

BEAUTY IN ART OR THE ART OF BEAUTY

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In this article, Christian Bernard, Emperor of the Rosicrucian Order, AMORC, invites us to develop our perception of the transcendental nature of beauty, which can be a powerful tool to carry us closer to Divine Wisdom.



Beauty is closely linked to the arts and, as a result, to the areas the arts are connected with. Both emotion and reason must be our guides when we contemplate the artistic works that are accessible to us, so that we only choose those that elevate us in consciousness. Beauty is in every manifestation, to varying degrees. Music, painting, sculpture, dance, as well as nature and the things humankind does, can kindle the feeling of beauty. And we should become more attached to the perception of beauty than to the arts themselves. Indeed, while the aim of aesthetics is to engender the feeling of beauty, its etymological meaning is “perception,” the translation of the Greek word *aisthetikos*. This therefore means that beauty is perceived and felt before being an object of contemplation.

Plato may be considered the founder of the science of beauty. He thought that there exists beyond manifested things an absolute, spiritual “beauty,” which administers beauty to all that exists on the earthly plane. He also said that the more pure our thoughts are, the better we perceive and feel universal beauty, which according to him was an emanation of the Divine. Of course, beauty does not only express itself in the visible world, and

is not limited to how things look. There is also inner beauty, that of the soul, which transcends the body and shines through it.

The transcendental nature of beauty can be compared to the impulse that carries us towards everything that is akin to the Good, as was magnificently expressed by the great Neoplatonist Plotinus. This inspired mystic had a fondness for revealing beauty by associating it with what he referred to as the “inner eye,” which he said has to open when we perceive what is beautiful in all things and all beings. This is what he stated:

The soul, therefore, must be accustomed first of all to contemplate beautiful pursuits, and next beautiful works... After this, contemplate the souls of those who are the authors of such beautiful actions. How, then, may you behold the beauty of a virtuous soul? Withdraw into yourself and look; and if you do not yet behold yourself as beautiful, do as does the maker of a statue which is to be beautiful; for this person cuts away, shaves down, smooths, and cleans it, until the sculptor has made manifest in the statue the beauty of the face which he or she portrays. So with yourself. Cut away that which is superfluous, straighten that which is crooked, purify that which is obscure: labor to make all bright, and never cease to fashion your statue until there shall shine out upon you the deity-like splendor of virtue... For one who beholds must be akin to that which one beholds, and must, before one comes to this

vision, be transformed into its likeness. Never could the eye have looked upon the Sun had it not become Sun-like, and never can the soul see Beauty unless she has become beautiful.

The perception of beauty follows a progression. Beauty has to appeal to the senses, and then to the mind and the emotions, before reaching the soul itself. There is an artist behind every work of art, but when considered perfect, it transcends the personality of its creator, and expresses an aspect of the Divine. God, in the sense of Universal Intelligence or Consciousness, is therefore present in the pure and genuine feeling of beauty, for beauty is one of God's attributes. Speaking of beauty in art, Augustine said:

Beauty is the inevitable, albeit half-erased, imprint of the Divine Hand. For a work of art to be truly beautiful, it must be part of those ratios which bring this world into being. In all the arts, proportion and harmony are what please. When there is harmony, all is beautiful. This harmony yearns for equality and unity. Beauty always takes the form of unity.

While Divine Beauty can be directly perceived and received through inspiration, it is only when the artist gives it material form that it becomes beauty for the ordinary person. It is then a work of art, the quintessence and archetype of which arise in the higher planes of Creation. This means to say that beauty—such as it manifests

here below through nature and humanity's works—should lead us to become aware of Divine Beauty. This is to say that its purpose is to raise us in consciousness towards the Divine. This is because our soul is an emanation of the Universal Soul, and it feels and expresses that which is most divine in itself by means of that which is beautiful.

While it is important to be receptive to beauty and to avail ourselves of it on all planes, it is equally important to manifest it—meaning create it, apart from within the arts. Therefore in each of our thoughts, words, and actions, we should endeavor to express beauty, and thus demonstrate

the harmonic relationship that connects us to the Divine, as we conceive and feel the Divine to be. The more spiritually evolved a person is, the more aware they are of beauty, and the more they become able to create it in and around themselves, thus generating a trace of the Divine on the earthly plane, for the delight of humankind.

In conclusion, we should cultivate our awareness of the beauty of things, not for the things themselves, but for the harmony that radiates from them, which through them is manifesting Divine Beauty. To be aware of what is beautiful is to open a window onto the Divine World and draw closer to Divine Wisdom; it is to experience Universal Love, of which it is said is the life and light of all things in the universe. Thus Rumi was moved to say: "That which the Divine said to the rose thereby making its beauty unfold, the Divine said to my heart and caused it to be a hundred times more beautiful."

