

Confidence in Katastematic Pleasure

Post by “Joshua” of February 12, 2023 at 11:40 AM

Quote

-GAUNT-

All places that the eye of heaven visits

Are to a wise man ports and happy havens.

Teach thy necessity to reason thus:

There is no virtue like necessity.

Think not the King did banish thee,

But thou the King. Woe doth the heavier sit

Where it perceives it is but faintly borne.

Go, say I sent thee forth to purchase honor,

And not the King exiled thee; or suppose

Devouring pestilence hangs in our air

And thou art flying to a fresher clime.

Look what thy soul holds dear, imagine it

To lie that way thou goest, not whence thou com'st.

Suppose the singing birds musicians,

The grass whereon thou tread'st the presence

strewed,

The flowers fair ladies, and thy steps no more

Than a delightful measure or a dance;

For gnarling sorrow hath less power to bite

The man that mocks at it and sets it light.

-BOLINGBROKE-

O, who can hold a fire in his hand
By thinking on the frosty Caucasus?
Or cloy the hungry edge of appetite
By bare imagination of a feast?
Or wallow naked in December snow
By thinking on fantastic summer's heat?
O no, the apprehension of the good
Gives but the greater feeling to the worse.
Fell sorrow's tooth doth never rankle more
Than when he bites but lanceth not the sore.

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I was thinking of this exchange in *Richard II* in relation to '*ataraxia* under duress'. John of Gaunt is Bolingbroke's father, and has dutifully argued for his own son's banishment--a service to the king which he comes to bitterly regret. One senses that his advice is as much for himself as for his son. But Bolingbroke is having none of it. "Who can hold a fire in his hand by thinking on the frosty Caucasus?"