

The Promise Of Beauty And Why It Matters

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When relationality is healthy and harmonious – it could be in the form of a flower or a relaxed and happy face, the placement of buildings or just the cleanliness of a street – beauty is present. When it is not, things appear and feel ugly, and are in fact so when rationally analysed. Most of our problems, environmental, socio-economic and health, arise out of disharmonies, disproportionalities, imbalances and a lack of synchronisation. In one way or another, ugliness is caused by poor relationality.

I remember the old aphorisms in Eastern and Western thought which claim that beauty is based on balance, harmony, proportion and rhythm. I wonder if this could be a way of looking at today's problems and to conceive their solutions. After all, everyone has a sense for beauty. Would our lives improve

if we used our instincts for beauty as a guide for living, rejecting what seems ugly and embracing what is beautiful? Especially, if we keep in mind that beauty is about much more than how things look on the surface.

Surely, beauty, or its absence, is an undeniable part of our sense of wellness, well-being and rightness. When people grumble about life, I notice they turn to their innate sense of beauty and ugliness and say this or that is ugly or is no longer beautiful. When people say life is not so beautiful any longer, it is not just because of how their street, neighbourhood or city looks, which is certainly a part of it, but due to a larger sense of it being 'out of whack'.

Just like the human pulse can tell doctors in the Ayurvedic and Chinese medical systems much about the health of

a person, I think our sense of beauty can tell us about the state of wellness of things around us. One could even say, as the truth, goodness, beauty triangulation suggests, that beauty is imbued with goodness and truth. That it forms in rightness and wholesomeness, and that our sense or instinct for beauty has this triangulation ingrained in it. This is why things that are not good usually feel ugly, though not always, and the same holds for untruths and dishonesty.

This might help explain why many of us are experiencing a growing ugliness in our societies. It is because of the many imbalances and disharmonies, like the filth and pollution in the environment; the rise of new diseases such as cancers and immune system malfunctions; the alarming growth of mental disorders such as depression, bipolar conditions and

attention disorders ... Despite rising GDPs (gross domestic product) and a dazzling array of new technologies we are not seeing a commensurate growth in human happiness and well-being ...

Everything in life, at all levels, occurs and exists in relationality and beauty is fundamentally about relational excellence. Each of these four important qualities – harmony, balance, proportion and rhythm – is relational and dynamic. Balance is a momentary state of equilibrium in a dynamic flow, not stasis; harmony is a state of relational excellence within perpetual change, not a fixed idyllic state; proportion is contextual, not absolute; and rhythm is, obviously, dynamic and flowing. It became clearer that there cannot be any 'absolute', 'permanent' and 'timeless' beauty, as beauty is always subjective, contextual and experiential.

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