

PART THREE: The Nature of Beauty and the Desire for Perfect Beauty (cont.)

II. The Desire for Perfect Beauty

“Human beings seem to have an awareness of what is more beautiful,” writes R. J. Spitzer. “It incites them to the desire for this more perfect ideal. This desire has both a positive and a negative effect,” (p277)

The positive effect is that humanity continues to strive for perfect beauty in the arts, in literature, and in music. It is the drive to not only create but to even create a better piece, composition, or writing. And of course, “This striving has left a legacy of architecture and art, music and drama, and every form of high culture,” (p278). The negative effect is that we not only grow bored but keep always looking for something better, *the more perfect!*

Spitzer notes that the negative effect is that we are always dissatisfied with even the most beautiful objects of our experience but on the other hand we are able to perceive that perfect beauty without imperfection or limit is beyond us in this life!

Plato, as was mentioned in the last section by Spitzer, “...was convinced of the **divine character** of Beauty itself and believed that human beings not only had a desire for it, but also had the capacity to behold it and be fulfilled through it.” Plato believed that this required proper instruction, hence art or music appreciation, so that the beginner would not get sidetracked by the base or lower orders of beauty. Note that he also intimated that, “...the achievement of ‘beholding absolute Beauty’ betokens **immortality** and points to human transcendentalism (or a soul).”

It goes without saying that the notion of perfect Beauty cannot be obtained or abstracted from a world of sensorial (imperfect) beauty, or even from the beauty of great ideal, goods, and truths (because they too are conditioned and imperfect), one is led to the conjecture that its origin arises out of perfect Beauty itself. For this reason, philosophers have associated the notion of perfect beauty with the notional presence of perfect Beauty, (i.e., **God**) to human consciousness,” (p280)

And he concludes this section with:

...from Plato, the beholding of perfect Beauty includes the notional awareness and use of the good, the true, and love. For Plato love is not only the desire for beauty but an awareness of its goodness, and the good is beautiful, true, and lovable.

When all four work together they help the soul to ascend to the state of its proper fulfillment. This proper fulfillment has an *ecstatic dimension* that points to the unity of the transcendentals (or attributes) of God. For this reason, Roger Fry connects it with mysticism,” (p280).

With this background we can begin to connect that Beauty is God’s invitation for us to dance with him, in order that we might begin to grow deeper to our awareness of God around us and beyond us in the appreciation of the created world. God invites us as creator to participate ourselves in creating through the arts!

Quote from footnote 25 in Spitzer’ section on The Desire for Perfect Beauty (p280):

“Beauty is the word that shall be our first. Beauty is the last thing which the thinking intellect dares to approach, since only it *dances* as an uncontained splendor around the double constellation of the true and the good and their inseparable relation to one another. Beauty is the disinterested one, without which the ancient world refused to understand itself, a world which both imperceptibly and yet unmistakably has bid farewell to our new world, a world of interests, leaving it to its own avarice and sadness...We no longer dare to believe in beauty and we make of it a mere appearance in order the more easily to dispose of it. Our situation today shows that beauty demands for itself at least as much courage and decision as do truth and goodness, and she will not allow herself to be separated and banned from her two sisters without taking them along with herself in an act of mysterious vengeance. We can be sure that whoever sneers at her name as if she were the ornament of a bourgeois past – whether he admits it or not – can no longer pray and soon will no longer be able to love” (Balthasar 1932, p. 18).