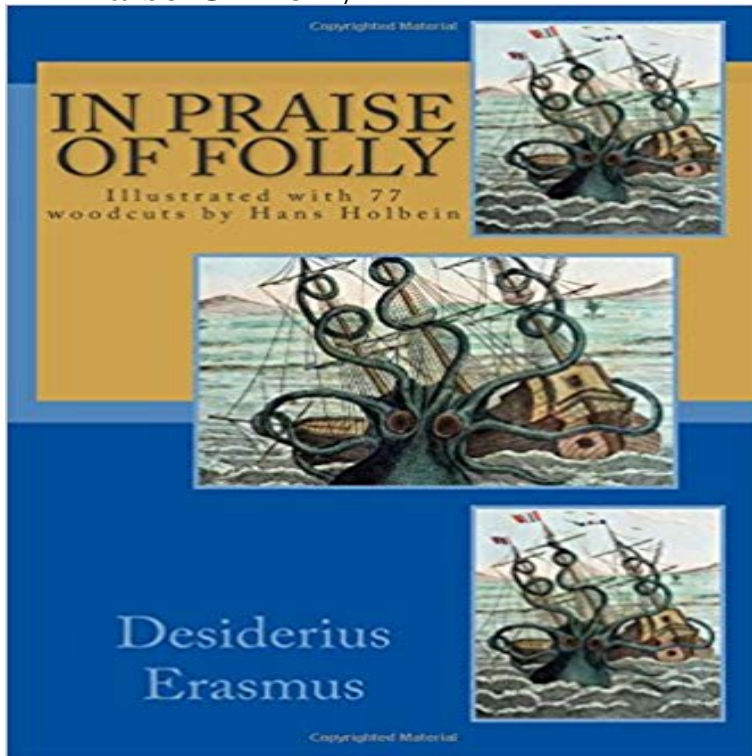


# In Praise Of Folly



In Praise of Folly starts off with a satirical learned encomium, in which Folly praises herself, after the manner of the Greek satirist Lucian, whose work Erasmus and Sir Thomas More had recently translated into Latin, a piece of virtuoso foolery; it then takes a darker tone in a series of orations, as Folly praises self-deception and madness and moves to a satirical examination of pious but superstitious abuses of Catholic doctrine and corrupt practices in parts of the Roman Catholic Church to which Erasmus was ever faithful and the folly of pedants. Erasmus had recently returned disappointed from Rome, where he had turned down offers of advancement in the curia, and Folly increasingly takes on Erasmus' own chastising voice. The essay ends with a straightforward statement of Christian ideals. Hans Holbein's witty marginal drawing of Folly (1515), in the first edition, a copy owned by Erasmus himself (Kupferstichkabinett, Basel) Erasmus was a good friend of More, with whom he shared a taste for dry humor and other intellectual pursuits. The title *Morias Encomium* can also be read as meaning In praise of More. The double or triple meanings go on throughout the text. The essay is filled with classical allusions delivered in a style typical of the learned humanists of the Renaissance. Folly parades as a goddess, offspring of Plutus, the god of wealth and a nymph, Freshness. She was nursed by two other nymphs Inebriation and Ignorance, her faithful companions include Philautia (self-love), Kolakia (flattery), Lethe (forgetfulness), Misoponia (laziness), Hedone (pleasure), Anopia (madness), Tryphe (wantonness) and two gods Komos (intemperance) and Eegretos Hypnos (dead sleep). Folly praises herself endlessly, arguing that life would be dull and distasteful without her. Of earthly existence, Folly pompously states, you'll find nothing frolic or fortunate

that it owes not to me.

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