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Life Art - the Aesthetic Way to View and Live, Part 1

Like your consciousness and quantum mechanics, *aesthetics* has everything to do with you, and you don't understand it. But this you can understand and instantly use.

Aesthetics - "Tis the perception of the beautiful, A fine extension of the faculties, Platonic, universal, wonderful, Drawn from the stars, and filtered through the skies, Without which life would be extremely dull." -Lord Byron

We were in Death Valley, California, one of the more merciless places on the planet. In stark contrast to that harshness I was with my impossibly beautiful, rapturously loving and lovable, hopefully soon-to-be-wife. We were in the visceral love throes stage of the relationship. I'd taken her there to pop the question.

Propose in Death Valley? Romantic? Well, it happens that despite some of the most brutal sunlight in the world during the day, at night, it is one of the darkest spots in the US. And if you've never experienced an evening in a clear, light pollution-free zone, then believe me; the entire brilliant cosmos parks itself on your nose in a way you should experience. It doesn't wait for you to reach and grab it - it grabs to possess you. Or at least it did to us. Our kind of romantic. And we're hardly alone.

The point, though, isn't light pollution, the stars, or that she said yes - it's all about your ability to be *possessed*. Because if you can't be so possessed... well, isn't it practically a dead man who can't be awed by the wide-open stars on a beautifully clear night?

There is a [*je ne sais quoi*](#) about looking at the stars - renowned throughout human history in all corners of the world. It is, therefore, one of the easiest universal examples I know of for entering the bewitchingly charismatic and ambiguous realm of [*aesthetics*](#).

Unless you're a philosopher, art critic or [aesthete](#), likely you don't spend a lot of coffee breaks talking about this somewhat esoteric subject. Its esotericism comes mostly from it not being a particularly popular verbal coin to spend in this far too often unaesthetic world. However, when you spend it, I think you'll find it to be the currency that buys you, at the very least, a more enjoyable coffee break.

For most, aesthetics is not "a thing." But it should be. That is if you want to raise the bar for the enjoyment of life. It's a bit like being kind, in that it usually costs you nothing, and from it, you give or gain a lot. It makes the world a better place: if not out in the world then inside the world of your head. Sure, you find aesthetics as a synonym of beauty, which is a thing for many. But leaving it there allows for the saying that beauty is only skin deep. It is far, far richer and more spacious than cosmetics and book covers.

If the world seen through the Google organic search lens is representative of us, then these days we most associate aesthetics with the beauty salon stylist. Next, in a rough hierarchy of popularity comes flowers, clothes, scenery, attractive products, interior design, French cooking, fancy cars, etc. Further down the list we get to art, the fine and performing arts, and other things along that echelon.

However, aesthetics is none of these things... and it is all of them. There are many manifestations of art and beauty, but at its core aesthetics isn't about any physical object or soundwave. Physical objects and soundwaves are the material things people use to create their immaterial aesthetics. You overlay, mold, build, utilize and imbue the physical stuff with your senses and sensibilities; the senses and sensibilities being the creative ingredient in quality.

Philosopher Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel had a profound influence on the course of western philosophy and many other aspects of our modern culture. He was an art lover and developed a more comprehensive philosophy of art than most philosophers. Probably his most famous claim about art is that "art comes to an end," by which he meant that as the spirit reaches its full self-realization, and the need for the images and symbols of art fade away; with them going the need for any art that uses physical means to express itself. This concept is the philosophy of [idealism](#) at it's finest.

Hegel's contemporary philosopher, Immanuel Kant, also thought that beauty, or sublimity, were not properties of objects, but were how we respond to objects.

For Plato, beauty, justice, and the circle are all examples of what he called Forms or Ideas. Other philosophers call them Universals. These Forms are perfect Ideals, and were more real to him than physical objects, so that he called them "the Really Real." To him, the world of the Forms is rational and unchanging, while the world of physical appearances is changeable and irrational. The mind or soul belongs to the Ideal world, whereas the body and its passions are stuck in the muck of the physical world.

First and foremost, aesthetics is a state of mind; a higher state of mind. That mind is the spiritual source of all the physicality that follows from it. And regardless of how some pretend they are not, if you look at the core of any being, you're looking at a beautiful thing.

“The highest level of communication there is, is art...” “And when you’re dealing with an individual as himself, you are essentially dealing with an artist, because he must be at least the architect of his own universe to be alive at all. He is as alive as he is the architect of his own universe.” –L. Hubbard

Aesthetics comes from the Classical Greek *aisthētikós*, meaning, to perceive, feel, sense, and is a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of beauty, art, and taste. It is the study of sensory or emotional values. It can be deep reflection of art, culture, and nature, but mostly it is judgments of sentiment and taste in anything. Philosopher Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten coined it to mean "the science of how things are known via the senses." Art comes from Latin, *ars*, meaning skill or craft; denoting the active verb sense over the passive noun meaning.

Aesthetics is a way of looking at things and life. And it is also a way you go about doing things. It is a fashion and an approach; a sense and an act of being. It is the "on" in [ontology](#).

If you don't wake up in the morning with an aesthetic frame of mind, then, like you drink a cup of coffee or tea, put on your pants or apply makeup, it will greatly behoove you to adorn yourself with it before you talk to anyone (including yourself), and definitely before you step out the door.

How do you do that?

We usually think of aesthetics as *experiencing*, which is true, but experiencing can be a passive or an active activity. The more you take part in the creation of the experience the more you experience it, whether discussing a work of art, singing along with a song on the radio, crying or laughing with the movie, or merely with applause. The highest compliment you can pay an artist is participation in their art. The reason you love what you love is that that is where so much of you resides.

American philosopher John Dewey gives the breadth of meaning to this. "Art is not the possession of the few who are recognized writers, painters, musicians; it is the authentic expression of any and all individuality. Those who have the gift of creative expression in unusually large measure disclose the meaning of the individuality of others to those others. In participating in the work of art, they become artists in their activity. They learn to know and honor individuality in whatever form it appears. The fountains of creative activity are discovered and released. The free individuality which is the source of art is also the final source of creative development in time."

You rarely find a seemingly trite old saying that remains true down to the core of existence, but we have it in "beauty is in the eye of the beholder." Only the most general laws of nature apply to the subject as a whole, to abide the lawlessness of self-expression; the poet's license, the impressionist brush, the jazzman's improvisation, and generally the artist's impetuous temperament of extemporization on nature's themes.

There was a fascinating series of studies done recently showing that what you perceive "out there," has an awful lot to do with what you create out there to perceive, even to energy wavelength output.

[Subjectivism](#), as promoted by philosopher Rene Descartes, is the theory that perception (or consciousness) is reality, and that there is no underlying, actual reality that exists independent of perception.

Whether that is ultimately true, not even modern neuroscience argues against the often astonishing efficacy of the placebo effect in medicine, which is a variation of the same thing. This also borders on the enigmatic subject of the "observer effect" in quantum mechanics, in which the act of looking determines the form, position or function of matter itself.

As an example, let's go back to the stars and what you put outward so you can feel it coming back. Do you think the stars were more beautiful for us because of the romanticism involved - the emotionalism that we put there? It's pretty obvious, isn't it, and well known, that what you put into an activity or experience has much to do with what you get from it. It's not the sentimental movie that jerks your tears. The film merely gives you a reason to jerk them for yourself.

The horror movie is just so much light on the screen and sound through speakers, and though the light and sound strike you, it scares some but not others. And in many instances, it's not just a phenomenon happening in the mind, but emotional, physical energy that you can palpably feel coming from another.

Emotional reflexism is a [neologism](#) for the self-reciprocal flow of emotional energy put into another person, thing, or the environment, so that one can then feel it back, usually failing to notice that you are the real source of the energy.

There's a story about two travelers that reach and overlook a town. One sees a dilapidated little mess on the horizon, while the other remarks it as a picturesque and probably friendly village. The first one is turned away from the inn, gets kicked out of the pub, and is arrested for vagrancy. The other one is so cordial with the town folk that he earns a friends and family discount at the inn, a free drink at the pub, gets invited to dinner, and generally thoroughly enjoys the stay, even managing to talk his friend out of jail.

Though the subject primarily addresses the echelons of higher wavelength beauty, aesthetics, of course, does not solely belong in the zone of the artist, and one certainly doesn't have to be an aesthete to enjoy quality and what you find as beautiful.

Many tomes have been written on the subject, and being fundamentally a thing of personal preference, individuals, especially aestheticians and philosophers, have lavishly colored it with arbitrary opinion befitting the universal collage of the creativity that it is.

Opinions abound in a subject to the degree it remains un-codified; and as if in dramatization of itself, aesthetics, chafing at the leash of regimentation (except within the boundaries of classical or strictly stylized genres), is as rife with

originality as exists in the creative imagination of human and spiritual experience to dramatize it.

There is an old adage: if you only have two loaves of bread, trade one for a hyacinth for the soul. As seemingly impractical as it may at first appear, it's a good investment and I ardently recommend this pocket-philosophy of life. When you're working on soul power, you tend to work for higher echelon activities. You also tend to get more creative or inventive about working out how to get more loaves... and fish, and wine.

The only strange thing about this subject is that we don't talk more about it when it has so much to do with us. And how we, underneath our personal crustiest and most deplorable persona, want to think about what we truly are; magnificent and admirable beings.

So whether dealing with the stars, musical bars, Italian scarves, gorgeous cars, working a bazaar, running a seminar, or believe it or not, even perfectly laying tar, we all possess something that potentially makes us exemplar.

Use it.

See *Life Art – the Aesthetic Way to View and Live, Part 2*