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A Discourse on Folly

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"I'm thirsty, but mom, I'm thirsty, but..."

Holly laughs, "Hey, thirsty-butt!"

My eyes swell up into tears. My mother reprimands my sister. Joe is playing with his food, mixing it together and refusing to eat. Our glasses of milk clink against each other. The room is full of laughter, shouting and crying. My parents continue to eat and talk with each other. It's not that they don't care, I know that they love me and my siblings—this is just a time where they let things be. We are the untamable family and it is like this every night. But tonight, there's going to be a storm. Dan grabs a piece of pizza and starts chewing. Dan is usually the nice one.

"Hey Erin, wanna know what you look like?"

He chews his pizza quickly and sticks out his tongue. I am extremely upset, I don't know how else to make him feel bad for doing that.

"Well, you look like THIS!"

I throw the pizza at his face. Dan ducks and the pizza hits the armoire and slides down the glass. There is no way around this, I am in trouble.

However, my dad, knowing the context of my reaction, looks at my brother and sends him straight to his room. I get off clean. It's the kind of miracle I expect kids to learn in Sunday school someday.

Later in the night, a loud boom of thunder shakes our house. I scurry into my parents room and lay in their bed. I love the security and peace I feel under their covers. I think about the pizza I had thrown against the dresser and the way it slid so slowly and how great it is that my brother was grounded.

A Discourse on Folly

Benjamin Fitzgerald

Enter Affectus

Aff. Marry, but I am ruined! How shall it appear to she—she, whom my very being doth but praise—praise? nay, exalt her virtues! She cannot be but the very image of Boticelli's Venus, the perfection of beauty, the pinnacle of becoming, the prime of bloom. But hearken! she is belonging to another man, a true Adonis, for a nobler man 'tis never lived but inside that very bosom. That I could tie his mortal coil into a knot, or better, to hang him with that serpentine thread! A bitterer knave did never live than I, to destroy such truth that virtue should belong to me. But who comes! soft you now, and steel thyself for a leper's discourse.

Enter Ratio

Rat. How now, Affectus? What is the nature, And wherefore the cause, that thou seem'st to me In a fit of agitation to be?

Aff. Fie upon thee, Ratio. Wherefore comest thou before me speaking in iambic tongue? To showcase thy chiseled mind, and to make me sport of thy roguery?

Rat. 'Twere no such thoughts upon my mind, good sir, But that in earnest I beseech of thee The cause by which thy breast beteems to stir— I pray you not bemoan my inquiry.

Aff. Upon my word, an honest knave! Fear thee not but that I shall answer, though I am loathe to do so; yet upon my word I cannot think of reason why I should. Such a tyranny of language, but how my words perambulate and become me not! Therefore sir, and no more digression, but I will avail thy curiosity.

Rat. Worry not sir, but be thou contented, I only want my wisdom augmented.

Aff. Thy wisdom! Fie upon thy wisdom! I have given my word—but wherefore shouldst I keep it? It should not harm

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thee should I not; nay, 'twould be my betterment. Unkind reason, how thou doth evade me! ah, but that I could content these ramblings! No matter; I am calm.

Rat. Art thou sure? for I could but take my leave, And thy confusion with me to bereave.

Aff. Noble squire! Thou art the very voice of reason. Be appeased; I am resolved. Mark thou ever fair Sanctimonia? Did a more lovely creature upon this earth reside? Does not Eve in all her splendor but pale when compared with one as she? Or Bathsheba, by whose visage the most righteous heart did melt—could she hold two pence before our fair lady? Or indeed, fair Helen, whose face—as Marlowe didst nobly describe—stirred in motion ten thousand ships to war, she herself would blush to behold that lovely nymph, and Paris would fain look upon Helen more. Mark you not her beauty?

Rat. No.

Aff. No? Then 'tis thy own misery, to never know such spirits. Attend thine eyes ever upon a sunset? where the clouds lowly hung in the firmament do alight, and red and gold, yellow and orange hues, aye, and bronze and copper dazzle the eyes, stir the bosom, and do homage to the great beauty Creation?

Rat. Thy speech, though prose in form, is worthy craft, And the allusions Shakespeare could not match. Of beauty, what can I say? I see it Though it moves me not, like a dull spirit Would not move a drunkard to slur his speech, Nor a slight breeze cause sandstorms on a beach. For the present sir, speak thy bosom plain And your struggles then I shall ascertain.

Aff. Thou doth rhyme well sir; truly I must tell you, there is no small stirring of envy on my part, that I may not be granted such gifts as thou—proof indeed enough of the baseness of Providence (were such a lie never spake!) that you shouldst be granted what I unfairly am denied. But no more of this—I must have her; though the Euphrates run red with the blood of Chaldea and Canaan's streams of honey stop their flow, I shall have her. Wretched, wretched fate! O, that c'er I was born to suffer so. I cannot imagine but that the demiurge be our cause;

for certes such beneficence cannot be the spring of such misery as I have known! O but that I may take up sword, and by work of havoc cut down that groveling, fawning dog!

Rat. Speakest thou of Veritas? So it seems; Thou shouldst know that I have oft seen the two Walk together in scenes of gentle bliss, Whence from the tracks they leave in faded grass Waters rise, flowers grow, the very air Of heav'n can be breathed; such a sweet perfume By angel or man, ne'er smelled fresh as that. But this is mere talk, pretty poetry That, though my mind can craft endless volumes, Yet sing they not to me; my bosom hears No sound, no art; nay, it beat not at all; But the hearkening of the deathwatches In the wall remind me that I still live. I feel nothing at all; and I'm grateful That no distraction may befall me thus, For science is the only art of worth, And reason the sole source of all merit. Of thy passions: they are folly, no more. Sanctimonia, she is fair enough, But no more than a distraction from vice. As for Veritas, he shall come to naught, For without Logos, truth is a blind guide. And think not, Affectus, that speak I thus Of the Word which is said to be God's flesh; For that is but silly superstition. Rather, Logos that readies to discern; Without intellect, nothing is of use.

Aff. Thou speakest aright, Ratio, that the scoundrel is Veritas himself (and a more loathsome creature Satan himself could not envision), but in speaking so poorly of Sanctimonia, you do discredit to your sex. I cannot think as you do, but—

Rat. Nay, you hath no mind by which to reason! A simple ass, eating weeds on a knoll Could not be more dull.

Aff. I warrant you are as brazen a knave as ever I didst behold, and a cuckold too, to be sure; for no other measure
could so disincline you to the luster of Sanctimonia's breasts.

Rat. Behold the man! First he calls me squire,  
And speaks to me in matters solemn grave,  
Yet when I move my tongue to inquire,  
He turns roundabout and doth call me knave!

Aff. A clever fellow, to be sure. Thou art not wanting in brains, good sir, but hast no soul.

Rat. And what is a soul? Something made from God,  
Who no more exists than doth a griffin.  
So the Scripture reads, man was craft from sod,  
And then woman made, smoother than chiffon;  
Yet from whence came God? reason cannot say,  
Therefore tell me this: wherefore should I pray?  
God did not make man, but 'twas the reverse,  
Just as I do form simple rhyming verse.

Aff. On this we are agreed, though by cause we differ. For quoth I, "How shalt God be good, if He give not me that which I desire?" Should not He, in His love, bestow upon me all the blessings that I deserve? By my very soul, by the fiber of grains that doth make my parts, I feel that I am more worthy than Veritas. Why should I not taste of her succulent flesh? Why must her linen hair, her silken muff be not mine? So do I know that God is not good, and therefore is not. What thinkst thou sir, that thy countenance do of a sudden change?

Rat. I am Hyperion, thou Hephaestus;  
For in all the ways which I am worthy,  
You merit not a charitable buss.  
So am I convinced, though she move not me,  
To woo Sanctimonia out of spite.  
Veritas be damned! I'm more man than he.  
Thus shall all your days become endless night—  
For she must see my greater faculty.

Aff. Thou abominable dog! I would sooner her blood on my hands, and my soul damned to the infernal fires, than see you possess'd with that which you dare not deserve. O miserable excrement! Pernicious alabaster idol! I am resolved; she shall be dead before another night falls, and all the plans of thy rational mind shall be laid waste from the tempest of my passions.

Enter Veritas and Sanctimonia

Ver. Come, Ratio, Affactus, good gentleman, won't you drink with us? 'Twould give me great pleasure to share with thee my affections.

San. Come, please do! My heart would be warmed with your company.

Rat. Madame, the favor which thou dost bestow  
No diamond in the world could bless me so.  
For thine heart I would sacrifice my soul;  
For thy pleasure, give of thee all my whole.

Ver. Come, thou dissembler, deal not falsely with m'lady. I know thy face, I see it in thy eyes; Thy expression betrays thee, thy motives clear as glass. Lady, he wishes to seduce you, to make you his own. And once you are his conquest, to deal with you no more.

San. My love, surely it cannot be. Such a mind as his, such reason—

Ver. Reason, my love, tempered not with humanity, nor with the faith that righteous Moses knew, is no provender.

Rat. Come sir! Call thyself true and pious man,  
Who bitter slanders speak'st of me untrue?  
Am not I righteous like the house of Dan?  
Am I not a Christian and thus a Jew?  
Do not I love justice as doth the Lord?  
How canst thou call me a false deceiver  
When I equip with righteousness the sword?  
Thou doth know me not, righteous believer.

Ver. The beauty of your verse hides not the malice of your heart, For artistry that hath no love is worse than poison dart.

San. Away from me, then, Ratio, or pray to God above,  
For I cannot live without a heart that knoweth love.

Rat. Somehow I hath lost; I bid thee adieu.  
Though I fathom not how I was subdued.

San. Come, please do! My heart would be warmed with your company.

Rat. Come sir! Call thyself true and pious man,  
Who bitter slanders speak'st of me untrue?  
Am not I righteous like the house of Dan?  
Am I not a Christian and thus a Jew?  
Do not I love justice as doth the Lord?  
How canst thou call me a false deceiver  
When I equip with righteousness the sword?  
Thou doth know me not, righteous believer.

San. Away from me, then, Ratio, or pray to God above,  
For I cannot live without a heart that knoweth love.
But on a woman's body it becomes a flock of birds.

San. No more! Be thou away from me this moment! Think'st thou that passion substitutes a want of wisdom? I could with my chastity not bear to part! Thy presumption becomes thee not; go. Apply to Scripture, that thou mayst become wise.

Aff. I know what the Scriptures read! "Behold thou art fair, my love, behold thou art fair." "Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet." "Thy breasts—"

Ver. Ah! that is enough; get thee hence at once,
And come thou not again with that foul mouth,
Which hot and cold it spits out all at once
Words too loose to belong to a strumpet
And base blasphemies of the Living Word.

Aff. May maledictions and afflictions, torments, imprecations, tribulations and calamity befall ye! Thou art anathema to me, the both of ye; thy visages are hateful. But as thou didst fail, foul Ratio, so thy life, wanton Sanctimonia, I shall spare.

Exit Affectus.

San. I know not what to think! Such villainy,
Without cause or motive – which was the worse?

Ver. The Lord doth not rank sins by less or more;
All vice is the same. As to knavish ways,
Though in their bosoms each had his own plan,
Yet both of them were equally vile.

San. Come, my love. Let us think of this no more.
My thoughts rest on thee, whom I doth adore.

Ver. My dove, steal away! Let us now be one,
That the Lord may smile, our love sealed and done.

Exit Sanctimonia and Veritas.

My Love is a Shadow

Monica Logan

You grasp me in your hand, and keep me in your pocket
For fear of losing track
Without me, your world would crumble away

I never complain
Nor sigh at your laziness
When you use and abuse me

Even if you do forget my presence
The moment I move
You run to me

The gazes and glares I receive
Only tie you to me
And make you fall

The Helena in a dream
You see me as Demetrius
Your one and only

But, as you truly do not know me
I must remain as close to you as the sun
That lightens the day, but darkens your sight

Do you miss me yet?
Do you miss the moon,
Lighting your path in the dark?

Is it really that hard without me?
Can you see anything outside yourself?
Or do you hear just your hollow, echoed replies?

Oh, I see now, I see who you think I am
Not a lackey or a jockey, just a horse,
Worse than your slave