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BEAUTY AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Volume 1 of 3: General ideas

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Introduction to the first volume

As one who works with beauty and photography as part of a daily profession, I'm happy to report that there's no easy recipe; the higher you go in connection to the quest for beauty, the still higher you can see that you can go; and photography--when it works completely, in all senses--is a majestic invention of humanity, a marvel, something altogether miraculous--and yet when it doesn't work, nothing is more mediocre. The transition from the mediocre to the beyond gorgeous is the quest of these volumes.

Beauty in a fashion setting is, as I take it, palpably different from beauty in a sexual setting. And that is why I do not blend the two when I photograph. It is, indeed, one of the reasons I emphasize fashion as, in a way, circulating around photos of one model, sometimes more,

but with just hints of the sensual.

All this is entirely different in the sexual setting. In a fashion setting, beauty involves something like a mindful, even intellectual 'ecstasy' of high-pitched form, beauty in a sexual setting has, as it were, a deeper note of bass tones.

As with the Art of Thinking five-volume series--which is slowly nearing completion as I take up this this three-volume new series--I will sometimes bring in what I consider a pure language of form, G15 PMN, to illustrate and explore perspectives, horizons, possibilities. Here, symphonies of contrasting similarities and similar contrasts, including in what is sometimes called 'fractal' features of an image, can be explored through the power of the algorithm. And at a more abstract level, a sense of whole numbers and how they give glimpses of higher orders is wonderfully well explored, sometimes, by such a number-oriented formal language, such as with the famous Fibonacci numbers enshrined in the concept of the Golden Ratio. Algorithms can also provide insights into the effects of a sprinkling with the spice I have, in this programming language, called RFFG--or Relatively Free Fluctuation Generation (a mild touch of noise).

For this is clear: beauty is neither the mechanical routine nor the static form; it is neither within the realm of the self-centered nor can it merely be an expression of the polite rules of society. Just as a great comedian must be ruthless against own half-humorous productions, so must a photographer be ruthless against own half-beautiful results--the phrase 'creative dissatisfaction', also uttered by J.Krishnamurti, comes to mind. And while a person in denial of sexuality cannot produce even a decent face portrait, let alone depict the highest form of beauty in fashion photography, so can a person not able to clear away sexuality from where it doesn't belong not understand whether the first or last thing about fashion, for the cement of society depends on a different mode of being--I sometimes use here the term 'business mode'. In the business mode, things are possible which the porn mode cannot fathom; for in the porn mode, the eyes are different; the motivations are spectacularly gene-oriented--but in the business mode, the world gets an order, people communicate, they vote, they talk, they listen, they have a dialogue. These modes are complementary and to be a whole human being is to know both and wield both and do so without damaging self, society or others; and without mixing everything beautiful up into one unbeautiful mess.

One of the upcoming volumes will be strongly oriented towards beauty in fashion photography, and another of them will be strongly oriented towards beauty in sexual photography.

CAN BEAUTY BE DEFINED? SEX?--AND DON'T CONDEMN MONEY
If spirituality is right, then perhaps beauty can be defined. But then again, perhaps not. In case beauty is one of the essential aspects of existence in the sense that it drives all, it may be forever beyond any terminology which exists inside creation. It is a source of creation, so how can an entity inside that creation try to define it by other concepts that refer to that creation?

And yet, is not this sort of statement, if one is enlightened enough in English natural language and elevated enough in mind to be spiritual, not merely regarding reality as a collision between atoms or a permutation of algorithms, itself a definition? There are definitions in the sense of 'trying to explain what I mean by a term'. Then there are definitions that not merely, if at all, try to explain, but which rather seek to reduce a phenomenon to some other phenomena. It is in this latter sense of 'definition' that beauty, I think, cannot be defined.

But to say that beauty cannot be defined by reducing it to lesser phenomena is not the same as to say that it is merely subjective, or merely cultural, or merely intersubjective, or merely an approximation to some rarely achieved commonly agreed-upon ideals. Beauty, to me, is most tangible. Beauty is real. Without intending to reduce it, I would also say that beauty is a force. Maybe even the force.

Some might object,--no, no, money is the force. And on a societal level, at least for those societies that do have money--as an abstraction, quantifiable, of the purest form of goods, services or real estate, it would be self-destructive not to be attracted to it and, by implication, a coherent person is attracted to it and thus it is undeniably a force, and in many ways the force. But money is a force in that it refers to goods, services or real estate, and beauty is different in that it refers to itself.

We do not object--it would be ridiculously dogmatic to object--to someone who, by the force of her natural beauty allows her radiance to embrace such as a piece of clothing that might otherwise have exhibited only a moderate level of attraction, elevates the possibilities of those clothes as goods to be exchangable for a higher sum of money and for that reason, the beautiful person herself earns money. She does something that presumably is fun, it is normally reasonably or completely harmless, and it provides increased revenue to the clothes makers and so the clothes makers give her money and she is also attracted to that; and can spend time exercising and swimming by the beaches rather than spoiling her beauty because of her elegant combination of connection to money with a use of her natural beauty. Now in this case money refers to beauty, or to a service associated with beauty, whereas this beauty shines, as it were, abundantly over all that it is near and this is craved.

Such beauty may also be envied and for that reason some try to erect, as a policy or even as some sort of thwarted "philosophy", that beauty does not exist. One might as well say that a mountain does not exist. But it does, and

it roams and forges the human mind from birth to death, whether one tries to submerge oneself in the hypnosis that beauty does not exist or one is has a better contact with reality.

Beauty, moreover, is cosmic but money is certainly not as cosmic.

Yet when sexual beauty is on display, and money is brought into the picture, there are millenia of condemnation involved. The beauty that is dressed-up can receive a thousand dollars and, given that this currency has real value, everybody smiles at this arrangement--the dressers-up and the model and the audience and the buyers of the dressers. But once she does this more sexually than dressed-up, we are in a league where the words are notoriously ugly--as if the whole language, at this point, has been shaped in order to incite a sense of the sick into the sexual.

If the display of the sexual beauty, perhaps as part of a massage-like intermingling with another, is associated with money, the age-old prejudice allocates it into a spot of corruption of money; but if the display is one of beauty without the sexual, or the massage is dressed-up and pointedly unhorny, we clap our hands and admire the process of paying and being paid while something so obviously healthy is going on.

Of course there are health challenges with the sexual contact, which requires insight, wisdom, intuition, creativity and logic to overcome. But apart from these health challenges, should not the most beautiful human being not also be allowed to earn money though the clothes are more scant--or absent--and the signs of unhorniness reversed? What cruelty the old prejudices, the so-called "scriptures" have, about such things! And when something so outrageously right as a woman's right to earn money and not just do it with clothes on but also with clothes off is denied, these supposedly "spiritual" texts only succeed in chopping off a part of society and leading to an excess of hidden money in an unholy mix of meaningful actions and a whole series of incoherent, violent actions--a mix that would not exist had it not been for the prejudice against something which is obviously right and good--namely, that beauty, in whatever form, sexual or not, is a radiant force and those who possess it have the right, as everyone else, to earn money on their assets.

Yet, however much we attribute to money the quality of being a force, one cannot learn pricing by listening to money alone; however one can learn pricing by listening to beauty, among other things. And so this also shows that money, as quantifiable abstractions, needs connection to substance. And the bearer of all substances is beauty.

Now some may say, 'beauty is just a word'. But the reply could be--do you mean that beauty is just a word in the same sense as 'authentic candysticks made by the UFO-people' is just a phrase? The phrase sums up something which strikes me as both perfectly meaningful and at the same time, perfectly referencefree. It doesn't point to anything, except an idea that has no further reference outside of a dreamer's mind. And the materialist--if such a human being really exists--in other words, the human who thinks of the world as composed of matter and where

anything immaterial is unreal--would say of anything except matter--such as real estate, computers, physical money, and physical living bodies, and trees, and plants, and such--that all else is, at best, 'just words'.

Just listen to the type of personality who, as easily as a breath, could say, not just 'beauty is just a word', but also 'love is just a word', 'compassion is just a word', 'joy is just a word', 'pain is just a word', 'ethics is just a word', 'responsibility is just a word'--you follow? The 'just a word'-type is a nihilist, one who has given up though she or he may still smile and eat and sleep and do things. You don't say to a child who has a headache, 'pain is just a word'; nor do you say to a child who is jubilant--'joy is just a word'. Anyone who says so is a dead persona. And just as you who now masters English so well have inside of you memories of how it was to begin to tackle language and be full of wonder of your own experience inside you, do you not also remember how certain shapes--perhaps even your ankle or foot--or that profile of the girl's face next to you--or the way that dancer moved just now--were so peculiarly magnetic in their presence inside you, so absorbing, so fascinatingly rich in meaning that for a moment everything else was more or less forgotten? And that adds up, if you have the luck to grow up with some leisure to reflect and with the luxury of a language, like English more than any other language past or present, which you can tame in order to think what you yourself want to think, rather than the language coming with prebuilt thoughts into it as according to self-important priests or presidents--with such a free language, and also freedom to be with yourself and with adults who say--"go on, think for yourself!"--gradually "beauty" becomes something that, although immaterial, has a reference which is unlike the candystick by UFO-people--a reference which is to something, we might say, more material than matter itself.

So let us pity the old person who says, "beauty is just a word, love is just a word", because that old person has lost the vivid memory of what it meant to have a vibrant mind; the person has become a mere quoter; the texts thus quoted turns to ashes though they may have been written by a person of intent and insight and connectedness to more than mere matter, more than that which comes in through the bodily senses, namely to the flame of an organic spiritual realm which flows in and through us all beginning with the first steps and first few words.

So with the dialogic clarity of an Aristotle, but with less prejudice, and millenia of reflected thinkers after him and his students to learn from,--where is this thing called 'sex' relative to the lofty concept we defined as something beyond definition, so real it is almost the driving-force of everything--namely beauty? We said of money that it is a quantifiable abstraction of certain features of society of importance to everyone, but of beauty that it overwhelms all that and is beyond all that; or whatever word we like to use for that utterly real and substantial phenomenon which we cannot point to, cannot--in my opinion--have any algorithm for, and which goes beyond any concrete set of human ideals--whether we say

'esthetics', 'prettiness', 'shapeliness', 'good looks', --not that these are synonyms--or speak in longer phrases, such as 'how well the features fit together', or more indirectly like, 'easy to look at'. And the beauty perspective can be applied to sound and to any modality, including scent.

But where in this is sex? We said, beauty in a fashion sense is not the same as beauty in a sexual sense. Well, then, is sex a category of beauty? If you ask Zeus--not something Aristotle usually did--you might perhaps get a conditional yes. Remember, Zeus was not only the seducer who transformed himself into attractive animals to avoid scaring the beautiful mortal girls but rather enlist them to sexual activity--he was also the stern, even slightly cold, but righteous judge--was, or is, if you take the Greek myths more seriously. And in his righteousness he made the muses to give a voice to creation. He was the source, through his muses,--was or is--of art. Poetry, music, physical beauty, dance, and so on. But when he was not the stern-eyed judge whose spirit was that of light and lightening, he could be the beautiful beast of nature whose features and limbs would make the limbs of the earthian nymphs open to him: and that, too, was good.

So you see how the Greek myth, holding together beauty as ethics--the beautiful action--with beauty as sex--the seduction and penetration and vibrancy of the ecstatic, self-forgetting body and bodies who becomes the process of beauty more than the process of thought--and with the brief, single or myriad "collapses" called orgasm--was sliced up by those men in power who sought to make texts to rule more safely by, and in which sex got chopped away from the Godhood--Deus, Zeus, Zevs--and put into the Pan figure, the beast figure, alongside clitoris and everything woman. I am not aware of a single large religion on the planet that avoided this in a serious way--though, fortunately, every religion has branches in which both woman and sex are more honored--intensely, in the case of the tantric and in some branches of ancient Chinese daoism.

Sex is a certain way to experience beauty. The girl who orgasm may do so with or without money involved, with or without another person present, with a focus on her own or another body or many other bodies, of any ages, and she may orgasm in a way that enhances her health or in some more rare cases in a way that deteriorates her health, and with this or that organ involved, or spasmodically the whole body, and may smile or not, may gasp or not, may scream or not, but beauty it is--physical and real and yet immaterial. It is a direct participation in the wavelength of the source.

So it is not that sex is complementary to beauty, but rather sex is complementary to thinking. If you think, and let beauty direct you, you may think better. When you 'do sex', it is beauty that is your mind and everything looks different.

Sex as photographed has a merit when one appreciates, fully, the implications of the fact that it is not normally given to a human being to predict what will be sexually triggering this individual in the future. This means that the ancient concept of "fidelity" to just one

sexual partner is riddled with false assumptions. At any rate, porn may help two sexual partners reignite passion for one another; but only if each is consciously generating a stream of 'generous anti-jealousy impulses' inside their own psyche, which is no small task and not something any pharmaceutical product can do for any person.

I have been told by the oldest of the old, so to speak, and--through them--their even older relatives, that the sexual intensities, desires, cravings have absolutely nothing at all to do with how they at present look; they may look like they have lived for too long to bother about anything, or are filled with wisdom entirely beyond sensory craving of any sort, and still, in a way, there is absolute no change in how they find themselves wrapped up in attraction to what is beautiful--as if a bit of them is laughing at their own withered body and refusing to participate in its assumed perspective. That bit, I venture to say, is soul. It is the immortal aspect of the human being that aspires not just to the highest beauty of thinking, but also the highest beauty in sexuality. And if reincarnation has a reality to it, I will further venture to say--it is exactly this Zeus-like joint perspective and craving for beauty--jointly, the beauty as beautiful action, as ethics, and beauty as the sexual joy, it is propelled by the unwithering lust in the human mind for re-experiencing it afresh in a more worthy instrument when the existing instrument cannot be a vehicle anymore, whether because brain is too sloppy or because the skin and sexual organs are too sloppy.

There are certain implications of this that the human society we have at present is not ready for. So the exploration, to be meaningful, must restrain itself or it will be a playing with fire. We have seen, in science as it has developed in the past centuries, a consequential extreme reluctance to explore sexuality and even those who decided to do it got clever only at some points and made embarrassing errors on all other points. This is not strange--it is the result of fear. To move the prejudice of many, people like Sigmund Freud decided to hammer on just one or two prejudices at a time, and became so consumed in doing so that the other prejudices touching on the very same themes were left intact, embarrassingly intact, in the same texts that strive to understate a re-evaluation of all things in the light of the rational mind; even Aristotle (if indeed his books are his books rather than the prejudices of his students) seemed to be much like this.

The solution, I believe, is to say: no, we're not going to get absolutely enlightened about sex--whether in this book, or in the next million books. None of us are ready for it. We're going to breathe in a little bit of the fresh air called 'sex', open our eyes to something of that Sunlight called 'sex',--but not take too full breaths, nor stare too intently into the middle of the Sun, for we must respect the feeble, rather idiotic state of humankind at present. Society would crumble if sexuality, the tantrism of the serpent of that volcano, should suddenly thunder through all bodies and brains. Even the hippies of the 1960s and 1970s didn't dare do it--rather, they smoked,

quite often, and tried to accomodate politics, and raised a pointed moralistic finger at certain groups in society--as if sex was too much even for those who declared sex to be about the only thing worth exploring.

AN ODE TO WALKING

The leisurely walk provides a kind of natural dancing rhythm to both brain and body, and to the senses; it is a physical telling to oneself that things are all right, that the body is healthy, that the world is good, that there is no need to rush, we got what we need and more than what we need, and there's time to feel the joy and ease of just walking for walking's sake, and to watch, and think that which comes natural to think when there isn't a hard focus on anything.

For as long as there has been humans, this--unique to humans--the very fact of leisurely walking--has been a coronation of the existence of the human being, and of a good society, a civilised society, a peaceful, affluent society. And so walking is infinitely more than 'slow running'--not to say that running doesn't have a value also, but the walk of ease and leisure is the most human of all human movement forms. Exactly what leisurely walking, the walking of ease, is all about is wired into the genes of your body and brain: and joy tingles in the brain when there is this fact of moving about in a way that signals, like nothing else, that the future is good, that life is worth thinking about, that the air is easy to breathe and that we need not worry. It is by this natural dance, the natural rhythm, that the body really truly straightens itself out and rediscovers its true potential.

And it is in the wake of such leisurely walking that you find that your subconscious mind not only is brimming with ripe intuitions, but these intuitions convey themselves with ease to your conscious mind.

In a word, the walker becomes beautiful and the mind of the walker becomes beauty-aware, able to perceive beauty afresh.

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