

Beauty as a Path of Peace

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In so far as man knoweth Beauty in him shall he know Love, and Truth, and Balance—and the Peace which passeth all understanding.

—Walter Russell, *The Message of the Divine Iliad*

BEAUTY AND SPIRITUALITY

“Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” This adage is generally understood to mean that beauty is a subjective perception and judgment, different from one person to another, or from one group to another, and therefore relative. There is another interpretation: Beauty is precisely in the eye of the beholder because without the vision that can behold beauty, there can be no experience of beauty. The more we open our vision for beauty, the more beauty we behold in our eye.

Beauty is a *universal quality* that is present throughout the universe. Beauty is only subjective in the sense that the kind of beauty that one beholds is determined by the kind of vision for beauty that one has unfolded. Beauty is only relative in the sense that the degree to which one beholds beauty is proportional to the degree to which one’s vision for beauty is open.

Therefore, the master artist whose vision for beauty has unfolded to an extraordinary degree can behold the finer beauty in Nature that eludes others. His artwork serves as his way of communicating the beauty that he beholds to others who may experience or may unfold a finer vision for beauty to experience the same beauty through his artistic creation.

The master composer whose vision for beauty has unfolded to an extraordinary degree can behold the deeper harmony in Nature that eludes others. His musical composition serves as his way of communicating the harmony that he beholds to others who may experience or may unfold a deeper vision for beauty to experience the same beauty through his musical creation.

The master scientist whose vision for beauty has unfolded to an extraordinary degree can behold the greater symmetry in Nature that eludes others. His mathematical formulation serves as his way of communicating the symmetry that he beholds to others who may experience or may unfold a greater vision for beauty to experience the same beauty through his mathematical creation.

Beauty is thus unconcealed, *illuminated-out* from the darkness of its concealment, through the opening of the vision that can behold it. “Unconcealment” is Martin Heidegger’s term for the Greek word “*aletheia*,” which has been traditionally translated as truth in the sense of

correctness. (1) However, *aletheia* literally means a negation of forgetfulness and concealment. (2) Beauty is truth, as unconcealment; and truth is beauty, as unconcealing. Thus, the Latin motto states: *Pulchritudo splendo veritatis*. Beauty is the splendor of truth. Beauty is the splendor that is truth.

The question arises: What is it that allows this unconcealment, this opening of vision for beauty, to take place? What is it that allows our sensibility for beauty to effloresce so that we can behold the finer beauty, deeper harmony, or greater symmetry that has been hitherto concealed from us?

The experience of beauty arises in the experience of balance. Beauty arises with balance. Balance is the oneness that is emergent in manyness, the simplicity that is emergent in multiplicity, and the undivided that is emergent in the divided. Thus, the experience of balance is the experience of undivided wholeness in divided manyness and of ultimate simplicity in dynamic multiplicity. This experience of undivided wholeness and ultimate simplicity is an experience of opening and openness. It is an experience of release from the confinement of dividedness and from the isolation of multiplicity.

Balance or symmetry is the fundamental structural principle of the universe. The whole is necessarily always in balance, and through the attainment of balance we restore our own wholeness. What is called imbalance is localization in the forgetfulness of and the isolation from the whole. Therefore, imbalance exists only as a localized phenomenon, but a local imbalance can always be balanced-out inside a larger whole that embraces it.

Beauty is as much unconcealment as deconfinement. In the experience of beauty, the universe en-presents its balance, openness, and wholeness, releasing us from the confines of our localized self to the openness of our Universal Self that is whole. This release into openness is the joy and ecstasy that we experience in the presence of beauty. In the presence of beauty, we experience more of life in its pristine liveliness and sacredness than that to which we are otherwise accustomed in our mundane world. That pristine liveliness and sacredness is beauty’s calling that allures us to its open embrace.

This experiential movement towards beauty's open embrace, towards a higher-order of balance, wholeness, and openness, is what is termed "*Buddha*" in Sanskrit. The *Buddha* is not any person or end-state but the dynamic, eternal, evolutionary movement towards an ever-higher order of balance, wholeness, and openness. That is, the *Buddha* is the evolutionary process of beauty's ever-greater awakening to itself. To committedly enter and to permanently dwell in the stream of this evolutionary movement is what it means to attain *Buddhahood* and to become a *Buddha*.

The terms "*Christ*" and "*Christhood*" can be interpreted within the same evolutionary context. The *Christ* (from the Greek etymological root *khriein*, to anoint) is not any person or end-state but a designation of the dynamic, eternal, evolutionary movement of beauty's evermore abundant self-anointing. To committedly enter and to permanently dwell in the stream of this evolutionary movement is what it means to achieve *Christhood* and to become a *Christ*.

Therefore, *Christhood* or *Buddhahood* has really little or nothing to do with a particular religion called Christianity or Buddhism, but rather it signifies the process-state of genuine spirituality wherein beauty's self-awakening or truth's self-unconcealing continually and evolvingly takes place. Thus, what allows the opening of vision and the unfolding of sensibility for beauty is the attainment of *Buddhahood* or *Christhood*. That is to say, what allows the opening of vision and the unfolding of sensibility for beauty is to enter and to dwell in an authentic, spiritual, evolutionary path.

Authentic spirituality has little or nothing to do with religion or religiosity, which is very often the producer-cum-product of blind, unthinking allegiance to belief systems and belief-based organizations. To be truly spiritual means to be deeply attuned to the evolutionary thrust for self-optimization and self-realization, which impels us to the opening of our vision and the unfolding of our sensibility for beauty and truth. When we are thus attuned to this evolutionary thrust, we are attuned with the Creativity of the universe. In that attunement, we become increasingly more capable of developing works of beauty in participation and co-creation with that Creativity to which the designation "God" or "Spirit" is traditionally given.

Beauty is a spiritual experience, and therefore requires the opening of spirituality within. There is no true artist who is not spiritual, no true musician who is not spiritual, no true scientist who is not spiritual, and no true philosopher who is not spiritual. On the other hand, a religion that is empty of spirituality can appear to be spiritual because of the great architectures that house it, the great works of art that adorn its cathedrals and temples, and the great pieces of music that embellish its ceremonies and rituals. This is a classical *non sequitur* of which very few are aware. People tend to mistake the glorious spirituality of the

architecture, art, and music that grace the atmosphere of a cathedral or temple for the spirituality of the religion that owns that piece of real estate.

People who are engaged in a creative search for authentic beauty and truth become increasingly more spiritual as they increasingly tune-in to the evolutionary thrust for self-optimization and self-realization existing within and without, and with the Creativity of the universe, which is the source of their own creativity. When we are tuned-in with the Creativity of the universe, we remain in a state of creativity and maintain a creative state of mind. As this Creativity is the very Spirit of the universe, when we are attuned to it, we become fountainheads of true spirituality. Thus, we will not find spirituality in the hypocritical 'Churchianity' or funereal 'Buddhibusiness' at all, but in our direct communion with Nature within and without, the only original church and temple of beauty and truth.

The famous haiku poem by the master Japanese haiku poet Basho Matsuo reads:

An old pond, a frog jumps in, the sound of water.

An old pond symbolizes the ancient tradition of poetry, and of literature and the arts in general, that has been passed on from one generation to the next continually without interruption, and the eternal beauty that inspires and expresses itself through that perennial tradition. *A frog* symbolizes the awakened poet, who has jumped into that tradition, and has awakened to eternal beauty and truth. *The sound of water* is the experience of awakening, the spreading of light, the opening of the evolutionary vision for beauty and truth.

The poet jumps out of the confines of his localized self and self-limiting vision of beauty into the openness-wholeness wherein he beholds and is beheld by eternal beauty. The poet himself *is* an old pond; an old pond *is* a frog jumping-in; a frog jumping-in *is* the sound of water; and the sound of water *is* the poet himself. Beauty that is unconcealed and is unconcealing through this haiku is Nature in its self-resonant wholeness and openness. This seemingly mundane observation of an ordinary frog's jumping-in to a nondescript old pond becomes a spiritual experience of exquisite beauty and splendid truth. This is a wonderful example of our new interpretation of the saying: "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder."

To behold beauty is to be beheld by beauty. To be beheld by beauty is to be transformed by the beholding of beauty. To be transformed by the beholding of beauty is to behold the transformation of beauty itself. In the experience of this transformation, we experience freedom, joy, and ecstasy. This freedom, this joy, this ecstasy, is what spirituality means, or what it means to be in communion with Spirit, with God.

Beauty beheld is the efflorescence of spirituality, and spirituality unfolding is the effulgence of beauty.

BEAUTY AS A PATH OF PEACE

As beauty arises with balance, so ugliness arises with imbalance. As beauty arises with wholeness and oneness, so ugliness arises with localization and isolation. Ugliness is the symptom of our forgetfulness of wholeness. Ugliness is the syndrome of the errancy-modes of our sensibility and openness for beauty.

Beauty is Nature's norm, as balance is the primary structural principle of the universe. There is nothing in Nature that is not beautiful. Ugliness is only a temporary and local aberration in the universe of beauty, brought-in to the world by those who lack intelligence in the sense of appreciative acumen for wholeness and critical sensibility for beauty.

Spiritual and intellectual development implies the unfolding and awakening of intelligence in the sense of appreciative acumen for wholeness and critical sensibility for beauty. The more we unfold and awaken our own intelligence, the more we can behold and create beauty in the world. The more beauty we behold and create in the world, the more love we will have for the world. The experience of beauty evokes the experience of love. For, we love that which is beautiful.

For those whose intelligence has not yet unfolded or is closed off, the world is not ugly but relatively beauty-less. In order for them to recognize what is ugly, they need to have developed or opened up their intelligence sufficiently to know what is beautiful. They need to have known resonance to recognize dissonance, and harmony to recognize disharmony. Just as the experience of beauty evokes the emotion of love, so the experience of ugliness evokes the emotion of hate. For, we hate that which is ugly.

As beauty is balance and ugliness is imbalance, and as balance is wholeness and ugliness is localization, to transform ugliness to beauty means to eliminate imbalance and localization, which in turn means to increase the order of balance and wholeness.

We have defined balance as the oneness emergent in manyness, the simplicity emergent in multiplicity, and the undivided emergent in the divided. As simplicity emerging in higher multiplicity is higher in its order of balance than simplicity emerging in lower multiplicity, the order of balance is proportionate to the degree of contrast existing between simplicity and multiplicity. Therefore, we can define the first order of balance as the balance existing between two entities or movements; the second order of balance as the balance between three entities or movements; the third order of balance as the balance between four entities or movements; and so forth.

In physics, a theory that has a higher order of balance, and therefore of beauty, is considered a better theory than others that have relatively lower orders of balance. For instance, the physicist Milo Wolff's wave structure of matter (WSM) theory, which describes the whole complexity of the phenomenal universe with just three simple mathematical equations within the framework of four-dimensional space-time, has a higher order of balance than the currently popular superstring theories, which attempt to describe the same complexity of the phenomenal universe with more than three complex equations within the frameworks of ten- or eleven-dimensional space-time. (3) Therefore, as a physical theory, the WSM theory should be considered superior to the superstring theories.

In music, when we compare the symphonic compositions of Mozart, Beethoven, and Rachmaninoff, the order of balance tends to increase from Mozart to Beethoven to Rachmaninoff. However, unlike in science, this does not mean that Rachmaninoff's symphonies are superior to Beethoven's or Beethoven's symphonies are better than Mozart's. The primary purpose of musical composition is the *evocation* of emotions arising from the appreciation of beauty of the universe, while the primary purpose of scientific theories is the *explication* of lawfulness identified through the discovery of beauty in the universe.

The value of a musical composition is measured by its evocative power, while the value of a scientific theory is measured by its explicatory power. Evocative power is proportionate to the degree of total balance achieved in a piece of music: balance within the listener, within the composition, within the execution, between the listener and the music, and amongst all these four balances. Explicatory power is proportionate to the order of balance achieved within a theory: the simpler the theory is and the more of the complexity of the universe it can explicate, the more explicatory power it has and the better it is as a theory.

The same order-of-balance principle applies to the development of societal order and the creation of peace. For example, the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians in the Middle East appears superficially to be a matter of creating a first-order balance between these two nations. As we all know, the issue is of course far more complex, involving a great many nations, peoples, and interests. If we can map out all of the interests represented and involved in this seemingly local conflict, we will discover that interests of the entire human race living on this planet are virtually all represented. We will realize that the number of variables involved is too numerous to be determinate, and no external measure for creating balance and peace will therefore bring about a complete resolution.

In order to create societal balance and peace through an external measure, we must identify and determine a finite number of variables and know what degree of order of

balance we intend to achieve. One critical variable in the creation of societal balance and peace is the presence or absence of inner balance and peace within all of the people who constitute a society. Inner balance and peace is that which is within our power to achieve independently of our circumstance and environment, and inner balance and peace is what is necessarily required of people who engage in the work of creating peace in the world. (For detailed analysis of inner peace, refer to my essay “Toward World Peace” in *The Cosmic Light*, Commemorative Edition, January, 2002.)

Henry David Thoreau wrote: “The perception of beauty is a moral test.” The philosopher David Michael Levin, in commenting on Thoreau’s statement, writes: “A test, [Thoreau] meant, of character—a test of character, moreover, not only in its ethical formation, but also in its spiritual vocation, that dimension of human existence in which we put into practice a commitment to cultivate our capacity for openness and wholeness.”⁽⁴⁾

If the perception of beauty is a moral test of the character of an individual, the presence of the creative expression and appreciation of beauty in the world is a moral indicator of the character of humanity as a whole, “not only in its ethical formation, but also in its spiritual vocation, that dimension of human existence in which we put into practice a commitment to cultivate our capacity for openness and wholeness.”

Here is another, entirely different approach to world peace from the old political approach. It is the approach through the development of culture—of ethics and spirituality through aesthetics—through cultivating our capacity for openness and wholeness—through tuning-in to the evolutionary thrust for self-optimization and self-realization within and without, and with the Creativity of the universe that is the source of our own creativity.

Let beauty be our guide for peace.

NOTES:

¹ Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, HarperSanFrancisco, 1977.

² David Michel Levin, *The Opening of Vision, Nihilism and the Postmodern Situation*, Routledge, 1988.

³ Milo Wolff, *Exploring the Physics of the Unknown Universe*, Technotran Press, 1990; F. David Peat, *Superstrings and the Search for The Theory of Everything*, Contemporary Books, 1989; Brian Greene, *The Elegant Universe, Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory*, W.W. Norton & Company, 1999.

⁴ David Michael Levin, Foreword to *Wholeness Lost and Wholeness Regained* by Herbert Guenther, State University of New York Press, 1994.