

Beauty

By Bishop George Khodr

Beauty exists in itself and you experience it as something outside you and you capture it through your ears and eyes. It becomes in you after it has been in the universe outside you. Why does it become yours and in you while others do not comprehend it? Also why is it that there is a distinction between the subject of beauty and you though it has become in you and you have realized what it is? Why is it that something in you has caused that separation? Is the comprehension of beauty inevitable if you are one with those who are able to contemplate it? And if there is a difference between you and them, how do you explain that difference?

Considering Da Vinci's masterpiece, the Mona Lisa, all of us agree on its beauty. Maybe not all see it as his masterpiece, but I never came across someone who refused to consider it as one of the chef d'oeuvre (rarities) of this world. Then there is in it a splendor that imposes itself on you unless you are illiterate in the field of Art. Its splendor is self imposing because it exists in it and there is no place as such for interpretation or explanation especially that it is static and immobile in the sense that it is the beauty in it that comes to you and you receive it without embarrassment or hesitation.

That means that there are principles that artists have drawn out concerning classical beauty because they see it in the subject they contemplate without much emotionalism and thus they hang on to the principles that artists have agreed on concerning that art (classical beauty) which is an "imitation of nature" as Aristotle has said.

From that perspective, I think that those who are cultured in classical art and those who are ignorant of it are not so distant from one another in their evaluation. They assess a work of art through what they know of the natural around them and as such the touch of beauty of the artist imposes itself on them. Of course the judgment of those knowledgeable is more credible than that of the amateurs; that is why the professionals can evaluate art differently from how the average person does. There is variance among those who evaluate art but Classical Art imposes itself in the same way the Nature, from which art comes, does so.

But modern art, being sophisticated since the impressionist school started, has people at unequal distances from it; in that people have different tastes and opinions. Modern art conceals ideas behind it or it can be interpreted in different ways and understandings.

That does not prevent those people to penetrate to what they think the artist wants to say especially if they know the mindset of the artist who places his own mind and experience in the product of his art. And as such it will be said of those, that they were able to capture the message behind the art. That does not mean that

you have comprehended it since Modern Art is not bound to rational understanding. Such art should penetrate your heart as you savor it and thus is not contingent to reasoning.

The fans of Modern Art do not find it necessary that beauty should be expressed and viewed through reasoning. They are not bothered to draw a body without a head. They want you to see a body different from what we see with our eyes. They want to convey to you what they feel inside themselves so that the piece of art is felt in whichever way you may and produce it a painting the way you perceive, without a principle; and as such the art comes forth from a mysterious sense in the artist who conveys to you whatever he conveys; and the artist is not concerned as to whether you agree with him or not and he does not argue with you as to what you see in his art; he only wants you to accept it.

So art is not a language the contents of which are agreed upon; a language that is explicable. The one who reflects on Art can recognize whether he has received something from it or not. There are those who see Art as a means of communication. The question is as to whether there is communication through feelings without the mediation of the mind or not; that is without clarity. There is also the harmony in color which is a form of music but not a subject.

The realm of beauty in modern times is beyond the realm of reason; that is beyond the coherent human whole. Perhaps modern Man might not experience the necessity of cohesiveness between one's reason and feelings and he accepts to live by emotional or instinctive reactions which are not ruled by the purified human mind.

We have taken from Plato the concept that the human being is like the Polis (the city state) based on beauty, virtue and truth; and that this trinity is indivisible. So the defeat of reason by beauty is like the defeat of virtue which is what purifies us; and the defeat of truth, without which our humanity does not exist, makes us like inner storms making us wallow in turmoil that cannot be quieted.

Beauty is linked to the senses as its source and as its receiver. This is the case if we ignore spiritual beauty which belongs to the realm of Holiness. Beholding beauty with the senses only makes our capturing of it prone to fragility and mixed with our passions. When we receive beauty through understanding and feeling, we are constantly in need of purity of heart and thought so that it does not get mixed with what is against virtue and truth. And of course that is a delicate process.

In other words, if we seek to receive beauty in us, we have to seek virtue and truth. If the aforementioned trinity is divided thus scattering beauty, virtue and truth away from each other, we become adrift. Without the inner harmony of the above three elements we lose the human equilibrium in us and we fall in the terrible falsehood which calls for the separation of beauty from virtue and truth.

The worship of beauty in itself without sticking to virtue and truth is a terrible heresy. Without these last two energies in us, beauty becomes a destruction of one's self rendering one's self a tomb for beauty.

The resurrection from the death of the soul is in keeping the unity of beauty, virtue and truth; that is the trinity that the Greeks have viewed before the Gospel dwelled in the heart of Man.