

In Praise of Fluff

As I sit here on my sun-speckled luxury hotel balcony overlooking Aruba's calm turquoise waves lapping its powder-fine white sands, drinking my chilled mojito and wistfully musing about the futility of my past activities and inquiries into the meaning of life and other ponderous questions, I now wonder if it'd be not inappropriate to borrow a page from Erasmus of Rotterdam and scribble some thoughts on the importance of Fluff. ...Slurp.

Besides me a ways on her plush lawn chair reclines my latest conquest dressed in her sky-blue string bikini reading *Cosmo* and puffing on her e-cigarette. Inside, a mixed CD of mellow bossa nova classics suffuses the tropical morning like muzak, while the AC thoroughly refrigerates our bedroom –though the inevitable midday heat has yet to rise to typically uncomfortable levels this early in the day. She's a barista and fashion model wannabe from...Iowa, I think...whom I met last night at the fake luau mixer, drinking one cuba libre after another and mocking the natives. One thing led to another and yaddah, yaddah, yaddah... Slurp.

But back to Fluff. There was a time some years ago when I thought like my peers that "information is power" and kept track of market shifts using Von Neumann gaming algorithms to place my investments. I'd also watch the news to keep up with scary world events like war in Iraq, famine in the Sudan or burning oil rigs in the Gulf of Mexico. I'd lose sleep worrying about the latest homegrown terrorist group or escaped serial killer. But I've finally learned my lesson: Don't worry; be fluffy!

Many millions of men and women have embraced Fluff and now live cool and contented lives enjoying the vacuous and uncomplicated comforts of our shallow global society. In this latter-day Shangri-La, credit is plentiful and online shopping malls are open 24-7. One can shop for anything and anyone to play any fluffy game one could possibly imagine. The Web can produce any film, song, image or toy you may desire. You can make hundreds of new friends on social media, or find a wife, a husband, a lover, a pet iguana or even order a prostitute online. You want a replica of the Venus de Milo to decorate your entertainment center? No problem: soon you'll be able to 3-D print it at your leisure.

And let's face it, Fluff is not new. If one would choose to waste one's time reading about ancient religions and philosophies, one would find many avatars of Fluff throughout many cultures and exotic traditions. For instance, one of the Buddhist schools of the 3rd century B.C. taught the doctrine of Śūnyatā –meaning emptiness or vacuity– that all things are empty or, to translated into our weltanschauung, that everything is just... Fluff.

Modern science also teaches us that the nucleus of a hydrogen atom is just 1.7 times 10^{-15} m. And if one compares the distance between the hydrogen nucleus and its electron shell to the distance between the sun and planets, it's the equivalent of 3.3 times the distance between the sun and Pluto! The rest is just empty space, in other words, fluff. Of course, we also know that this nucleus is not a hard rubber ball, but rather a quantum of energy, so...fluff. All this is also true of all the carbon atoms and other elements that make up our bodies: all are made of fluff orbiting fluff. In fact, they say that if all the atoms of the universe would all of a sudden stop spinning, all that orbiting energy making

up matter would also freeze up, and therefore everything would just disappear... poof! Gone... Even less than fluff.

Vanity of vanities! All is fluff... Slurp.

My new girlfriend Cindi (or is it Brandi?) is telling me she's bored and wants to go to the beach. I reply: "Go ahead, babe. Enjoy. I wanna stay here and catch the morning steel drum band playin' by the pool. See you later, alligator." She meanders past me... She's got a pair of peaches on her... Never mind... Slurp.

As I was saying, there are many ways to live the fluffy way. One can start a collection of mass-produced items and get it appraised by an antiques and collectibles expert like that Andrew Zegers on TV. But try to avoid serious stuff like war memorabilia. Stick to light-weight trivial stuff, like plush stuffed animals... teddy bears, pandas and such. You'd be surprised how much a 19th century teddy bear can fetch in the collectibles market. The fluffier the better, I say.

In the age-old battle between substance and style, the latter wins hands down. No contest. Many thinkers have wasted their lives searching for the ultimate ἀρχή, the fundamental principle from which everything is derived... the Urgrund. Get real! I say, flush Substance. Bah! I deride your Substance! You may say I'm attacking the very idea of Substance, ... that I'm heaping abuse on Substance (... substance abuse?...) I think the mojito is fluffing up my head a bit.

I may as well go back inside, freshen up my mojito, lie down and check what's on TV. Here we go... click... Meet the candidates... click... *Modern Family*... click... Defeat Obamacare... click... *Sin Tetas no Hay Paraíso*, su telenovela en *TeleMundo*... click... Ah!... Here we go! Straight via satellite feed from Missoula, Montana: COIFF-O-RAMA, The 2015 International Convention and Salon of Hairstyling and Grooming Products and Services!

I bet Cindi would just love this! I'll text her on my smart phone.

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