Worcester F 80 Distinctiones

268 To See for vision (*Videre Ad Visionem*)

To see. For corporal vision three things are required. The organ by which it is seen,

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the object, which is seen, the light by which it is seen. The organ must be suitable in the ordinary way for two reasons: as for the needed application and as for the removal of confusion. If the eye by the position of the fingers is moved from its due position, one thing appears as two. The eye, even in the nebulous air, does not perceive the vapor on account of the contamination but going out and looking back one perceives it well.

¶ Again,[[1]](#endnote-1) as for the second it is required that the object be situated conveniently so that it is not too far distant nor too close. For if it is visible, it is put over the eye immediately. It will not seem similar if it is less distant or not seen or seen as less than it is.

¶ Again, it is required that the medium of light be proportional to the organ, because excelling the ability of the sense corrupts the sense. For a bright light rather blinds the weak eye than illuminates it. Similarly, also in the eye. If the light is too weak, it will show itself too much and the truth of the thing, it will hide the color. Just as is evident in the firefly and other things thus shining at night are seen but it does not show the color on account of the paucity of light. But with a bright light overcoming the color is evident but the feebler light hides on account of the presence of the greater light. For this reason, the stars are not seen during the day. So, it happens in the spiritual vision for this, so that the truth may be seen. Intellect itself is required congruent to a thing disposed for understanding, conveniently put forth, and the light of discretion applied to both.

¶ The defect of the first, they have discords in the congregation. For these seek to drive out the spirit of indignation, the eye of reason, from the due disposition. Wherefore and on account of too much it seems to them that unity is to be divided and thus they labor at dissension. Wherefore Archytas of Tarentum,[[2]](#endnote-2) the philosopher, while angry towards a worthless servant, said, I would have taken vengeance upon you except I was angry. I prefer to dismiss you unpunished than to punish you on account of the offense more gravely than is just.

¶ The defect of the second, the proud are the ones who estimate too much for themselves, they put themselves close and this through inordinate love which more intensely blinds among other passions. Wherefore Gregory,[[3]](#endnote-3) the intellect does not easily apprehend what the feeling abhors.

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From this also they are rendered ungrateful to others. Wherefore Seneca,[[4]](#endnote-4) the man is ungrateful, who denies that he has received a benefit. And who dissimulates, and who does not give back in return, and who has forgotten. Such ones not seeing their own iniquity they attribute great disrespect to others. Such ones have prominent eyes. Therefore, their sight is weak according to the Philosopher, book 19, *De animalibus*.[[5]](#endnote-5) For these attend too much to other things, their own they value little.

¶ They have the defect of the third, who weigh secular matters over spiritual. These are as if fireflies “for the children of this world are wiser than the children of light,” in their generation, [Luke 16:8].

¶ Again for a notable showing of sight three things are required, namely, the efficiency of the organ, the sufficient purity of the medium, the proficient illumination of the object. The operation fitting for this is that which Dionysius, *De celesti hierarchia,* chapter 3,[[6]](#endnote-6) says, there are three hierarchical works, to purge, to illuminate, and to perfect. They who have eyes well purified can better investigate others and correct them. Some prelates are negligent and little caring for the beloved. Some are carnal and from this fear to correct. The third kind are faint hearted and less believing, who are figured through Hely, [1] Reg. 3[:2]: “Heli lay in his” bed of torpor, “and his eyes” spiritual in the discretion of virtues and vices, “were grown dim,” because of faint heartedness for humility, accepting carnal compassion for charity, “that he could not see” the light of God, that is, to accept true virtue before it is extinguished, before he loses the existence of virtue and the retains only the appearance. Or because he can hardly bear the prosperity of his neighbor. For the envious are like birds of whom their intuition illuminates the night, the day blinds. He falls from his saddle, that is, from his prelature or from this life, etc.

1. Cf. Raymond Jordan, *Idiota opera omnia* Oculus Mysticus, cap. 11.3.15-16 (Paris: Iacobum Quesnel, 1654), pp. 538-539: 15. Tertio, requiritur ad visum proportio distantiae: nam si visibile super oculum ponitur, vel nimis distat ab oculo, non videtur. Modo consimili si scholaris ab aliqua scientia nimis distat per odium, vel si accedat nimis per amorem inordinatum, non videt eam, nec rectum iudicium de ea habet. Et, sicut dicit Seneca. Perit omne iudicium, cum res venit ad affectum. Hinc contingit aliquando quod multis opera propria non multum valentia, videntur aliorum operibus, quamuis praestantioribus melior: *Nam, quod fecit, homo quisque tuetur opus*.

   16. Vt enim ut dicit Petrus Alophonsus naturaliter quisque gloriatur in suo carmine qualecunque sit, sicut et simia in sua prole. Videtur enim simiae, quod sua proles caeteris antecellat in pulchritudine; cum tamen extremum locum teneat in deformitate. Vnde simia de suo filio fingitur dixisse, *Iudicio super est omnibus iste meo*. Sic etiam dicit Poetra, *Author opus laudat.* et iterum. *Est cupidus doctor, studiorum quisque suorum.* Sicut interdum home de suis operibus male iudicat, eo quod sunt ei nimis proxima per amorem; sic de aliorum operibus, si distens ab eius affectu per odum vel rancorem. Nam vt dicit Gregorius, non facile capit intellectus, quod aborret affectus.

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2. Archytas, cf. Cicero, *De re publica* 1.38.59 (LCL 213:88-89): Non mehercule, inquit, sed imitor Archytam illum Tarentinum, qui cum ad villam venisset et omnia aliter offendisset ac iusserat, “A te infelicem,” inquit vilico, “quem necassem iam verberibus, nisi iratus essem.”

   Certainly not, but I imitate the famous Archytas of Tarentum, who, when he found, upon arriving at his country place, that all his orders had been disobeyed, said to his superintendent:’ “You are at fault, wretched man, and I should have had you flogged to death ere this were I not angry!” [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Gregory, cf. Raymond Jordan, *Idiota opera omnia,* Oculus Mysticus 11.3.16 (Paris: Apud Jacobum Quesnel, 1654), (p. 539): Sicut interdum homo de suis operibus male iudicat, eo quod sunt ei nimis proxima per amorem; sic de aliorum operibus, si distent ab eius affectu per odiu7m vel rancorem. Nam ut dicit Gregorius, non facile capit intellectus, quod abhorret affectus. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Seneca, *De beneficiis* 3.3 (LCL 310:126-129): Ingratus est, qui beneficium accepisse se negat, quod accepit; ingratus est, qui dissimulat; ingratus, qui non reddit, ingratissimus omnium, qui oblitus est.

   The man is ungrateful who denies that he has received a benefit, which he has in fact received; he is ungrateful who pretends that he has not received one; he, too, is ungrateful who fails to return one; but the most ungrateful of all is the man who has forgotten a benefit. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Aristotle, *History of Animals* 1.10 492a7-10 (Barnes 1:783): Of eyes, some are large, some small, some medium-sized; of these, the medium-sized are the best. Moreover, eyes sometimes protrude, sometimes recede, sometimes are neither protruding nor receding. Of these, the receding eye is in all animals the most acute; but the last kind are the sign of the best disposition. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Celestial Hierarchies* 3, (Godalming, Surrey, 1935): For the holy constitution of the Hierarchy ordains that some are purified, others purify; some are enlightened, others enlighten; some are perfected, others make perfect; for in this way the divine imitation will fit each one. … I hold, therefore, that those who are being purified ought to be wholly perfected and free from all taint of unlikeness; those who are illuminated should be filled full with Divine Light, ascending to the contemplative state and power with the most pure eyes of the mind; those who are being initiated, holding themselves apart from all imperfection, should become participators in the Divine Wisdom which they have contemplated. [Dionysius the Areopagite: Celestial Hierarchies (esotericarchives.com)](https://www.esotericarchives.com/oracle/dionys2.htm#chap3) [↑](#endnote-ref-6)