Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

109 The lion is attentive (*Leo studiosus est*)

A lion is attentive by its natural diligence, generous in its irrational nature, virtuous in its bodily power, and condemned for its terrible violence. Because of the first three the just man is compared to the lion, and because of the fourth the sinner.

¶ Because, therefore, the lion is keenly diligent it is evident that he watches with his eyes open when he sleeps.[[1]](#endnote-1) When he is followed by hunters, he destroys his tracks with his tail lest he be captured.[[2]](#endnote-2) He looks about the earth so that he might fear less, so the just man in the state of entering upon [his life] looks to investigate his conscience. So, a woman looks at herself in her mirror, Can. 5[:2]: “I sleep, and my heart watches.” Second, man destroys his tracks through contrition and confession. So, a thief throws away the stolen object lest he be taken with it. But also, he does this with his tail, that is, the memory of his end, namely, his death, Eccli. 28[:6]: “Remember your last things,” that is, uncertain death, the judgment of the just, the pain of the damned, and the glory of the blessed, “and let enmity cease,” that is, to do away the enmity between yourself and God. These by not obeying between yourself and your neighbor, those by doing injury

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between the flesh and the spirit with the flesh consenting, Deut. 33[:20]: “Blessed be Gad in his breadth, he has rested as a lion,” because after the destruction of his tracks, that is, of his sins, he rests on his bed with a pacified conscience. He considers the land of the living so that he may fear less the present labor, just as according to Gregory, in the *Homelia,*[[3]](#endnote-3) a consideration of the reward lessens the power of the whip. Wherefore Gen. 49[:14-15]: “Issachar shall be a strong ass lying down between the borders,” namely, hell and heaven. “He saw rest, that it was good, and the land that it was excellent, and he bowed his shoulders to carry.” Num. 23[:24]: “A lion shall not lie down,” that is, the just man shall not cease, “till it devours the prey,” that is, until it eats bread in the kingdom of heaven.

¶ Second, principally the lion is generous by nature. Wherefore it has its name in Greek, which is said as king in Latin,[[4]](#endnote-4) because it is tame to all, itself not injuring unless it has been offended, it is merciful to the humble. For it spares men prostrate,[[5]](#endnote-5) but it is terrible to other animals. Wherefore also in its roaring it signals its approach to another beast. So, the just man in the state of setting out is mild by being submissive to the wise, just as to an unhealthy palate bread that is healthy and sweet is a penalty. And to sick eyes the light which is pure and friendly is hateful, Eccli. 7[:22]: “Hurt not the servant that works faithfully” for you, etc. Isai. 11[:7]: “The lion shall eat straw like the ox,” that is, the just man will be friendly with the just.

¶ Again he is merciful to the penitent, just as Christ himself was to the thief, the father to the son, the prodigal returning, according to that [3] Kings 21[:29]: “Have you not seen Achab humbled before me,” etc., up to “in his days.” Judic. 14[:14]: “Out of the eater,” that is, out of the lion, “came forth meat,” etc. This food coming out pertains to the effect of mercy.

¶ Again he is terrible to sinners who do not want to repent, as Moses to Pharaoh, Prov. 20[:8]: “The king, who sits on the throne of judgment, scatters away all evil with his look.” Amos 3[:8]: “Who will not fear?” Prov. 19[:12]: “As the roaring of a lion, so also is the anger of a king,” so that namely, the sinner seeing God the irate king, plants his steps so that he should not proceed further to sin.

¶ Again the lion is virtuous in its power. For according to Isadore, book 12,[[6]](#endnote-6) it has strength in its breast, firmness in its head, boldness in work. Wherefore also its cubs are born dead.[[7]](#endnote-7) Third, from its roaring it thus raises them to life, thus a strong just man by the fervor of his zeal, just as a house well cemented and tied together is said to be strong, Prov. 30[:30]: “A lion, the strongest

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of beasts, who has no fear of anything he meets.” For charity outside sends away fear, as is evident in Paul whom nothing could separate from Christ, Rom. 8[:35-39].

¶ Again a just man is firm in the foundation of the faith, just as a building founded upon stone is said to be strong, Prov. 12[:19]: “The lip of truth shall be steadfast forever.” Gen. 49[:9]: “Juda is a lion's whelp,” that is, one confessing Christ through faith, etc. Again, the industrious man emboldened by faith, just as the merchant labors by the hope of profit, Prov. 28[:1]: “The just, bold as a lion,” which is hunted as a prey, “shall be without dread.” However, Isadore[[8]](#endnote-8) says that the lion fears fire and the noise of wheels. So, the just man fears the fire of hell and the hiss of the prophets. Wherefore the assurance of the just ought not to be in fear except of the divine lest perhaps he falls into presumption. Therefore, it is said of Judas Maccabeus, [1 Macc. 3:4]: “In his acts he was like a lion.”

¶ Fourth, it is condemned for its terrible violence which is evident. Because it has a cruel rapacity and voraciousness. So, the sinner has a cruel pride such as Pharaoh and Roboam. Therefore Eccli. 4[:35]: “Be not as a lion in your house, terrifying them of your household.” This lion is to be killed by tameness, in the example of David, 1 Kings 17[:36]: “I your servant have killed both a lion,” of pride, “and a bear,” of sloth.” In the servant is noted humility. Again, the sinner has the rapacity of cupidity and avarice, Psal. [9:30]: “He lies in ambush that he may catch the poor man,” as if the lion in its cave.[[9]](#endnote-9) Eccli. 13[:23]: “The wild ass is the lion's prey in the desert: so also, the poor are devoured by the rich.”

¶ This lion is to be killed by the freedom of mercy. In the example of Banaias, 1 Paral. 11[:22]: “Who killed a lion amid a pit in the time of snow.”

¶ Third, it has the voraciousness of gluttony just as at the banquet of the rich, Luke 16[:19]. And just like Nabil, [1] Kings 25[:11]. For in [1] Pet. 5[:8] it is said, “Your adversary the devil, as [a roaring lion],” etc. This lion is to be killed by the strength of abstinence. In the example of Sampson, Judic. 14[:6]: “He tore the lion as he would have torn a kid in pieces.”

1. Cf. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 12.2.5 (PL 82:434): Cum dormierint, vigilant oculi; cum ambulant, cauda sua cooperiunt vestigia sua, ne eos venator inveniat.

Cf. Isidore, *The Etymologies* 12.2.5 (Barney, p. 251b): Even when they are sleeping their eyes are watchful. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Cf. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 12.2.5 (PL 82:434): cum ambulant, cauda sua cooperiunt vestigia sua, ne eos venator inveniat.

Cf. Isidore, *The Etymologies* 12.2.5 (Barney, p. 251b): When they walk their tail brushes away their tracks, so that a hunter cannot find them. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Cf. Gregory, *Moralia* 3.33.64 (PL 75:631): Et rursum consideratio munerum cogitationis asperae impatientiam refrenet, dicens: Si bona accepimus de manu Domini, mala quare non sustineamus?

Cf. Gregory, *Morals* 3.33.64 : And, on the other hand, let the consideration of the gifts repress the discontent of bitter thought, saying, Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?  [Gregory the Great - Moralia in Job (Morals on the Book of Job) - Book III (Book 3) - online (lectionarycentral.com)](http://www.lectionarycentral.com/GregoryMoralia/Book03.html) [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 12.2.3 (PL 82:434): Leo autem Graece, Latine rex interpretatur, eo quod princeps sit omnium bestiarum.

Cf. Isidore, *The Etymologies* 12.2.3 (Barney, p. 251a): 3. The term ‘lion’ (*leo,* gen*. leonis*) is of Greek origin but is declined in Latin, for it is called *leon* in Greek. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Cf. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 12.2.6 (PL 82:434): Circa hominem leonum natura est benigna, ut nisi laesi nequeant irasci. Patet enim eorum misericordia exemplis assiduis. Prostratis enim parcunt; [Col.0434C] captivos obvios repatriare permittunt; hominem non nisi in magna fame interimunt.

Cf. Isidore, *The Etymologies* 12.2.6 (Barney, p. 251b): 6. Around humans, the lion’s nature is such that unless they are hurt they are unable to become angry. Their tender-heartedness is obvious from continual examples, for they spare those who are lying prone, they allow captives whom they meet to return home, and they never kill a human except in great hunger. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 12.2.4 (PL 82:434): Virtus eorum in pectore, firmitas in capite.

Cf. Isidore, *The Etymologies* 12.2.4 (Barney, p. 251a): Their strength is indicated in their chest, their steadfastness in their head. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Cf. Pliny, *Natural History* 10.83.176-177 (LCL 353:404-405): haec inchoatos, in quo sunt genere leaenae, ursae; et vulpes informe etiam magis quam supradicta parit, rarumque est videre parientem. postea lambendo calefaciunt fetus omnia ea et figurant.

these produce them unfinished—in this class being lionesses and bears; and a fox bears its young in an even more unfinished state than the species above-mentioned, and it is rare to see one in the act of giving birth. Afterwards all these species warm their offspring and shape them by licking them. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Isidore, *Etymologiae* 12.2.4 (PL 82:434): Rotarum timent strepitus, sed ignes magis.

Cf. Isidore, *The Etymologies* 12.2.4 (Barney, p. 251b): They fear the rattle of wheels, but they fear fire even more. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Aesop’s Fables, no. 142 in Perry Index. Ademar 59: Leo Senex et vulpis: Leo in annis deficiens languere fingebat, et per eam fallaciam ceterae bestiae ad uisitandum eum introibant. Leo uero continuo edebat eas. Vulpis autem ueniens stetit ante speluncam, et salutauit eum; interrogata a Leone, cur non introiret, r[es]p[ondit] : Quoniam uideo ineuntium uestigia, non egredientium.
*Quia aliorum priuata doctrina nobis debet esse sanitas, et in domum potentis facile est intrare, exire autem iam tardum est.*

Cf. Oxford, Laura Gibbs 18: A lion had grown old and weak. He pretended to be sick, which was just a ruse to make the other animals come pay their respects so that he could eat them all up, one by one. The fox also came to see the lion, but she greeted him from outside the cave. The lion asked the fox why she didn't come in. The fox replied, 'Because I see the tracks of those going in, but none coming out.'
*Other people's lives are lessons in how we can avoid danger: it is easy to enter the house of a powerful man, but once you are inside, it may already be too late to get out.* [THE FOX, THE LION AND THE FOOTPRINTS (mythfolklore.net)](http://www.mythfolklore.net/aesopica/perry/142.htm) [↑](#endnote-ref-9)