

*“Non est quicquam expers pulchritudinis”*

**THE THEME OF BEAUTY  
IN NICHOLAS OF CUSA'S SERMONS**

**by**

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“*Non est quicquam expers pulchritudinis*”<sup>1</sup>

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Giovanni Santinello in his insightful analysis and Italian translation<sup>2</sup> of Nicholas of Cusa’s sermon “*Tota Pulchra Es, Amica Mea*” (Sermon CCXLIII) rightly points out that this sermon is the only work in which Nicholas deals systematically with the theme of beauty. Yet, he also points out that this theme pervades Nicholas’s other works, even though it does not surface in them extensively. Santinello goes on to exhibit the direct borrowings that Nicholas makes from Pseudo-Dionysius’s *De Divinis Nominibus* and from Albertus Magnus’s commentary *Super Dionysium De Divinis Nominibus*. Santinello then explores the issue of Nicholas’s originality and concludes that “il pensiero estetico del Cusano ha una sua notevole originalità, e ... il concetto albertista del bello ... trova la sua giustificazione nel sistema filosofico e nelle convinzioni estetiche che sono proprie del Cusano.”<sup>3</sup>

Let us build upon Santinello’s conclusion, and let us nuance several of his observations.

I

To begin with, we may assure ourselves that the theme of beauty is indeed a major object of Cusa’s attention. This fact is evident from a reading of his late work *De Venatione Sapientiae*. This treatise from 1463 is one in which Nicholas looks back on his earlier writings, reaffirming and re-emphasizing some of his key ideas. The several allusions therein to God’s beauty and to the beauty of the created world signal to us the centrality of these motifs in Nicholas’s thought. This judgment about centrality holds true in spite of the fact that beauty is not one of the ten topics upon which Nicholas chooses to concentrate in this late work.<sup>4</sup> Yet, it is an important topic for him. By way of comparison we may consider the fact that he also does not list among the ten focal topics the topic of *posse-fieri*—a subject that nonetheless is of great interest to him and that is prominently examined in *De Venatione Sapientiae* itself.

There can be no doubt that Nicholas deems the relationship between pulchritudo and the pursuit of wisdom (*venatio sapientiae*) to be a salient relationship. In Chapter 12 of this late treatise on the pursuit of wisdom, God is said by him to be the God of Infinite Beauty;<sup>5</sup> and in Chapter 30 He is said to be Absolute Beauty itself.<sup>6</sup> In both of these chapters we are given to understand that God's beauty is reflected in the universe and in each of its parts;<sup>7</sup> for, as Nicholas says, Absolute Beauty shines forth in all things.<sup>8</sup> This metaphysical claim echoes a passage in Nicholas's *De Possess* 10, which tells us that God lacks nothing of the world's beauty, since all creatable beauty is a likeness of God's beauty.<sup>9</sup> Howbeit, in *De Possess* 10 this likeness is said to be a disproportional likeness—a statement that itself echoes *De Docta Ignorantia* I, 3 (9) and other passages which advance the thesis that there is no comparative relation between the finite and the Infinite. Since nothing in the world lacks beauty<sup>10</sup>—supposing that that thing is whole and unmalformed by disease, deterioration, or damage—Nicholas can readily maintain (as he does in *Idiota de Sapientia*) that “Eternal Wisdom is ... the beauty in everything beautiful.”<sup>11</sup>

## II

In the sermons Nicholas emphasizes the foregoing three associated themes: namely, (a) that God is Absolute Beauty itself, (b) that each thing in the universe partakes of (a likeness of) God's Beauty, and (c) that not only are Beauty and Wisdom identical in God but also they are intimately associated in this world, for the “beauty of wisdom” attracts the human soul unto itself.

With regard to the first of these associated themes Nicholas notes in Sermon CCXLVI (17:10-11) that the Giver-of-form is God, than whom nothing is more beautiful.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, in Sermon CCXI (24:20-21) God is referred to as the Fount of Beauty; and in Sermon CCLXXV Nicholas repeats the affirmation that God is Beauty itself. So too, in Sermon CCLXXX (58:6-11) Nicholas calls God Immortal Beauty, just as in Sermon CCXLIII (30:11 & 31:8) he designates Him by the title “King of Beauty.” And in this same sermon (at 7:12-14) he cites Albertus Magnus's statement that God's Essence

(which *is* God) is supreme-and-primary Beauty.

With regard to the second associated theme Nicholas's sermons also promote the idea that the universe, as well as each thing in it, is possessed of a likeness of God's Beauty.<sup>13</sup> For, as Nicholas sermonizes, Absolute Beauty (namely, God) created all things in its own likeness, so that just as God is Orderliness,<sup>14</sup> so too the universe's beauty consists in its orderliness and in the harmony of its parts.<sup>15</sup> In the sermons Nicholas draws upon the definition of "beauty" introduced by Pseudo-Dionysius and adopted by Albertus Magnus. In accordance with these sources Nicholas regards finite material objects as beautiful insofar as (a) they have excellence of substantial (or accidental) form with respect to the proportion of their parts, (b) insofar as they are objects of desire, and (c) insofar as each's respective form unites its parts<sup>16</sup>—or, as Nicholas adds, insofar as each's form "unites multiple potencies of matter and confines them in one thing."<sup>17</sup> However, this conception of beauty does not apply to God, since God is immaterial and has no (proportional) parts. Rather than having beauty, God is Beauty. Nonetheless, qua Cause of all beautiful things, He may acceptably be said to be beautiful, since (in the Neo-Platonic tradition) Beauty itself must be thought to be beautiful. Still, God's being beautiful is not dependent upon His causing-to-be-beautiful;<sup>18</sup> for even had He not created, He would nonetheless have been beautiful in and of Himself, maintains Nicholas.

With regard to the third associated theme Nicholas generalizes—thereby closely interrelating not only wisdom and beauty but also goodness and beauty. Borrowing once again from Pseudo-Dionysius and Albertus, he agrees with them that even finite immaterial realities, such as the the soul or its virtues,<sup>19</sup> can justifiably be called beautiful. For all created things, insofar as they have being, are good; and insofar as they are good they are also beautiful.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, even as all created things seek their own good,<sup>21</sup> their own well-being, so too they seek and love their own beauty. For example, discerns Nicholas, our respective intellectual natures seek the beautiful-and-good.<sup>22</sup> Nicholas implicitly follows Albertus, who explicitly maintains that no rational human being wills

his own detriment. Even when a rational human being wills what is evil, he does not will it as evil but as a perceived benefit, as a perceived good.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, non-rational beings that merely exist (such as stones) or that both exist and live (such as birds) also aim, by nature, at the beautiful-and-good. As Albertus writes: “*inquantum ... unumquodque naturaliter amat suam pulchritudinem, quam iam habet, operatur ad continentiam et conservationem sui esse, quantum potest.*”<sup>24</sup> Nicholas himself observes that no creature hates itself but rather seeks its own good and would rather be a creature of its own species than be any other kind of creature.<sup>25</sup> Borrowing still further, Nicholas repeats from Pseudo-Dionysius and Albertus their common point about the Greek language: namely, the fact that the Greek word for *beautiful* (“*kallos*”) fosters the impression of being etymologically cognate with the Greek word for *good* (“*kalos*”).<sup>26</sup>

### III

Whereas Santinello cites at length the influence of Pseudo-Dionysius and Albertus Magnus on Nicholas’s conception of beauty, he says almost nothing in his article about Augustine’s influence thereon.<sup>27</sup> We may now turn to this aspect.

We must remember that Augustine himself accentuated the role of beauty in his theology. Indeed, as he tells us in his *Confessions*,<sup>28</sup> he once, early on, wrote several essays under the title *De Pulchro et Apto*—essays that reflected his fascination with the phenomenon of beauty but essays that he misplaced or otherwise permanently lost track of. In the *Confessions* there also appears his famous lamentation: “Late have I loved Thee, O Beauty so ancient and so new!”<sup>29</sup> Elsewhere, he likewise refers to God as Supreme Beauty<sup>30</sup> and states that nothing is more beautiful than is Beauty itself.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, God’s Face is so beautiful, he says, that once it is viewed, no other beauty is delightful.<sup>32</sup> And of Jesus, the God-man, Augustine writes: “Your humility was made my exaltation. Your unsightliness was made my beauty. For unless, wounded, You had descended from the Cross, I would not, as purified, have ascended from the [most sacred] Fount.”<sup>33</sup> Moreover, the created world is itself beautiful,<sup>34</sup> as is every-

thing that is orderly.<sup>35</sup> But among created things the human soul and its intellectual nature are especially beautiful.<sup>36</sup> Augustine also speaks of the beauty of wisdom;<sup>37</sup> and he calls virtue the beauty of the inner man<sup>38</sup> and refers to the individual virtues as beautiful. Even the word “*philosophia*” (“the love of wisdom”) is understood by him to be closely related to the word “*philocalia*” (“the love of beauty”).<sup>39</sup> And he readily refers to the beauty of faith<sup>40</sup> and to the beauty of the Church.<sup>41</sup>

There are many other parallels between Augustine’s and Nicholas’s statements regarding beauty. Let us mention but three more. However, before doing so, we should remind ourselves of the fact that these parallels are not simply such. Rather, they are examples of real historical influences. For Nicholas was thoroughly familiar with Augustine’s writings, mentioning Augustine frequently by name—indeed, mentioning him expressly in twenty-one of his twenty-six early sermons (1430-1441), while elsewhere referring to him as “the great Augustine”<sup>42</sup> and borrowing his very puzzles and utilizing his very arguments.<sup>43</sup>

The first of our three targeted influences has to do with Augustine’s recognition that God’s Beauty is ineffable.<sup>44</sup> This is the same point that Nicholas makes in *De Possesit* 72:3 and in *De Visione Dei* 6 (20:11-12); and it is, in fact, an aspect of his doctrine of learned ignorance. Nonetheless, both Augustine and Nicholas recognize that God as Infinite Beauty and Absolute Beauty knows (and loves) Himself.<sup>45</sup> Borrowing directly from Augustine’s *In Joannis Evangelium*, Nicholas expresses poignantly the dialectical character of human self-love:

... the soul conforms itself to that which it loves; and when it loves itself, it conforms itself to itself. And because it does not have from itself its existing and living, it does not love itself when it loves itself. But if it loves God (from whom it has its existing and living [and] whose image it is), and if in order to love Him more, it does not love itself: then it loves itself—as Augustine ... beautifully conveys.<sup>46</sup>

As a second instance of Augustine’s influence we may note Augustine’s teaching that from God’s having created all things as beautiful and good, we are to recognize that the

Creator is more beautiful than are they. And with the help of this recognition we are spiritually to ascend unto God by transferring our affection upwards from the beauty of earthly things unto Him who is the Beauty of all things beautiful.<sup>47</sup> Nicholas, repeating this cogent Augustinian directive, writes:

Our earnest desire ought to be to ascend from the beauty of perceptible things unto the beauty of our spirit—a beauty that encompasses all perceptible beauties. And from our beauty let us ascend admiringly unto the Fount of Beauty, to whom our beauty bears a likeness. And let us leave behind all things ugly, i.e., all sins. For our spirit attests that sins are hideous .... And let us amidst our beauty aspire with continuous love to be conformed to the Fount of Beauty. For [our] living, intellectual being, by beholding (or understanding) Absolute Beauty, is brought to it by means of indescribable desire. And the more fervent its desire, the closer it approaches—and the more and more it becomes like—the Exemplar. For the desire, or love, continually transforms the one-who-loves into a likeness with the Beloved. And this ascending occurs by means of the attracting power of beauty, i.e., of God’s glory.<sup>48</sup>

This passage reflects the Augustinian route to God—a route that proceeds by way of turning inwardly to contemplate God in and through the operations of the mind.<sup>49</sup>

A third example of Augustinian influence surfaces in Nicholas’s Sermon XLIII (7), where Nicholas exclaims that his soul cannot find rest in the beautiful objects of the world but only in the Eternal Being by whom he himself was created: “O Lord, I have a face turned not toward the [earthly] things that I have described but turned upwards toward Thee. And so, I am restless until I return [unto Thee].” This exclamation is, of course, reminiscent of Augustine’s exclamation toward the outset of his *Confessions*: “Thou hast made us for Thyself. And our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee.” And, indeed, Nicholas, in his Sermon CCXII (13:18-21), directly borrows from this passage in the *Confessions*.

Even though each of the foregoing three doctrines is to be found in Pseudo-Dionysius and Albertus, nonetheless all three are reinforced, for Nicholas, because of Augustine’s authority. This point can be seen quite clearly in and through the following patent historical consideration: Nicholas

received his insight into the doctrine of learned ignorance while on his sea voyage back from Greece—as he tells us in his letter to Cardinal Julian (a letter appended to *De Docta Ignorantia* III). When he was subsequently looking for “confirmation” of this doctrine, he found it both in Pseudo-Dionysius and in Augustine. He openly avows this confirmation in his *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae* (17-18). So, on the one hand, an idea sometimes comes to Nicholas from his reading of earlier writers; and sometimes he looks to these earlier writers principally for reinforcement of his own ideas and for suggested ways of expanding upon these ideas of his. In the case of the doctrine of learned ignorance there occurred a reinforcement and an expansion; for Nicholas had the idea prior to its having caught his attention in Pseudo-Dionysius and in Augustine. But in the case of the theme of beauty, his highlighting of this theme came only after his having responded to the emphasis on this theme that is so prominent in these two predecessors.

#### IV

We may now call attention to certain points that Nicholas emphasizes more than does Augustine and more than do Pseudo-Dionysius and Albertus.

To begin with, let us single out Nicholas’s identifying the three Persons of the Divine Trinity by the names “Begetting Beauty,” “Begotten Beauty,” and “Glorious Beauty” (or simply “Glory”—a Glory that arises from Begetting Beauty and Begotten Beauty).<sup>50</sup> Here Nicholas adapts the theme of God’s Beauty so as to apply it to each Person of God. Augustine himself views the Trinity as participated in by created things, for whom the Trinity is these things’ “most perfect Beauty and most blessed Delight.”<sup>51</sup> Nicholas, however, gives this doctrine somewhat greater emphasis. And in doing so, he is mindful of the fact that (1) neither the New Testament nor the Old Testament—with the exception of the Canticle of Canticles—accentuates the theme of God’s Beauty but that (2) this theme is imported into Christian theology from the Neo-Platonic tradition.<sup>52</sup> Yet, since Nicholas regards beauty as an excellence, and since he holds with Anselm that God is a Being than which none more excellent can be conceived,<sup>53</sup>

he eagerly designates God as Triune Beauty. And in Sermon CCXLIII (19) he repeats a variant of this designation—this time using the Trinitarian titles “Fount of Beauty,” “Understanding of Beauty,” and “Love of Beauty.”

Nicholas proceeds, secondly, to make an inference: just as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are beautiful, so too was the God-bearer, the *theotókos*, beautiful—namely, the Virgin Mary. Indeed, the Virgin Mary, also called the mother of God, is said by Nicholas to be the most beautiful of all women.<sup>54</sup> For she was “totally and most perfectly beautiful in every manner of beauty.”<sup>55</sup> Her beauty, however, was not a seductive or an alluring beauty but was the all-appealing beauty that accompanies moral perfection; it was the beauty of innocence;<sup>56</sup> it was beauty-of-soul that is reflected in comeliness-of-body. Thus, of Mary it can truly be said: “*Tota pulchra es.*”<sup>57</sup>

Thirdly, Nicholas calls attention to the beauty that is related to *filiatio*<sup>58</sup>—i.e., to one’s becoming a son of God, a theme expounded richly in his treatise *De Filiatione Dei*. Christian believers, he says, are, by their commitment, transformed into spiritual sons of God when, because of their commitment, God adopts them as sons. They then possess a beauty of soul that was previously absent. For their souls are no longer made hideous by unforgiven mortal sin but, rather, are beautified by Christ’s righteousness, which is imputed to them.

Fourthly, Nicholas—influenced by Isaiah 52:7, Romans 10:15, and John 20:21, as well as by Pseudo-Dionysius’s *De Divinis Nominibus*<sup>59</sup>—wants to interrelate beauty and peace. Thus, he can write: “Peace is Beauty itself, which makes all things beautiful.”<sup>60</sup> And he distinguishes between *Uncreated Peace* (namely, Divine Peace), *created peace* (namely, God’s peace in relation to men), and *recreated peace* (namely, peace among men in their interactions with one another).<sup>61</sup> But he goes even further and talks of peace between men’s rational spirit and God (a peace wrought by man’s obedience to God), peace of the rational spirit towards itself (a peace wrought by humility), and peace between the rational spirit and the senses (a peace wrought by the rational spirit’s successful gover-

nance of the senses).

#### CONCLUSION

Drawing together the foregoing points, we may conclude by recognizing that the theme of beauty—perhaps more than any other Cusan theme—attests to just how centrally Nicholas stands in the Neoplatonic tradition. For his attachment to Augustine and to Pseudo-Dionysius—his perspective on the latter not being focused exclusively through the eyes of Albertus Magnus—was unrelenting. When we compare, for instance, his use of Pseudo-Dionysius's *De Divinis Nominibus* with the use of it made by Albertus and by Albertus's star pupil, Thomas Aquinas: we see that, for Cusanus, the role played by the Dionysian theme of beauty is situated in a philosophical framework that owes less to Aristotle than to Plato and Plotinus. By contrast, the philosophical framework into which Albertus and Thomas incorporate the Dionysian materials is vastly more Aristotelian than (Neo-)Platonistic.

Accordingly, we may in good conscience embrace Santinello's verdict that "the aesthetical thought of Cusanus has a noteworthy originality of its own; and the Albertinian conception of the beautiful finds its [real] justification in the philosophical system, and in the aesthetical convictions, that are Cusa's own."<sup>62</sup>

NOTES TO THE THEME OF BEAUTY IN  
NICHOLAS OF CUSA'S SERMONS\*

\* All Cusanus references are to the Latin texts. References to *De Docta Ignorantia* are given in terms of the three (German-Latin) volumes published in Felix Meiner Verlag's Philosophische Bibliothek. All other Cusanus references are to the Latin texts contained in the series *Nicolai de Cusa Opera Omnia* (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag).

The abbreviation "PL" stands for "*Patrologia Latina*," the series edited by J.-P. Migne.

1. Sermon CCXLIII (21:11-12). The sermon is translated into English in my *Nicholas of Cusa's Didactic Sermons* (Loveland, CO: Banning, 2008), pp. 168-177.

2. Giovanni Santinello, "Nicolai De Cusa: Tota pulchra es, amica mea (Sermo de pulchritudine). Introduzione ed ediz. critica," *Atti e Memorie dell'Accademia Patavina di Scienze Lettere ed Arti*, 71, Part 3 (1958-59), 21-58.

3. Santinello, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43.

4. Note the mention—in Chap. 11—of the ten principal topics with which *De Venatione Sapientiae* deals.

5. *De Venatione Sapientiae* 12 (32:20).

6. *De Venatione Sapientiae* 30 (90:12). Cf. *De Visione Dei* 6 (20:14-15).

7. *De Venatione Sapientiae* 27 (81:16-17). Cf. 30 (90).

8. *De Venatione Sapientiae* 30 (90:10-12).

9. *De Possess* 10:13-17. Cf. *De Possess* 72. In *De Venatione Sapientiae* 22 (65) Nicholas makes clear that things partake of a likeness of God, not of God Himself.

10. Note the text in the title of this present article.

11. *Idiota de Sapientia* I (14:3-4).

12. Yet, God's beauty is inconceivable by us, says Nicholas. *De Visione Dei* 6 (20:11:12).

13. Sermon CCXLIII (29:5-6).

14. *De Venatione Sapientiae* 30 (90:2-7).

15. Sermon LVIII (15).

16. Albertus Magnus, *Super Dionysium De Divinis Nominibus* (Vol. 37, Part 1 in the series *Alberti Magni Opera Omnia*), edited by Paul Simon (Münster: Aschendorff, 1972), Chapter 4, margin number 72 (p. 182a & b, lines 38 ff.). Cf. Cusa's Sermon CCXLIII (6).

17. Sermon CCXLIII (9:12-14).

18. Albertus Magnus, *op. cit.* Chap. 4, n. 73 (p. 183b, lines 50-56 and p. 184a, lines 3-12).

19. Albertus Magnus, *op. cit.*, Chap. 4, n. 76 (p. 186a, lines 13-14). Cusa,

Sermons CCXLIII (8:3-4 & 27:1-2) and CCLXXV (20:1 ff.).

20. Albertus Magnus, *op. cit.*, Chap. 4, n. 87 (p. 192b, lines 65-79) and n. 89 (p. 193b, lines 57-58). Cusa, Sermon CCXLIII (10 & 15).

21. Cusa, Sermon CCXLIII (16:8-10).

22. Cusa, Sermon CCXLIII (16-17).

23. Albertus Magnus, *op. cit.*, Chap. 4, n. 115 (p. 212b, lines 45-50) and n. 114 (p. 211b, lines 68-70).

24. Albertus Magnus, *op. cit.*, n. 85 (p. 191b, lines 65-68): “Inasmuch as each given thing naturally loves the beauty which it at a given moment has, it strives (as best it can) for the continuance and the conservation of its own being.”

25. Cusa, *De Docta Ignorantia* II, 2 (104). Cf. *De Visione Dei* 15 (65:11-17).

26. Cusa, Sermon CCXLIII (1). Albertus Magnus, *op. cit.*, n. 77 (p. 186a, lines 20-31).

27. Santinello, in his book *Il pensiero di Nicolò Cusano nella sua prospettiva estetica* (Padua: Liviana, 1958), gives somewhat more attention to Augustine—especially to the influence of Augustine’s trinitarian views.

28. Augustine, *Confessiones* IV, 13 (PL 32:701).

29. Augustine, *Confessiones* X, 27 (PL 32:795).

30. Augustine, *De Diversis Questionibus* LXXXIII. Q. 44 (PL 40:28).

31. Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram, Liber Imperfectus*, Chap. 16, n. 58 (PL 34:242).

32. Augustine, Sermon CLXX, Chap. 9, n. 9 (PL 38:931).

33. Augustine, *Sermo de Quarta Feria* (also called *Sermo de Cultura Agri Dominici*), Chap. 5, n. 6 (PL 40:690).

34. Augustine, Sermon XCVI, Chap. 4 (PL 38:586-587).

35. Augustine, *De Vera Religione*, Chap. 41, n. 77 (PL 34:156).

36. Augustine, *Epistola* 120, n. 20 (PL 33:462).

37. Augustine, *De Libero Arbitrio*, Book II, Chap. 14, n. 38 (PL 32:1262). *Contra Academicos*, Book II, Chap. 3, n. 7 (PL 32:922).

38. See the reference in n. 35 above.

39. *Contra Academicos*, Book II, Chap. 3, n. 7 (PL 32:922). See also Augustine, *Retractationes*, Book I, Chap. 1, n. 3 (PL 32:586).

40. Augustine, Sermon CLIX, Chap. 6, n. 7 (PL 38:871).

41. Augustine, *Contra Julianum*, Book III, Chap. 17 (PL 44:718).

42. Cusa, *De Aequalitate* 26.

43. For example, in Sermon CCXVI (22-23) Nicholas explicitly names Augustine and cites Book XI of his *Confessions*. He takes up Augustine’s discussion of the naïve question “What was God doing before the creation of the world?” And Augustine’s answer he gives as his own. Here the historical connection between Cusanus and Augustine is as evident as can be.

44. Augustine, *City of God*, Book IX, Chap. 22 (PL 41:274).
45. Cusa, Sermons CCXLIII (19) & CLXXXVII (4:14-21). Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Book XV, Chaps. 22-23 (PL 42:1089-1090).
46. Cusa, Sermon CCLXXVII (23:1-8). Augustine, *In Joannis Evangelium*, Tractate CXXIII, n. 5 (PL 35:1968).
47. *Enarationes in Psalmos*, Psalm 84, n. 9 (PL 37:1075).
48. Cusa, Sermon CCXLIII (29). Cf. *Apologia Doctae Ignorantiae*, n. 27.
49. Augustine, *Confessiones*, Book VII, Chap. 10, n. 16 and Book X, Chap. 24, n. 35 (PL 32:742 & 794).
50. Cusa, Sermon CLXXXVII (4:1-29).
51. Augustine, *De Trinitate*, Book VI, Chap. 10, n. 12 (PL 42:932).
52. In the Scriptures God's Beauty is implied but is rarely thematized. Psalms 27:4 (in the King James Version and the New Revised Standard Version but not in the Douay Version in the corresponding passage, viz., 26:4) does speak of the Beauty of the Lord. And Canticle of Canticles 5:16—in a text that is oftentimes interpreted as applying to Christ—does speak of the one who is "All-Lovely."
53. Cusa, Sermon CCLXXV (13:5-6).
54. Cusa, Sermon CCXLIII (31).
55. Cf. Canticle of Canticles 5:17.
56. Mary's beauty is comparable in this respect to the God-man's beauty—the beauty of innocence. See Sermon CCVII (15:16-26). Cf. Sermon CCLXXV (20:1-9). The beauty of Jesus, the God-man, is visible beauty, even though the Beauty of the Godhead is invisible and is describable by us only metaphorically.
57. Nicholas applies passages in the Canticle of Canticles to the Virgin Mary, as well as to the Church. Note Sermon CCXLIII (31).
58. Cusa, Sermon XLIII (8:10-18). Note also *De Filiatione Dei* 3 (67).
59. *Dionysiaca* XI (especially Vol. I, p. 502). Bruges: Desclée de Brouwer, 1937. Cf. PL 122:1165C (Eriugena's Latin translation): "Unam igitur quandam et simplam pacificae unitatis contemplabitur naturam, copulantem omnes sibi, et sibimetipsis, et invicem ...."
60. Cusa, Sermon XCIX (4:11-12).
61. Cusa, *ibid.*, (5:1-4).
62. See n. 3 above.