pinguis ille ac nitidus Epicuri de grege porcus, miscere stultitiam consiliis iubet, tametsi *brevem*, non admodum scite, addidit. Item alibi: *Dulce est desipere in loco.* Rursum alio in loco mavult *delirus inersque videri, quam sapere, et ringi.* Iam apud Homerum Telemachus, quem modis omnibus laudat poëta, subinde νήπιος appellatur, atque eodem praenomine tanquam felicis ominis libenter pueros et adolescentes vocare solent tragici.	To begin with, everyone is convinced by a very well-known proverb that where the thing itself is lacking, pretense is best. That is why this line is rightly taught to boys straight away: *To feign folly at the right moment is the height of wisdom.* Now judge for yourselves how great a good Folly is, when even her deceptive shadow and mere imitation earn such praise from the learned. But that plump, sleek hog from Epicurus' herd puts it much more candidly: he bids us mix folly with our plans, though he added the word *brief*, not very cleverly. Again elsewhere: *It is sweet to play the fool at the right moment.* And in yet another place he would rather *seem silly and useless than be wise and fret.* Then in Homer, Telemachus, whom the poet praises in every way, is repeatedly called νήπιος [childish, foolish], and the tragedians readily give boys and youths the same epithet, as if it were a happy omen.[2]

2 The first line is from the *Distichs of Cato*, a school text; the "hog from Epicurus' herd" is Horace, who so described himself (*Epistles* 1.4.16), and the quotations come from his *Odes* 4.12 and *Epistles* 2.2.

LATIN	ENGLISH
Quid autem sacrum Iliadis carmen, nisi stultorum regum et populorum continet iras? Porro quam absoluta laus illa Ciceronis: *Stultorum plena sunt omnia!* Quis enim ignorat, unumquodque bonum, quo latius patet, hoc esse praestantius?	And what does the sacred song of the *Iliad* contain, but the angry passions of foolish kings and peoples? And how complete is Cicero's praise: *The world is full of fools!* For who does not know that every good thing is the more excellent the more widely it extends?[3]

THE TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE

Folly turns to Ecclesiastes, Jeremiah, Solomon and Paul to show that all men are fools.

LATIN	ENGLISH
63 Atqui fortassis apud Christianos horum levis est auctoritas: proinde sacrarum quoque litterarum testimoniis, si videtur, laudes nostras fulciamus, sive, ut docti solent, fundemus, principio veniam a theologis praefatae, ut nobis fas esse velint; deinde, quoniam arduam rem aggredimur, et fortassis improbum fuerit, denuo Musas ex Helicone ad tantum itineris revocare, praesertim quum res sit alienior, fortasse magis conveniet optare, ut interim, dum theologum ago, perque has spinas ingredior, Scoti anima paulisper ex sua Sorbona in meum pectus demigret, quovis histrice atque erinaceo spinosior, moxque remigret quo lubebit, vel ἐς κόρακας. Utinam et vultum alium liceat sumere, et ornatus adsit theologicus. Verum illud interim vereor, ne quis me furti ream agat, quasi clanculum magistrorum nostrorum scrinia compilaverim, quae tantum rei theologicae teneam.	But perhaps among Christians these authorities carry little weight. So, if you please, let us prop up our praises, or, as the learned say, found them, on the testimony of Holy Scripture as well, first asking the theologians' leave to make this lawful for us. Next, since we are taking on an arduous task, and it might be too much to call the Muses down from Helicon yet again for so long a journey, especially when the subject is rather foreign to them, it may be more fitting to pray that, while I play the theologian and pick my way through these thorns, the soul of Scotus, pricklier than any porcupine or hedgehog, might move for a while from his Sorbonne into my breast, and then go back wherever it likes, or ἐς κόρακας [to the crows, that is, to perdition]. If only I could also put on a different face, and had theological robes to hand! But meanwhile I am afraid someone may accuse me of theft, as if I had secretly ransacked the desks of our masters, since I know so much theology.[4]
Sed non adeo mirum videri debet, si tam diutina, quae mihi arctissima est, cum theologis consuetudine nonnihil arripui, quum ficulnus etiam ille deus Priapus nonnullas Graecas voces, legente domino, subnotarit tenueritque: et Gallus Lucianicus longo hominum convictu sermonem humanum expedite calluerit. Sed iam ad rem bonis avibus. Scripsit Ecclesiastes capite primo: *Stultorum infinitus est numerus*. Quum numerum praedicat infinitum, nonne mortaleis universos complecti videtur, praeter pauculos aliquot, quos haud scio, an cuiquam videre contigerit? Sed magis ingenue confitetur hoc Hieremias capite decimo: *Stultus*, inquiens, *factus est omnis homo a sapientia sua.* Soli Deo tribuit sapientiam, universis hominibus stultitiam relinquens. Ac rursum	But it should not seem so surprising if I have picked up a little from my long and very close intimacy with the theologians. After all, even that fig-wood god Priapus noted down and remembered some Greek words while his master was reading aloud, and Lucian's cock, from living a long time among men, became fluent in human speech. But now to the matter, and may the omens be good. Ecclesiastes wrote in his first chapter: *The number of fools is infinite.* When he declares their number infinite, does he not seem to include all mortals, except a very few, whom I doubt anyone has ever had the luck to see? But Jeremiah confesses it more frankly in his tenth chapter: *Every man,* he says, *is made a fool by his own wisdom.* He

3 Cicero, *Letters to Friends* 9.22.

4 John Duns Scotus (c. 1266–1308) taught at Paris, whose theology faculty was the Sorbonne.

LATIN

paulo superius: *Ne glorietur homo in sapientia sua*. Cur non vis hominem in sua sapientia gloriari, optime Hieremia?

Nimirum, inquiet, ob id, quia non habet sapientiam. Sed ad Ecclesiasten redeo. Hunc, quum exclamat: *Vanitas vanitatum, et omnia vanitas,* quid aliud sensisse creditis, nisi, quemadmodum diximus, vitam humanam nihil aliud quam stultitiae ludicrum esse? nimirum Ciceronianae laudi album addentem calculum, cuius optimo iure celebratur illud quod modo retulimus: *Stultorum plena sunt omnia*. Rursum sapiens ille Ecclesiasticus, qui dixit: *Stultus mutatur ut luna, sapiens permanet ut Sol,* quid aliud innuit, nisi mortale genus omne stultum esse, soli deo sapientis nomen competere: siquidem lunam humanam naturam interpretantur, solem omnis luminis fontem deum. Huic adstipulatur, quod ipse Christus in evangelio negat, quenquam appellandum bonum, nisi deum unum.

Porro si stultus est, quisquis sapiens non est, et quisquis bonus, idem sapiens, auctoribus Stoicis, nimirum mortales omneis stultitia complectatur necessum esse. Iterum Salomon capite decimo quinto: *Stultitia*, inquit, *gaudium stulto*, videlicet, manifeste confitens, sine stultitia nihil in vita suave esse. Eodem pertinet illud quoque: *Qui apponit scientiam, apponit dolorem; et in multo sensu multa indignatio.* An non idem palam confitetur egregius ille concionator capite septimo? *Cor sapientium, ubi tristitia est, et cor stultorum, ubi laetitia*. Eoque non satis habuit sapientiam perdiscere, nisi nostri quoque cognitionem addidisset. Quod si mihi parum habetur fidei, ipsius accipite verba, quae scripsit capite primo: *Dedique cor meum, ut scirem prudentiam atque doctrinam, erroresque et stultitiam.* Quo quidem loco illud animadvertendum, ad stultitiae laudem pertinere, quod eam posteriore posuit loco.

Ecclesiastes scripsit, et hunc scitis esse ordinem Ecclesiasticum, ut qui dignitate primus sit, is locum obtineat extremum, vel hic certe memor Evangelici praecepti. Sed stultitiam praestantiorem esse sapientia, et Ecclesiasticus ille, quisquis fuit, liquido testatur capite quadragesimo quarto; cuius mehercle verba non prius

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attributes wisdom to God alone and leaves folly to all men. And again, a little earlier: *Let not man glory in his wisdom.* Why do you not want a man to glory in his own wisdom, good Jeremiah?[5]

"Clearly," he will say, "because he has no wisdom." But I return to Ecclesiastes. When he cries, *Vanity of vanities, and all is vanity*, what else do you think he meant than what we said: that human life is nothing but a game of Folly? He was adding his white pebble, of course, to Cicero's praise, and Cicero's saying, which we quoted just now, is celebrated with every right: *The world is full of fools.* Again, that wise man Ecclesiasticus, who said, *The fool changes like the moon, the wise man abides like the sun*: what else does he hint at, but that the whole mortal race is foolish, and the name of wise belongs to God alone? For they interpret the moon as human nature, and the sun, the source of all light, as God. In agreement with this, Christ himself in the Gospel denies that anyone should be called good but God alone.[6]

Moreover, if whoever is not wise is a fool, and whoever is good is also wise, as the Stoics hold, then Folly must embrace all mortals. Again, Solomon in his fifteenth chapter: *Folly*, he says, *is joy to the fool*, plainly admitting that without folly nothing in life is sweet. To the same point is this too: *He who increases knowledge increases sorrow, and in much understanding is much indignation.* And does not that excellent preacher openly confess the same thing in his seventh chapter? *The heart of the wise is where sadness is, and the heart of fools where there is mirth.* That is why he was not content to master wisdom until he had added knowledge of me as well. If you do not trust me, take his own words, written in his first chapter: *And I gave my heart to know prudence and learning, and errors and folly.* Here it should be noticed that it redounds to the praise of folly that he put it last.

Ecclesiastes wrote it, and you know the ecclesiastical order: whoever is first in rank holds the last place, mindful at least here, no doubt, of the Gospel precept. But that folly is more excellent than wisdom is plainly attested by that Ecclesiasticus too, whoever he was, in his forty-fourth chapter.

5 Priapus, a garden god whose statues were often carved from fig wood, picks up Greek in the Latin *Priapea*; the cock is the talking rooster of Lucian's dialogue mentioned earlier.

6 Ancient voters cast a white pebble to signal approval; Ecclesiasticus (the Wisdom of Sirach) is a different book from Ecclesiastes.

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proferam, quam εἰσαγωγήν meam commoda responsione adiuveritis, ut faciunt apud Platonem hi, qui cum Socrate disputant. Utra magis convenit recondere, quae rara sunt et pretiosa, an quae vulgaria viliaque? Quid tacetis? Etiam si vos dissimuletis, proverbium illud Graecorum pro vobis respondet, τὴν ἐπὶ θύραις ὑδρίαν, quod ne quis impie reiiciat, refert Aristoteles, magistrorum nostrorum Deus. An quisquam vestrum tam stultus est, ut gemmas et aurum in via relinquat! Non hercle opinor.

In abditissimis penetralibus, nec id satis, in munitissimorum scriniorum secretissimis angulis ista reponitis, coenum in propatulo relinquitis. Ergo si, quod pretiosius est, reconditur, quod vilius, exponitur, nonne palam est, sapientiam, quam vetat abscondi, viliorem esse stultitia, quam recondi iubet? Iam ipsius testimonii verba accipite. *Melior est homo, qui abscondit stultitiam suam, quam homo, qui abscondit sapientiam suam.* Quid quod animi quoque candorem divinae litterae stulto tribuunt, quum sapiens interim neminem sui similem putet? Sic enim intelligo id, quod scribit Ecclesiastes capite decimo: *Sed et in via stultus ambulans, quum ipse insipiens sit, omneis stultos existimat.* An non illud eximii cuiusdam candoris est, omnes aequare tibi ipsi, quumque nemo non magnifice de se sentiat, omnibus tamen tuas communicare laudes?

Proinde nec puduit tantum regem huius cognominis, quum ait capite trigesimo: *Stultissimus sum virorum*. Neque Paulus, ille magnus gentium doctor, Corinthiis scribens, stulti cognomen illibenter agnoscit. *Ut insipiens*, inquit, *dico: plus ego:* perinde quasi turpe sit, vinci stultitia. Sed interim obstrepunt mihi Graeculi quidam, qui tot huius temporis theologorum, ceu cornicum oculos student configere, dum annotationes suas, veluti fumos quosdam aliis offundunt, cuius gregis si non Alpha, certe Beta meus est Erasmus, quem ego saepius honoris caussa nomino. O vere stultam, inquiunt, et ipsa dignam Moria citationem. Longe diversa mens apostoli, quam tu somnias.

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By Hercules, I will not bring out his words until you have helped my εἰσαγωγήν [introduction] along with a suitable answer, as Socrates' partners in Plato's dialogues do. Which is it more fitting to hide away: things that are rare and precious, or things common and cheap? Why are you silent? Even if you pretend not to know, the Greek proverb answers for you, τὴν ἐπὶ θύραις ὑδρίαν [the water jar at the door]; and lest anyone impiously reject it, Aristotle, the god of our masters, quotes it. Is any of you so foolish as to leave gems and gold lying in the road? Not by Hercules, I think.[7]

You put such things away in the most hidden inner rooms, and, not content with that, in the most secret corners of the best-secured chests, while you leave mud out in the open. So if what is more precious is hidden away and what is cheaper is left exposed, is it not obvious that wisdom, which he forbids us to hide, is cheaper than folly, which he bids us hide away? Now hear the words of the testimony itself: *Better is the man who hides his folly than the man who hides his wisdom.* And what of the fact that Holy Scripture also credits the fool with candor of heart, while the wise man thinks no one is like himself? That is how I understand what Ecclesiastes writes in his tenth chapter: *But the fool walking along the road, being foolish himself, thinks everyone a fool.* Is it not a mark of remarkable candor to treat everyone as your equal, and, though nobody fails to think highly of himself, still to share your own praises with all?

So that great king was not ashamed of this title either, when he said in his thirtieth chapter: *I am the most foolish of men.* Nor does Paul, that great teacher of the Gentiles, writing to the Corinthians, accept the title of fool reluctantly. *I speak as a fool*, he says: *I am more*, as if it were shameful to be outdone in folly. But meanwhile certain Greeklings are shouting me down. They are bent on piercing the eyes of so many theologians of our day, like crows' eyes, while they blow their annotations like smoke into other people's faces; and of that flock, if not the Alpha, then certainly the Beta is my Erasmus, whom I mention rather often, out of respect. "Oh, what a truly foolish citation," they say, "worthy of Moria herself! The Apostle meant

7 The proverb denotes something worthless, left by the door where anyone could take it; Aristotle cites it in the *Rhetoric*.

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something quite different from what you are dreaming."[8]

Nec enim hoc agit his verbis, ut ceteris stultior haberetur, verum quum dixisset: *ministri Christi sunt, et ego*, seque veluti iactabundus in hac quoque parte aequasset ceteris, per correctionem adiecit, *plus ego*, sentiens se non modo parem reliquis apostolis in Evangelii ministerio, verum etiam aliquanto superiorem. Idque quum ita verum videri vellet, ne tamen ut arrogantius dictum offenderet aures, praemuniit stultitiae praetextu: *ut minus sapiens dico*, propterea quod sciret esse stultorum privilegium, ut soli verum citra offensam, proloquantur. Verum quid Paulus senserit, quum haec scriberet, ipsis disputandum relinquo. Ego magnos, pingues, crassos, et vulgo probatissimos theologos sequor, cum quibus magna pars doctorum errare νὴ τὸν Δία malit, quam cum istis trilinguibus bene sentire.

For his aim in these words is not to be thought more foolish than the rest. Rather, after he had said, *They are ministers of Christ; so am I*, and, as if boasting, had made himself equal to the others in this respect too, he added by way of correction, *I am more*. He meant that he was not only equal to the other apostles in the ministry of the Gospel, but somewhat superior to them. And since he wanted this to seem true, yet did not want it to offend ears as too arrogant a statement, he forestalled that with the pretext of folly, *I speak as one less wise*, because he knew it is the privilege of fools alone to speak the truth without giving offense. But what Paul meant when he wrote this I leave to them to argue about. I follow the great, fat, thick theologians, approved by the crowd, with whom most of the learned would rather err, νὴ τὸν Δία [by Zeus], than be right with these trilingual fellows.

Neque quisquam illorum Graeculos istos pluris facit, quam graculos: praesertim quum quidam gloriosus theologus, cuius ego nomen prudens supprimo, ne graculi nostri continuo Graecum in illum scomma iaciant ὄνος λύρας; magistraliter et theologaliter hunc passum enarrans, ab hoc loco: *Ut minus sapiens dico, plus ego*, novum facit caput, et quod absque summa dialectica non poterat, novam addit sectionem, ad hunc interpretans modum: (adducam enim ipsius verba, non solum in forma, verum etiam in materia:) *Ut minus sapiens dico, id est, si videor vobis insipiens, me pseudapostolis adaequando, adhuc videbor vobis minus sapiens, me eis praeferendo.* Quanquam idem paulo post, velut oblitus sui, alio delabitur.

None of them thinks any more of these Greeklings than of jackdaws. This is especially so since a certain glorious theologian, whose name I prudently suppress lest our jackdaws at once fling at him the Greek jibe ὄνος λύρας [an ass at the lyre], expounding this passage magisterially and theologically, begins a new chapter at the words *I speak as one less wise, I am more*, and, which could not be done without the utmost dialectic, adds a new section. He interprets it like this (I shall quote his very words, not only in form but also in matter): *I speak as one less wise; that is, if I seem to you unwise in making myself equal to the false apostles, I shall seem to you still less wise in preferring myself to them.* Though a little later the same man, as if forgetting himself, slides off onto something else.[9]

HOW THEOLOGIANS TWIST SCRIPTURE

Folly shows theologians wrenching texts from context, including Christ's words on the sword and Paul on heretics.

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64 Sed cur anxie me unius exemplo tueor? quum hoc publicum ius sit Theologorum, coelum, hoc est, divinam

But why do I anxiously defend myself with a single example, when it is the common right of theolo-

8 To "pierce the crows' eyes" is a proverb for outwitting those who think themselves sharpest; the "Greeklings" are humanist scholars who, like Erasmus, corrected the Latin Bible from the Greek.

9 The Latin plays on *Graeculi* (Greeklings) and *graculi* (jackdaws); the unnamed theologian is Nicholas of Lyra (c. 1270–1349), hence "an ass at the lyre."

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scripturam, ceu pellem extendere: quum apud divum Paulum pugnent divinae scripturae verba, quae suo loco non pugnant, si qua fides illi πενταγλώττῳ Hieronymo: quum Athenis forte conspectum arae titulum torqueret in argumentum fidei Christianae, ac ceteris omissis, quae caussae fuerant offectura, duo tantum extrema verba decerpserit, nempe haec, *ignoto Deo*, atque haec quoque nonnihil immutata: siquidem integer titulus sic habebat, *diis Asiae, Europae, et Africae, diis ignotis, et peregrinis*.

Ad huius, opinor, exemplum passim iam οἱ τῶν θεολόγων παῖδες, hinc atque hinc revulsa quatuor aut quinque verbula, et si quid opus est, etiam depravata, ad suam accommodant utilitatem, licet ea quae praecedunt et consequuntur, aut nihil omnino faciant ad rem, aut reclament quoque. Quod quidem faciunt tam felici impudentia, ut saepenumero theologis invideant iureconsulti. Quid enim illis iam non succedat, posteaquam magnus ille, pene nomen effutiveram, sed rursus metuo Graecum proverbium, ex Lucae verbis sententiam expresserit, tam consentaneam animo Christi, quam igni cum aqua convenit.

Etenim quum immineret extremum periculum, quo tempore solent boni clientes maxime suis adesse patronis, et quanta valent ope συμμαχεῖν, Christus hoc agens, ut omnem huiusmodi praesidiorum fiduciam eximeret ex animis suorum, percontatus est eos, num quid rei defuisset usquam, quum illos emisisset, adeo non instructos viatico, ut nec calceis muniret adversus spinarum et saxorum iniuriam, nec peram adderet adversus famem. Ubi negassent defuisse quicquam, adiecit: *Sed nunc*, inquit, *qui habet sacculum, tollat, similiter et peram; et qui non habet, vendat tunicam suam, et emat gladium*. Quum tota Christi doctrina nihil aliud inculcet, quam mansuetudinem, tolerantiam, vitae contemptum, cui non perspicuum sit, quid hoc loco sentiat?

nempe ut magis etiam exarmet suos legatos, ut non tantum calceos negligant et peram, verum et tunicam

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gians to stretch the heavens, that is, Holy Scripture, like a hide? In Saint Paul, words of Holy Scripture contradict one another that do not contradict in their own setting, if we may trust that πενταγλώττῳ [five-tongued] Jerome. And when Paul happened to see the inscription on an altar at Athens, he twisted it into an argument for the Christian faith: leaving out the rest, which would have damaged his case, he plucked out only the last two words, *to the unknown God*, and even altered these a little. For the complete inscription ran: *To the gods of Asia, Europe and Africa, to the unknown and foreign gods.*[10]

Following his example, I suppose, οἱ τῶν θεολόγων παῖδες [the sons of the theologians] everywhere now pluck four or five little words from here and there, distorting them too if need be, and adapt them to their own convenience, even though what comes before and after is either quite irrelevant or actually contradicts them. And they do it with such happy impudence that the lawyers often envy the theologians. For what can they not get away with now, since that great man (I almost blurted out his name, but again I fear the Greek proverb) has squeezed out of Luke's words a meaning as consistent with the mind of Christ as fire is with water?

For when the final danger was at hand, at the very time when good clients most stand by their patrons and συμμαχεῖν [fight at their side] with all their strength, Christ, intending to remove from his followers' minds all trust in such defenses, asked them whether they had lacked anything when he had sent them out so unprovided for the journey that he had not even protected them with shoes against the injuries of thorns and stones, nor given them a wallet against hunger. When they said they had lacked nothing, he added: *But now*, he said, *let him who has a purse take it, and likewise a wallet; and let him who has none sell his tunic and buy a sword.* Since the whole teaching of Christ inculcates nothing but gentleness, patience and contempt for life, who can fail to see what he means here?

He means, of course, to disarm his envoys still further: they are not only to do without shoes and

10 Psalm 104:2 speaks of God "stretching out the heavens like a hide"; Jerome reports the full Athenian inscription in his commentary on Titus.

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insuper abiiciant, nudique et prorsus expediti, munus evangelicum aggrediantur; nihil sibi parent, nisi gladium, non istum quo grassantur latrones et parricidae, sed gladium spiritus, in intimos quoque pectoris sinus penetrantem, qui semel affectus omneis sic amputat, ut nihil iam illis cordi sit, praeter pietatem. At videte, quaeso, quorsum haec torqueat celebris ille theologus.

Gladium interpretatur defensionem adversus persecutionem, sacculum sufficientem commeatus provisionem, perinde quasi Christus, commutata in diversum sententia, quod oratores suos parum βασιλικῶς instructos emisisse videretur, superioris institutionis palinodiam canat, aut velut oblitus, quod dixerat, beatos fore, quum probris, contumeliis et suppliciis afficerentur, prohibens ne quando resisterent malo, mites enim beatos esse, non feroces, oblitus, quod illos ad passerum et liliorum exemplum vocarit, nunc adeo noluerit eos absque gladio proficisci, ut eum vel tunica divendita iubeat emi, malitque nudos ire, quam non accinctos ferro. Ad haec, quemadmodum gladii nomine contineri putat, quicquid ad depellendam vim pertinet, ita marsupii titulo complectitur, quicquid ad vitae pertinet necessitatem. Atque ita divinae mentis interpres apostolos lanceis, ballistis, fundis et bombardis instructos educit ad praedicationem crucifixi.

Loculis item, vidulis, et sarcinis onerat, ne forte non liceat illis e diversorio discedere, nisi impransis. Nec vel illud commovit hominem, quod ensem, quem tantopere iusserat emi, mox idem obiurgans iubeat recondi, quodque numquam fando sit auditum, apostolos ensibus aut clypeis usos adversus vim ethnicorum, utique usuros, si Christus hoc sensisset, quod hic interpretatur. Est alius, quem honoris caussa non nomino, haud quaquam postremi nominis, qui e tentoriis, quorum meminit Habacuc, *Turbabuntur pelles terrae Madian*, pellem fecerit Bartholomaei excoriati. Ipsa nuper interfui dissertationi theologicae; nam id facio frequenter.

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wallet, but to throw off their tunic as well, and undertake the Gospel mission naked and wholly unencumbered. They are to provide themselves with nothing but a sword: not the kind with which robbers and murderers go about their violence, but the sword of the spirit, which pierces even the inmost recesses of the heart and cuts away all passions at one stroke, so that nothing is dear to them any longer but piety. But look, please, at the way that celebrated theologian twists this.

He interprets the sword as defense against persecution, and the purse as a sufficient provision of supplies. It is as if Christ had turned his meaning completely around and, because he seemed to have sent his ambassadors out not βασιλικῶς [royally] enough equipped, were now singing a recantation of his earlier instruction. Or as if he had forgotten that he had said they would be blessed when they suffered insults, abuse and punishments, forbidding them ever to resist evil, since it is the meek who are blessed, not the fierce; as if he had forgotten that he had pointed them to the example of the sparrows and the lilies, and were now so unwilling for them to set out without a sword that he bids them buy one even if they must sell their tunic, and would rather they went naked than without steel at their side. Moreover, just as he thinks the word "sword" covers everything that serves to repel force, so under the heading "purse" he includes everything that belongs to the necessities of life. And so this interpreter of the divine mind leads the apostles out to preach the Crucified, equipped with lances, crossbows, slings and cannon.

He loads them, too, with satchels, trunks and baggage, so that they will never have to leave an inn without their dinner. Nor was the man troubled even by the fact that the sword Christ had so emphatically ordered them to buy, he soon afterward, with a rebuke, orders put back in its sheath; or that no one has ever heard of the apostles using swords or shields against the violence of the pagans, as they certainly would have, if Christ had meant what this man interprets. There is another, whom I do not name out of respect, and by no means of the lowest reputation, who out of the tents mentioned by Habakkuk, *The skins of the land of Midian shall be troubled*, made the skin of the

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flayed Bartholomew. I was present myself not long ago at a theological disputation, as I often am.[11]

Ibi quum quispiam exigeret, quae tandem esset divinarum litterarum auctoritas, quae iuberet haereticos incendio vinci magis quam disputatione revinci: senex quidam severus, et vel supercilio teste, theologus, magno stomacho respondit, hanc legem tulisse Paulum Apostolum, qui dixerit: *Haereticum hominem post unam et alteram correptionem devita*. Quumque ea verba identidem intonaret, et plerique demirarentur quid accidisset homini, tandem explanavit, de vita tollendum haereticum. Risere quidam, nec deerant tamen, quibus hoc commentum plane theologicum videretur. Ceterum, reclamantibus etiamnum nonnullis, successit Τενέδιος, quod aiunt, συνήγορος et auctor irrefragabilis. Accipite rem, inquit; Scriptum est, maleficum ne patiaris vivere; omnis haereticus maleficus; ergo etc. Mirari, quotquot aderant, hominis ingenium, et in eam sententiam itum est pedibus, et quidem peronatis.

There someone asked what authority in Holy Scripture ordered heretics to be overcome by fire rather than refuted by argument. A certain stern old man, a theologian, as even his eyebrows testified, answered very angrily that the Apostle Paul had laid down this law when he said, *A man who is a heretic, after a first and second warning, avoid*, in Latin *devita*. When he had thundered these words again and again, and most people were wondering what had come over the man, he finally explained that the heretic must be removed *de vita*, "from life." Some laughed; yet there were those who thought this interpretation thoroughly theological. But since several still objected, there came forward a Τενέδιος συνήγορος [Tenedian advocate], as the saying goes, an authority beyond appeal. "Here is the point," he said. "It is written, *Do not allow an evildoer to live*; every heretic is an evildoer; therefore, etc." Everyone present marveled at the man's ingenuity, and they voted for his opinion with their feet, and booted feet at that.[12]

Neque cuiquam venit in mentem legem eam ad sortilegos et incantatores ac magos attinere, quos Hebraei sua lingua vocant מכשפים; alioqui fornicationem et ebrietatem capite punire oportuit.

And it occurred to no one that the law concerns sorcerers, enchanters and magicians, whom the Hebrews in their language call מכשפים [sorcerers]. Otherwise fornication and drunkenness would have had to be punished with death.

FOOLS FOR CHRIST

Folly cites Paul and the Gospels to show that God chose the foolish and confounds the wise.

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65 Verum haec stulte persequor, tam innumera, ut nec Chrysippi, nec Didymi voluminibus omnia comprehendi possint. Illud duntaxat admonitos volebam, quum haec divinis illis magistris licuerint, mihi quoque plane συκίνῃ θεολόγῳ par est dare veniam, si minus omnia ad amussim citavero. Nunc tandem ad Paulum redeo: *libenter*, inquit, *fertis insipientes,* de sese loquens. Et rursum: *Velut insipientem accipite me;* et: *non loquor secundum Deum, sed quasi in insipientia*. Rursus alibi: *Nos*, inquit, *stulti propter Christum.* Audistis, a quanto auctore, quanta stultitiae praeconia. Quid, quod idem palam stultitiam praecipit, ut rem in primis necessariam et

But it is foolish of me to pursue these things, which are so countless that not even the volumes of Chrysippus or Didymus could contain them all. I only wanted you to note this: since those divine masters have been allowed such liberties, it is only fair to pardon me too, plainly a συκίνῃ θεολόγῳ [fig-wood theologian], if I do not cite everything with perfect precision. Now at last I return to Paul. *You gladly bear with fools*, he says, speaking of himself. And again: *Receive me as a fool*; and: *I speak not according to God, but as it were in foolishness.* Elsewhere again: *We are fools for Christ's*

11 Habakkuk 3:7 speaks of the tent-curtains ("skins") of Midian; Saint Bartholomew was said to have been flayed alive.
12 A "Tenedian advocate," after the axe-wielding justice of King Tenes of Tenedos, was proverbial for a merciless one; the Vulgate's *maleficus* (Exodus 22:18) means "sorcerer," but literally "evildoer."

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oppido salutarem. *Qui videtur esse sapiens inter vos, stultus fiat, ut sit sapiens*. Et apud Lucam duos discipulos, quibus se iunxerat in via, Iesus *stultos* appellat.

Illud haud scio, an mirum videatur, quum Deo quoque nonnihil stultitiae tribuit divinus ille Paulus: *Quod stultum est*, inquit, *Dei, sapientius est hominibus*. Porro Origenes interpres obsistit, quo minus hanc stultitiam ad hominum opinionem possis referre: quod genus est illud, *verbum crucis pereuntibus quidem stultitiam*. Sed quid ego frustra anxia, tot testimoniis haec docere pergo, quum in psalmis mysticis palam ipse Christus loquatur patri: *Tu scis insipientiam meam?* Neque vero temere est, quod Deo stulti tam impense placuerunt: opinor propterea, quod, quemadmodum summi principes nimium cordatos suspectos habent et invisos, ut Iulius Brutum et Cassium, quum ebrium Antonium nihil metueret, utque Nero Senecam, Dionysius Platonem, contra crassioribus ac simplicioribus ingeniis delectantur, itidem Christus σοφοὺς istos suaeque nitentes prudentiae semper detestatur ac damnat.

Testatur id Paulus haudquaquam obscure, quum ait: *Quae stulta sunt mundi, elegit Deus:* quumque ait, *Deo visum esse, ut per stultitiam servaret mundum, quandoquidem per sapientiam restitui non poterat*. Quin ipse idem satis indicat, clamans per os prophetae: *Perdam sapientiam sapientium, et prudentiam prudentium reprobabo*. Rursum quum agit gratias, quod salutis mysterium celasset sapientes, parvulis autem, hoc est stultis, aperuisset. Nam graece pro parvulis est νηπίοις, quos opposuit σοφοῖς. Huc pertinet, quod passim in Evangelio Pharisaeos et scribas ac legum doctores incessit, vulgus indoctum sedulo tuetur. Quid enim aliud est, *Vae vobis, scribae et Pharisaei*, quam vae vobis sapientes? At parvulis, mulieribus, ac piscatoribus potissimum delectatus esse videtur.

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sake. You have heard what praises of folly, and from what an authority! What is more, he openly prescribes folly as something especially necessary and highly beneficial: *Whoever among you seems to be wise, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.* And in Luke, Jesus calls the two disciples whom he had joined on the road *fools*.[13]

I do not know whether it may seem surprising that the divine Paul attributes some folly even to God: *The foolishness of God*, he says, *is wiser than men.* Moreover, Origen the interpreter prevents you from referring this folly to human opinion, as in the saying *The word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.* But why do I fret and go on proving all this with so many testimonies, when in the mystical psalms Christ himself openly says to the Father: *You know my foolishness*? Nor is it without reason that fools have so greatly pleased God. It is, I think, because the greatest princes regard the too-clever with suspicion and dislike, as Julius did Brutus and Cassius while fearing nothing from the drunken Antony, and as Nero did Seneca and Dionysius Plato, while they delight in duller and simpler minds. In the same way Christ always detests and condemns those σοφοὺς [wise men] who rely on their own prudence.

Paul testifies to this not at all obscurely when he says, *God has chosen the foolish things of the world*, and when he says *it pleased God to save the world through folly, since it could not be restored through wisdom.* Indeed, he himself makes it plain enough when he cries through the prophet's mouth: *I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject.* And again, when he gives thanks that the mystery of salvation had been hidden from the wise but revealed to little ones, that is, to fools. For in Greek the word for "little ones" is νηπίοις [the childish, the simple], which he set against σοφοῖς [the wise]. Here belongs the fact that throughout the Gospel he attacks the Pharisees, the scribes and the teachers of the law, while he carefully protects the unlearned crowd. For what else is *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees*, but "woe to you, wise men"? But he seems to have taken most delight in children, women and fishermen.

13 Chrysippus and Didymus, the Alexandrian scholar, were famous for the vast number of their books; "fig-wood" meant worthless, fig being useless timber.

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Quin et ex animantium brutorum genere ea potissimum placent Christo, quae a vulpina prudentia quam longissime absunt: eoque asino maluit insidere, quum ille, si libuisset, vel leonis tergum impune potuisset premere. Ac spiritus ille sacer in columbae specie delapsus est, non aquilae aut milvii. Praeterea cervorum, hinnulorum, agnorum, crebra passim in divinis litteris [fit] mentio. Adde quod suos ad immortalem vitam destinatos, oves appellat, quo quidem animante non est aliud insipientius, vel Aristotelico proverbio teste, προβάτων ἦθος quod quidem admonet, ab eius pecudis stoliditate sumptum in stupidos et bardos convicii loco dici solere. Atqui huius gregis Christus sese pastorem profitetur; quin etiam ipse agni nomine delectatus est, indicante eum Ioanne, *ecce agnus Dei:* cuius multa fit et in Apocalypsi mentio.

Haec quid aliud clamitant, nisi mortaleis stultos esse, etiam pios? ipsum quoque Christum, quo stultitiae mortalium subveniret, quum esset sapientia patris, tamen quodammodo stultum esse factum, quum, hominis assumpta natura, habitu inventus est ut homo: quemadmodum et peccatum factus est, ut peccatis mederetur. Neque alia ratione mederi voluit, quam per stultitiam crucis, per apostolos idiotas ac pingues: quibus sedulo stultitiam praecipit, a sapientia deterrens, quum eos ad puerorum, liliorum, sinapis, et passerculorum exemplum provocat, rerum stupidarum ac sensu carentium, soloque naturae ductu, nulla arte, nulla solicitudine vitam agentium: praeterea quum vetat esse solicitos, qua essent apud praesides oratione usuri, quumque interdicit, ne scrutentur tempora vel momenta temporum, videlicet, ne quid fiderent suae prudentiae, sed totis animis ex se penderent.

Eodem pertinet, quod Deus ille orbis architectus interminatur, ne quid de arbore scientiae degustarent, perinde quasi scientia felicitatis sit venenum. Quanquam Paulus aperte scientiam, veluti inflantem et perniciosam, improbat. Quem divus Bernardus, opinor, sequutus, montem eum, in quo Lucifer sedem statuerat, scientiae montem interpretatur. Fortasse nec illud omittendum videatur argumentum, gratiosam esse apud superos stultitiam, quod huic soli datur erratorum venia, sapienti

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Even among the brute animals, those please Christ most that are furthest removed from the cunning of the fox. That is why he chose to ride an ass, though he could have sat safely on a lion's back had he wished. And the Holy Spirit came down in the form of a dove, not of an eagle or a kite. Besides, deer, fawns and lambs are mentioned again and again throughout Holy Scripture. Add that he calls his own, those destined for eternal life, sheep; and no animal is more foolish than that, as even Aristotle's proverb προβάτων ἦθος [a sheep's character] testifies, which, he reminds us, is drawn from the stupidity of that beast and is commonly used as an insult against the dull and witless. Yet Christ declares himself the shepherd of this flock; indeed, he himself delighted in the name of lamb, when John pointed him out: *Behold the Lamb of God*. And the lamb is mentioned often in the Apocalypse as well.

What do all these things proclaim, but that mortals are fools, even the pious? And that Christ himself, to relieve the folly of mortals, though he was the wisdom of the Father, nevertheless became in a way a fool when he took on human nature and was found in appearance as a man, just as he was also made sin in order to heal sins? Nor did he choose to heal them in any other way than through the folly of the Cross, through unlearned and thick-witted apostles. To them he diligently prescribes folly and warns them away from wisdom, when he urges them to follow the example of children, lilies, mustard seed and sparrows, stupid things without sense, which live by the guidance of nature alone, with no art and no anxiety. He does the same when he forbids them to worry about what speech they would make before governors, and forbids them to search out times and seasons: that is, they were not to rely on their own prudence, but to depend on him with all their hearts.

To the same point is the fact that God, the architect of the world, forbade them on pain of death to taste of the tree of knowledge, as if knowledge were the poison of happiness. And Paul openly condemns knowledge as something that puffs up and does harm. Saint Bernard, following him, I think, interprets the mountain on which Lucifer set up his seat as the mountain of knowledge. Perhaps this argument should not be left out either,

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non ignoscitur, unde qui veniam orant, etiamsi prudentes peccaverint, tamen stultitiae praetextu patrocinioque utuntur. Nam sic Aaron uxoris poenam deprecatur in Numerorum, si satis commemini, libris: *Obsecro Domine mi, ne imponas nobis hoc peccatum, quod stulte commisimus*. Sic et Saul apud David culpam deprecatur, *Apparet enim*, inquiens, *quod stulte egerim*.	that folly is in favor with those above: to folly alone is pardon granted for its errors, while the wise man is not forgiven. Hence those who pray for pardon, even if they sinned knowingly, still use folly as their pretext and defense. So Aaron, in the book of Numbers, if I remember rightly, pleads to have his wife's punishment remitted: *I beg you, my lord, do not lay upon us this sin, which we have foolishly committed.* So too Saul begs David to pardon his fault: *For it is clear*, he says, *that I have acted foolishly.*[14]
Rursum ipse David ita blanditur Domino: *Sed precor, Domine, ut transferas iniquitatem servi tui, quia stulte egimus:* perinde quasi non impetraturus veniam, nisi stultitiam et inscitiam obtenderet. Sed illud acrius urget, quod Christus in cruce, quum oraret pro suis inimicis: *Pater ignosce illis*: non aliam praetexuit excusationem, quam imprudentiae: *Quia nesciunt*, inquit, *quid faciant*. Ad eundem modum Paulus scribens ad Timotheum: *Sed ideo misericordiam Dei consecutus sum, quia ignorans feci in incredulitate*. Quid est, *ignorans feci*, nisi: per stultitiam feci, non malitiam? Quid est, *ideo misericordiam consecutus sum*, nisi non consecuturus, ni stultitiae patrocinio commendatus? Pro nobis facit et mysticus ille psalmographus, qui suo loco non veniebat in mentem: *Delicta iuventutis meae, et ignorantias meas ne memineris*.	Again, David himself coaxes the Lord like this: *But I pray, Lord, take away the iniquity of your servant, for we have acted foolishly*, as if he could not obtain pardon unless he pleaded folly and ignorance. But this presses the point harder: when Christ on the cross prayed for his enemies, *Father, forgive them*, he offered no other excuse than their lack of understanding: *For they do not know*, he said, *what they are doing*. In the same way Paul, writing to Timothy: *But I obtained the mercy of God because I acted ignorantly in unbelief.* What does *I acted ignorantly* mean, if not "I acted from folly, not malice"? What does *therefore I obtained mercy* mean, if not that he would not have obtained it unless commended by the plea of folly? That mystical psalmist, too, who did not come to mind in his proper place, is on our side: *Remember not the sins of my youth and my ignorances.*
Audistis quae duo praetexat, nimirum aetatem, cui semper comes esse soleo, et ignorantias, idque numero multitudinis, ut ingentem stultitiae vim intelligeremus.	You heard the two things he pleads: his age, whose constant companion I am, and his ignorances, and in the plural at that, so that we might grasp the huge power of folly.

CHRISTIANITY AS A KIND OF FOLLY

Folly argues that devout Christians, like Plato's philosophers, seem mad because they despise bodily things.

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66 Ac ne, quae sunt infinita, persequar, utque summatim dicam, videtur omnino Christiana religio quandam habere cum aliqua stultitia cognationem, minimeque cum sapientia convenire. Cuius rei si desideratis argumenta, primum illud animadvertite, pueros, senes, mulieres ac fatuos sacris ac religiosis rebus praeter ceteros gaudere, eoque semper altaribus esse proximos, solo nimirum naturae impulsu. Praeterea videtis primos illos religionis auctores, mire simplicitatem amplexos,	But not to pursue what has no end, and to put it briefly: the Christian religion as a whole seems to have a kind of kinship with some sort of folly, and to have very little in common with wisdom. If you want proofs of this, notice first that children, old people, women and simpletons take more delight than anyone else in sacred and religious things, and so are always nearest the altars, by the sole impulse of nature, no doubt. Next, you see that the

14 In Numbers 12:11 Aaron is in fact pleading for his sister Miriam.

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acerrimos litterarum hostes fuisse. Postremo nulli moriones magis desipere videntur, quam hi, quos Christianae pietatis ardor semel totos arripuit: adeo sua profundunt, iniurias negligunt, falli sese patiuntur, inter amicos et inimicos nullum discrimen, voluptatem horrent, inedia, vigilia, lacrymis, laboribus, contumeliis saginantur, vitam fastidiunt, mortem unice optant, breviter ad omnem sensum communem prorsus obstupuisse videntur, perinde quasi alibi vivat animus, non in suo corpore.

Quod quidem quid aliud est, quam insanire? Quo minus mirum videri debet, si apostoli musto temulenti sunt visi, si Paulus iudici Festo visus est insanire. Sed posteaquam semel τὴν λεοντήν induimus, age doceamus et illud, felicitatem Christianorum, quam tot laboribus expetunt, nihil aliud esse, quam insaniae stultitiaeque genus quoddam: absit invidia verbis, rem ipsam potius expendite. Iam primum illud propemodum Christianis convenit cum Platonicis, animum immersum alligatumque esse corporeis vinculis, huiusque crassitudine praepediri, quo minus ea, quae vera sunt, contemplari, fruique possit. Proinde philosophiam definit esse mortis meditationem, quod ea mentem a rebus visibilibus ac corporeis abducat, quod idem utique mors facit.

Itaque quamdiu animus corporis organis probe utitur, tam diu sanus appellatur: verum ubi, ruptis iam vinculis, conatur in libertatem asserere sese, quasique fugam ex eo carcere meditatur, tum insaniam vocant. Id si forte contingit morbo, vitioque organorum, prorsus omnium consensu insania est. Et tamen hoc quoque genus hominum videmus futura praedicere, scire linguas ac litteras, quas ante nunquam didicerant, et omnino divinum quiddam prae se ferre. Neque dubium est, id inde accidere, quod mens a contagio corporis paulo liberior, incipit nativam sui vim exerere. Idem arbitror esse in caussa, cur laborantibus vicina morte simile quiddam soleat accidere, ut tanquam afflati prodigiosa quaedam loquantur.

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first founders of the religion, wonderfully devoted to simplicity, were the fiercest enemies of letters. Finally, no fools seem more out of their minds than those whom the ardor of Christian piety has once seized completely. They pour out their possessions, ignore injuries, let themselves be cheated, make no distinction between friends and enemies, shudder at pleasure, and fatten themselves on fasting, vigils, tears, toil and insults. They loathe life and desire death above all things. In short, they seem to have become wholly numb to all common sense, as if their mind lived somewhere else and not in its own body.

And what is that, if not madness? So it should seem less surprising that the apostles were thought to be drunk on new wine, and that Paul seemed mad to the judge Festus. But since we have once put on τὴν λεοντήν [the lion's skin], come, let us also show that the happiness of Christians, which they seek with so much toil, is nothing but a kind of madness and folly. Let the words give no offense; weigh the thing itself instead. First, Christians very nearly agree with the Platonists that the soul is sunk in and bound by bodily chains, and that the grossness of the body hinders it from contemplating and enjoying the things that are true. That is why Plato defines philosophy as a meditation on death: it draws the mind away from visible and bodily things, which is exactly what death does.[15]

So as long as the soul makes proper use of the body's organs, it is called sane. But when it breaks its bonds and tries to assert its freedom, as if planning its escape from that prison, then people call it madness. If this happens to come about through disease or a defect of the organs, everyone agrees it is madness. And yet we see people of this kind too foretelling the future, knowing languages and literature they had never learned before, and showing something altogether divine. There is no doubt that this happens because the mind, a little freer from contact with the body, begins to exercise its native power. The same cause, I think, explains why something similar commonly happens to those who are struggling with approaching death, so that they speak marvelous things, as if inspired.

15 To put on the lion's skin, that of Hercules, is a proverb for taking on a role beyond one's strength.

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Rursum si id eveniat studio pietatis, fortasse non est idem insaniae genus, sed tamen adeo confine, ut magna pars hominum meram insaniam esse iudicet, praesertim quum pauculi homunciones ab universo mortalium coetu tota vita dissentiant. Itaque solet iis usu venire, quod iuxta Platonicum figmentum, opinor accidere iis, qui in specu vincti rerum umbras mirantur, et fugitivo illi, qui reversus in antrum, veras res vidisse se praedicat, illos longe falli, qui praeter miseras umbras nihil aliud esse credant. Etenim sapiens hic commiseratur ac deplorat illorum insaniam, qui tanto errore teneantur. Illi vicissim illum veluti delirantem rident, atque eiiciunt. Itidem vulgus hominum ea, quae maxime corporea sunt, maxime miratur, eaque prope sola putat esse.

Contra pii, quo quidque propius accedit ad corpus, hoc magis negligunt, totique ad invisibilium rerum contemplationem rapiuntur. Nam isti primas partes tribuunt divitiis, proximas corporis commodis, postremas animo relinquunt: quem tamen plerique nec esse credunt, quia non cernatur oculis. E diverso illi primum in ipsum Deum, rerum omnium simplicissimum, toti nituntur: secundum hunc, et tamen in hoc, quod ad illum quam proxime accedit, nempe animum: corporis curam negligunt, pecunias ceu putamina prorsus aspernantur ac fugitant. Aut si quid huiusmodi rerum tractare coguntur, gravatim ac fastidienter id faciunt: habent tanquam non habentes, possident tanquam non possidentes. Sunt et in singulis rebus gradus multum inter istos diversi.

Principio sensus tametsi omnes cum corpore cognationem habent, tamen quidam sunt ex his crassiores, ut tactus, auditus, visus, olfactus, gustus: quidam magis a corpore semoti, veluti memoria, intellectus, voluntas. Igitur, ubi se intenderit animus, ibi valet. Pii, quoniam omnis animi vis ad ea contendit, quae sunt a crassioribus sensibus alienissima, in his velut obbrutescunt, atque obstupescunt. Contra vulgus in his plurimum valet, in illis quam minimum. Inde est, quod audimus nonnullis divinis viris accidisse, ut oleum vini loco biberint. Rursum in affectibus animi quidam plus habent cum pingui corpore commercii, veluti libido, cibi

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Again, if this comes about through zeal for piety, perhaps it is not the same kind of madness; but it is so close to it that most people judge it to be pure madness, especially since a handful of little men disagree with the whole mass of mortals for their entire lives. And so what usually happens to them is, I think, what happens in Plato's fable to those who sit chained in the cave and marvel at the shadows of things, and to that runaway who returns to the cave and declares that he has seen real things, and that they are badly deceived in believing nothing exists but those wretched shadows. This wise man pities and laments the madness of those held fast by such error; they in turn laugh at him as a madman and throw him out. In the same way the mass of people most admire what is most bodily, and think it almost the only thing that exists.

The pious, on the contrary, neglect each thing the more, the closer it comes to the body, and are wholly carried away to the contemplation of things invisible. For the others give first place to riches, the next to bodily comforts, and leave the last to the soul, which most of them do not even believe exists, since it cannot be seen with the eyes. The pious, by contrast, strive with their whole being first toward God himself, the simplest of all things; and after him, though still within him, toward what comes nearest to him, namely the soul. They neglect the care of the body, and they utterly scorn and shun money like so much chaff. Or if they are forced to handle anything of this kind, they do it reluctantly and with distaste: they have as though not having, and possess as though not possessing. There are also, in each particular, widely differing degrees between these two kinds of people.

First, although all the senses are akin to the body, some of them are grosser, such as touch, hearing, sight, smell and taste, while others are further removed from the body, such as memory, understanding and will. Now wherever the soul has applied itself, there it is strong. The pious, since all the force of their soul strains toward what is furthest from the grosser senses, become as it were brutish and numb in these. The common people, on the contrary, are strongest in these and weakest in the others. That is why we hear that some holy men have drunk oil in place of wine. Again,

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somnique appetentia, iracundia, superbia, invidia. Cum his irreconciliabile bellum piis; contra vulgus sine his vitam esse non putat.

Deinde sunt quidam affectus medii, quasique naturales, ut amor patris, charitas in liberos, in parentes, in amicos. His vulgus nonnihil tribuit. At illi hos quoque student ex animo revellere, nisi quatenus ad summam illam animi partem assurgant, ut iam parentem ament, non tanquam parentem, (quid enim ille genuit, nisi corpus? quanquam hoc ipsum Deo parenti debetur,) sed tanquam virum bonum, et in quo luceat imago summae illius mentis, quam unam summum bonum vocant, et extra quam nihil nec amandum, nec expetendum esse praedicant. Hac eadem regula reliqua item omnia vitae officia metiuntur, ut ubique id, quod visibile est, si non est omnino contemnendum, tamen longe minoris faciant, quam ea quae videri nequeunt. Aiunt autem et in sacramentis atque ipsis pietatis officiis corpus et spiritum inveniri.

Velut in ieiunio non magni ducunt, si quis tantum a carnibus coenaque abstineat, id quod vulgus absolutum esse ieiunium existimat, nisi simul et affectibus aliquid adimat, ut minus permittat irae quam soleat, minus superbiae: utque, ceu minus iam onustus mole corporea, spiritus ad coelestium bonorum gustum fruitionemque enitatur. Similiter et in synaxi, tametsi non est aspernandum, inquiunt, quod cerimoniis geritur, tamen id per se aut parum est conducibile, aut etiam perniciosum, nisi id quod est spiritale accesserit, nempe hoc quod signis illis visibilibus repraesentatur. Repraesentatur autem mors Christi, quam domitis, exstinctis, quasique sepultis corporis affectibus exprimere mortales oportet, ut in novitatem vitae resurgant, utque unum cum illo, unum item inter sese fieri queant. Haec igitur agit, haec meditatur ille pius.

Contra vulgus sacrificium nihil aliud esse credit, quam adesse altaribus, idque proxime, audire vocum strepitum, aliasque id genus cerimoniolas spectare. Nec in his tantum, quae duntaxat exempli gratia proposuimus, sed simpliciter in omni vita refugit pius ab his, quae corpori

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among the passions of the soul some have more to do with the gross body, such as lust, the craving for food and sleep, anger, pride and envy. With these the pious wage an irreconcilable war, whereas the common people think there is no life without them.

Then there are certain intermediate passions, natural ones, as it were, such as love for one's father and affection for children, parents and friends. To these the common people give some weight. But the pious strive to tear even these out of their souls, except insofar as they rise to that highest part of the soul. So they love a parent not as a parent (for what did he beget but the body? and even that is owed to God the Father), but as a good man, one in whom shines the image of that supreme Mind, which alone they call the highest good, and outside which, they declare, nothing is to be loved or desired. By this same rule they measure all the other duties of life too, so that everywhere what is visible, if not to be despised altogether, they still value far less than what cannot be seen. They say, moreover, that in the sacraments and in the very duties of piety there is both a body and a spirit.

In fasting, for instance, they think little of it if someone merely abstains from meat and supper, which the common people consider a complete fast, unless at the same time he also takes something away from his passions, allowing less room than usual to anger and less to pride, so that the spirit, less weighed down by the bulk of the body, may rise up to taste and enjoy the goods of heaven. Similarly in the synaxis, the Communion: although what is done with ceremonies is not to be despised, they say, yet by itself it is of little benefit or even harmful, unless the spiritual element is added, namely what those visible signs represent. And what they represent is the death of Christ, which mortals ought to express by taming, extinguishing and, as it were, burying the passions of the body, so that they may rise again in newness of life and become one with him and one with each other. These, then, are the things the pious man does; these are what he meditates on.

The common people, on the other hand, believe the sacrifice is nothing more than being present at the altar, as close as possible, hearing the noise of voices and watching other little ceremonies of that kind. And not only in these matters, which we

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cognata sunt, ad aeterna, ad invisibilia, ad spiritalia rapitur. Proinde quum summa sit inter hos et illos omnibus de rebus dissensio, fit ut utrique alteris insanire videantur. Quanquam id vocabuli rectius in pios competit, quam in vulgus, mea quidem sententia.

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have offered merely as examples, but quite simply in the whole of life, the pious man flees from what is akin to the body and is carried away to the eternal, the invisible and the spiritual. So, since the two sides disagree completely about everything, each seems mad to the other. Though in my opinion the word applies more properly to the pious than to the common people.

THE ECSTASY OF THE BLESSED

Folly describes the happiness of heaven as the soul carried out of itself, a foretaste felt by a few.

LATIN

67 Quod quidem magis perspicuum fiet, si, quemadmodum pollicita sum, paucis demonstraro, summum illud praemium nihil aliud esse, quam insaniam quandam. Primum igitur existimate, Platonem tale quiddam iam tum somniasse, quum amantium furorem omnium felicissimum esse scriberet. Etenim qui vehementer amat, iam non in se vivit, sed in eo quod amat, quoque longius a se ipso digreditur, et in illud demigrat, hoc magis ac magis gaudet. Atque quum animus a corpore peregrinari meditatur, neque probe suis utitur organis, istud haud dubie furorem recte dixeris. Alioqui quid sibi vult, quod vulgo etiam dicunt: *Non est apud se, et ad te redi*, et *sibi redditus est?* Porro quo amor est absolutior, hoc furor est maior ac felicior.

Ergo quaenam futura est illa coelitum vita, ad quam piae mentes tanto studio suspirant? Nempe spiritus absorbebit corpus, utpote victor ac fortior. Idque hoc faciet facilius, partim quod iam olim in vita corpus ad huiusmodi transformationem repurgarit atque extenuarit: deinde spiritus a mente illa summa mire absorbebitur, quippe infinitis partibus potentiore: ita ut iam totus homo extra se futurus sit, nec alia ratione felix futurus, nisi quod, extra sese positus, patietur quiddam ineffabile a summo illo bono, omnia in se rapiente. Iam haec felicitas quanquam tum demum perfecta contingit, quum animi receptis pristinis corporibus immortalitate donabuntur, tamen quoniam piorum vita nihil aliud est, quam illius vitae meditatio ac velut umbra quaedam, fit, ut praemii quoque illius aliquando gustum aut odorem aliquem sentiant.

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This will become clearer still if, as I promised, I show briefly that that supreme reward is nothing other than a kind of madness. First, then, consider that Plato was already dreaming of something of this sort when he wrote that the frenzy of lovers is the happiest of all. For one who loves intensely no longer lives in himself but in the one he loves, and the further he departs from himself and moves over into the other, the more and more he rejoices. And when the soul is planning to journey away from the body and does not use its organs properly, you could no doubt rightly call that frenzy. Otherwise, what do people mean by those common sayings, *He is beside himself*, *Come back to yourself*, and *He has come back to himself*? Moreover, the more perfect the love, the greater and happier the frenzy.

What, then, will that life of the blessed in heaven be like, for which pious souls sigh so ardently? The spirit will absorb the body, being the victor and the stronger. And it will do this all the more easily, partly because it has long since, in this life, purified and refined the body for such a transformation; and then the spirit itself will be wondrously absorbed by that supreme Mind, which is infinitely more powerful. So the whole man will be outside himself, and he will be happy for no other reason than that, placed outside himself, he will undergo something ineffable from that highest good, which draws all things into itself. Now this happiness comes in its perfection only when souls have recovered their former bodies and are endowed with immortality. Yet since the life of the pious is nothing but a meditation on that life, and a kind of shadow of it, they sometimes feel a taste or some fragrance of that reward as well.

LATIN

Id tametsi minutissima quaedam stillula est ad fontem illum aeternae felicitatis, tamen longe superat universas corporis voluptates, etiamsi omnes omnium mortalium deliciae in unum conferantur; usque adeo praestant spiritalia corporalibus, invisibilia visibilibus. Hoc nimirum est quod pollicetur propheta: *Oculus non vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascenderunt, quae praeparavit Deus diligentibus se*. Atque haec est Moriae pars, quae non aufertur commutatione vitae, sed perficitur. Hoc igitur quibus sentire licuit, (contingit autem perpaucis,) ii patiuntur quiddam dementiae simillimum; loquuntur quaedam non satis cohaerentia, nec humano more, sed dant sine mente sonum; deinde subinde totam oris speciem vertunt, nunc alacres, nunc deiecti, nunc lacrymant, nunc rident, nunc suspirant, in summa, vere toti extra se sunt.

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Though this is the tiniest little drop compared with that fountain of eternal happiness, it far surpasses all the pleasures of the body, even if all the delights of all mortals were gathered into one: so far does the spiritual excel the bodily, the invisible the visible. This, surely, is what the prophet promises: *Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what God has prepared for those who love him.* And this is the part of Moria which is not taken away by the change of life, but perfected. Those, then, who have been allowed to feel this (and it is granted to very few) undergo something very like madness. They say things that are not quite coherent, not in the human way, but utter sound without sense. Then they keep changing their whole expression, now cheerful, now downcast; now they weep, now laugh, now sigh. In short, they are truly and wholly outside themselves.[16]

Mox ubi ad sese redierint, negant se scire ubi fuerint, utrum in corpore, an extra corpus, vigilantes, an dormientes; quid audierint, quid viderint, quid dixerint, quid fecerint, non meminerunt, nisi tanquam per nebulam ac somnium; tantum hoc sciunt, se felicissimos fuisse, dum ita desiperent. Itaque plorant sese resipuisse, nihilque omnium malint, quam hoc insaniae genus perpetuo insanire. Atque haec est futurae felicitatis tenuis quaedam degustatiuncula.

Then, when they have come back to themselves, they say they do not know where they have been, whether in the body or out of the body, awake or asleep. What they heard, saw, said or did they do not remember, except as through a mist or a dream; they know only this, that they were supremely happy while they were thus out of their minds. So they weep at having come to their senses again, and would want nothing in the world more than to be mad with this kind of madness forever. And this is just a faint little foretaste of the happiness to come.

FOLLY'S FAREWELL

Folly admits she has forgotten her speech and dismisses her audience with a toast.

LATIN

68 Verum ego iam dudum oblita mei, ὑπὲρ τὰ ἐσκαμμένα πηδῶ. Quanquam si quid petulantius aut loquacius a me dictum videbitur, cogitate, et Stultitiam, et mulierem dixisse. Sed interim tamen memineritis illius Graecanici proverbii: πολλάκι τοι καὶ μωρὸς ἀνὴρ κατακαίριον εἶπεν, nisi forte putatis hoc ad mulieres nihil attinere. Video vos epilogum exspectare; sed nimium desipitis, siquidem arbitramini, me, quid dixerim, etiamnum meminisse, quum tantam verborum farraginem effuderim. Vetus illud, μισῶ μνάμονα συμπόταν. Novum

ENGLISH

But I have long since forgotten myself, and ὑπὲρ τὰ ἐσκαμμένα πηδῶ [I am jumping beyond the line]. Still, if anything I have said seems too saucy or too talkative, remember that it was both Folly and a woman who said it. But remember too, meanwhile, that Greek proverb: πολλάκι τοι καὶ μωρὸς ἀνὴρ κατακαίριον εἶπεν [often even a foolish man has said something to the point], unless perhaps you think it does not apply to women. I see you are waiting for an epilogue; but you are quite out of your minds if you think I still remember what I

16 An echo of Luke 10:42, Mary's "better part, which shall not be taken away from her."

LATIN	ENGLISH
hoc, μισῶ μνάμονα ἀκροατήν. Quare valete, plaudite, vivite, bibite, Moriae celeberrimi Mystae.	said, after pouring out such a hodgepodge of words. There is the old saying: μισῶ μνάμονα συμπόταν [I hate a drinking companion with a memory]. Here is a new one: μισῶ μνάμονα ἀκροατήν [I hate a listener with a memory]. So farewell, applaud, live, drink, most illustrious initiates of Folly.[17]

17 An athletes' proverb: to jump beyond the dug-out pit marking a good leap, that is, to go too far.