Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

206 Beauty is triple (*Pulcritudo triplex*)

Beauty is triple: corporal, virtual, eternal. The first is dangerous, the second is grace giving, and the third is glorious. First, just as the one being deceived is taught to put little value on the cross, for Christ who was “Beautiful in form,” Psal. [44:3], “above the sons of men.” On the cross he did not have beauty nor decorum.

¶ And certainly, bodily beauty is triple. Innate consistent in the lineaments of the body, borrowed consisting in ornaments, and simulated consistent in signs painted by hypocrisy.

¶ Against the first of these Christ on the cross appeared as if a person with leprosy. Against the second he hung naked. Against the third he had an open side.

¶ Second, beauty just as followers are taught by the cross to seek these things. For certainly, beauty consists in chastity just as in fairness, in charity just as in redness, in truth just as in the due proportion of the parts. But Christ taught chastity hanging among the virgins, charity praying for his enemies, and truth of the prophets and fulfilling their promises. These three for being beautiful we ought to seek because to make the soul beautiful just as is treated in that most beautiful voice of women there. In the soul are three potencies.

¶ Third beauty, just as the proficient

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are taught by hoping on the cross. For these things Christ died on the cross. This consists in three: in contemplating the deity, in rejoicing in society, and in a secure eternity. Wherefore Augustine, the second book, *De libero arbitrio*, in the end.[[1]](#endnote-1) Such is the beauty of eternal charity and unchangeable truth that even if we were allowed to dwell in it no more than the space of a single day for this we would rightly set aside innumerable treasures full of delights. For it is not false or for trivial effect that it has been said, Psal. [83:11]: “Better in your courts above thousands.”

¶ Again, it is read that beauty is triple. One is the greatest and fully settling, namely, eternal. Another is leading to this, namely, internal. The third frequently seducing and leading away from this, namely, external. Therefore, to be valued as little is the third to be held as one deceiving. The third is to be done away with and thus the first is to be received, never failing.

1. Augustine, *De libero arbitrio* 3.25 (PL 32:1308-1309):  Tanta est autem pulchritudo justitiae, tanta jucunditas lucis aeternae, hoc est incommutabilis veritatis atque sapientiae, ut etiamsi non liceret amplius in ea manere quam unius diei mora, propter hoc solum innumerabiles anni hujus vitae pleni deliciis et circumfluentia temporalium bonorum recte meritoque **[Col. 1309]**contemnerentur. Non enim falso aut parvo affectu dictum est: Quoniam melior est dies unus in atriis tuis super millia (Psal. LXXXIII, 11). Quanquam et alio sensu possit intelligi, ut millia dierum in temporis mutabilitate intelligantur; unius autem diei nomine incommutabilitas aeternitatis vocetur.

See Peter King, *Augustine: On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings* (Cambridge: Univ. Press, 2010), (pp. 125-126): So great is the beauty of justice, so great is the delightfulness of eternal light, that is, of unchangeable truth and wisdom, that even if we were allowed no more than the span of a single day to dwell in it, for this alone would we rightly and deservedly set at naught countless years of this life that were filled with delights and an overflowing abundance of temporal goods. As the Psalmist said with genuine feeling: “One day in Your courts is better than a thousand!” [Ps. 83:11 (84:10 rsv)].

[On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings (wordpress.com)](https://philonew.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/augustine-augustine-on-the-free-choice-of-the-will-on-grace-and-free-choice-and-other-writings-2010.pdf) [↑](#endnote-ref-1)