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One of the characteristics of man's nature is his ability to appreciate beauty. If we approach this experience with the view of the "evolutionist," this encounter with beauty has no rational explanation for existence.

For most people the "theory of evolution" has become the "fact of evolution" so one must ask, "Where in that process did this intangible pleasure "evolve?"

I have observed agnostics and atheists waxing eloquent about the awesome beauty of this species of animal or insect, a cosmic happening, or a scenic view of earth. But what is the source of such ability to enjoy an insight into the material universe or even the simple pleasure of viewing a mountain or stream? Those who discard the idea of creation say, "Surely they are only the result of the folding earth's crust and the moving tectonic plates. Why the pleasure experience?"

We seem to be able to find beauty in almost any aspect of life; from the simplest life forms observed under a microscope to the complexity of man's brain, the uniqueness of snowflakes or the majesty of the Rocky Mountains.

These pleasurable experiences of beauty become entrenched memories that we keep in order to savour them at a later date but we also look for opportunities to share them with others. The very act of sharing brings a new dimension to this encounter with beauty that is not only different but often deeper and richer than the original experience. It is as though the original engagement is not complete until we have found others with whom to share it. Those who find no pleasure in beauty are considered needing some form of therapy or lacking some important human quality of life.

THE BIGGEST QUESTION THEN IS NOT, "WHY ARE THINGS BEAUTIFUL," BUT "WHY DO WE *FIND* THEM BEAUTIFUL AND THEN NEED TO SHARE THIS EXPERIENCE WITH OTHERS"?

"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge." PSALM 19 (NIV)

One of the confirmations of God's existence is that we repeat His process of creation; we create watches, cars, and buildings none of which evolve but are deliberate decisions and acts created by mankind. Creation is a God procedure and because we are made in His image and likeness we repeat the Creator's process; we just can't stop creating!!!

Beauty is such a vital part of this creative process that success of automobile sales rises and falls on their visual beauty. This illustration can be extended to all walks of life. Technology has to be clad in beauty for us enjoy it more fully. Ugly houses people do not buy.

But is "beauty only in the eye of the beholder?" Well, to some degree yes, but there is a process of increasing human capacity to embrace higher degrees of every subject. The joy of music follows the same parallel; we start with simple melodies and progress to more and more complex sounds. So it is with beauty; it is conditioned and developed by both experience and exposure. Even so this still does not explain the sense of wonder and awe we encounter when exposed to something totally new to our sight; "The heavens declare the glory of God."

As C. S. Lewis states, the higher we value an object the greater the level of pleasure. For example, our pleasure encountering insects will be less than with cats, dogs and horses. The reason for this progression is that we enjoy feedback and response to our enjoyment of these creatures. A relationship is developed between the parties involved. This leads us to human relationships where we find beauty is often the door of attraction between

men and women. There is a very profitable industry built on this intangible experience of creating, improving, and maintaining beauty.

We can now see how beauty is linked to the potential of relationships, but there is another dimension of beauty that the eye does not see; that of the beautiful qualities of life; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control; the fruit of God's Holy Spirit.

These are "God qualities" that point us to at least two conclusions. The first is that man is designed to delight in people, objects, values, character, qualities as well as the desire to share these pleasures and experiences with others. This is what the Bible calls worship.

The second is that this encounter also changes us. The degree of change will depend on our reaction to that in which we delight. We embrace the splendour we see in beautiful things and acquire them so we can extend the enjoyment. In terms of people, we plan to share time with them or even marry them.

The more time and effort we invest in these encounters, the more we are changed by them and become like them; sometimes the dog owner starts to look like the dog!!!

The ultimate transformation is when we see the beauty of God's character of mercy, love and forgiveness balanced with justice and righteousness. The degree of exposure to such beautiful qualities has the impact of us desiring to be like Him.

FOR THIS WE WERE MADE, CREATED IN HIS IMAGE AND LIKENESS.

But you say, "Mankind is a nothing like this. The world is not a pretty picture. How can this be"? Well, that is the reason for Jesus Christ's teaching, His life and humiliating murder on a Roman scaffold.

Human nature has a very ugly side that indulges in filth and cruel behaviour and it is completely opposite to our ability to embrace beauty. It is the vandal in us that wants to spoil all that is beautiful. We break windows, bully, kill, steal, hurt, and destroy all that is wholesome and beautiful. Some go as far as to describe these activities as being beautiful but in reality we know they are only perversions.

The appeal of Christianity as expressed in Christ is the process of dealing with both the cause of our failure and our restoration to the ultimate vision – made to be like God.

Don't you think that this is something so important that it is worth exploring further?

Shalom.

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