Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

207 Beauty Beauty is triple (*Pulchritudo triplex est pulcribudo*)

Beauty. Beauty is triple because it is apparent and not existing. Of which the first is feigned and simulated, in which it consists in words and signs of the hypocrites, when however, it is not thus in heart. Superiors have this who pursue vices under the guise of correcting, but they are more under the intent of extorting money, unjustly being enriched, that they might support their ample entourage, or that they may give a splendid alms, and many gorge themselves under the species of becoming stronger in the service of God, Matt. 23[:27]: “Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, you are like to whited sepulchers, which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but within.”

¶ Second, beauty is apparent and not existent. It is a painted promise, just as it is said in the proverb,[[1]](#endnote-1) A beautiful promise makes a fool happy, So the flesh promises delight, but concludes with bitterness. Just as the world and the devil promise a long life, sufficient time for repenting. By this way young men deceive women by saying, I will never desert you.

¶ Third, beauty is changeable, which consists in sayings, delights, and honors, concerning which Dan. 4[:7, 9]: “I saw, and behold a tree in the midst of the earth.” About which see in the chapter Tree (*Arbor*). But certainly, this beauty is unstable and uncertain since it is borrowed. About which it is said proverbially, a borrowed thing in the end wants to return home.[[2]](#endnote-2) Job 5[:3]: “I have seen a fool with a strong root, and I cursed his beauty.”

¶ The example in Horace,[[3]](#endnote-3) the little crow because of his blackness is thrown out. Thus, does the cautious with reason as concerning a certain beautiful bird

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borrows its feathers to the ornament of its nest.

¶ But when afterwards it despised other birds, according to the decree of Jove it pulled out some of the bird’s feathers, and thus the crow remained black and derided. So, man, who is cherished much by other creatures, if he contemns God in the end he is denuded by the birds of heaven, that is, derided by angels, left, and trampled upon by the demons, Isai. 3[:18, 17]: “In that day the Lord will take away the ornaments of the daughters of Sion,” [Lam. 1:6]: “All her beauty.” Which are her chairs, what a widowed princess ornamented by someone, or is she beautiful. To whom does that one appear? For me what ornamentation is more beautiful than the text? The example of Seneca[[4]](#endnote-4) for this concerning the horse covered and having the blankets bound, which is suspected in those places, so it is concerning the rich who cover their riches and underneath are weak and foul. And often what is on top is less appreciated, like an earthen pot over the solid part, straw over the grain, as in a tent the worst skins were on top.

1. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I.5.4. ad 1 : pulchra enim dicuntur quae visa placent

   “Beautiful things are those which please when seen.” [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. F 128 adds: In English, **Guide love well and you (will have a) lasting home.** [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Horace, *Epistles* 1.3.18-20 (LCL 194:272-273): quid mihi Celsus agit? monitus multumque monendus,privatas ut quaerat opes et tangere vitet scripta Palatinus quaecumque recepit Apollo, ne, si forte suas repetitum venerit olimgrex avium plumas, moveat cornicula risum furtivis nudata coloribus. ipse quid audes?

   What, pray, is Celsus doing? He was warned, and must often be warned to search for home treasures, and to shrink from touching the writings which Apollo on the Palatine has admitted: lest, if some day perchance the flock of birds come to reclaim their plumage, the poor crow, stripped of his stolen colours, awake laughter. And yourself

   ### Crow, cf. Odo of Cheriton 3. DE CORNICE. [Perry](http://mythfolklore.net/aesopica/perry/noperry.htm) : *Contra illos qui iactant se habere quod non habent.* Cornix semel, uidens se turpem et nigram, conquesta est Aquile. Aquila dixit ei quod mutuo reciperet plumas de diuersis auibus. Fecit sic. Accepit de cauda Pauonis, de alis Columbe, et, sicut sibi placuit, de ceteris auibus. Cornix, uidens se ornatam, cepit deridere et inclamare contra alias aues. Venerunt igitur aues, et conquerebantur Aquile de superbia Cornicis. Respondit Aquila: Accipiat quelibet auis suam pennam, et sic humiliabitur. Quo facto, Cornix relicta est turpis et nuda.

   Cf. Bartholomaeus Anglicus [13th century CE] (*De proprietatibus rerum*, book 12): … For when father and mother in age are both naked and bare of covering of feathers, then the young crows hide and cover them with their feathers, and gather meat and feed them. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Seneca, *Epistula* 47.16 (LCL 75:310-311): Quemadmodum stultus est, qui equum empturus non ipsum inspicit, sed stratum eius ac frenos, sic stultissimus est, qui hominem aut ex veste aut ex condicione, quae vestis modo nobis circumdata est, aestimat.

   As he is a fool who, when purchasing a horse, does not consider the animal’s points, but merely his saddle and bridle; so he is doubly a fool who values a man from his clothes or from his rank, which indeed is only a robe that clothes us. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)