

## Beauty - A Blessing Or Characteristic

Written by Ahrhaley Tesfagergs

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It has been wisely observed that “philosophy bakes no bread.” It has, with equal wisdom, been also observed that “without a philosophy no bread is baked.” Let me talk to you, then of philosophy—my philosophy concerning beauty—and, in a broader sense, my philosophy regarding human traits in general.

Sometime ago I overheard someone saying, in the world, for a female to have good looks is to have everything. Because when a female possesses good looks, she will be secure from all insecurities and all sorts of miseries will be tales told in stories...

This is one view, a view held by a significant number of people. But it is not the only view. In my opinion it is not the correct view. What is beauty? Is it the core of a “female’s being”? No one is likely to disagree with me if I say that beauty, first of all, is a characteristic. Yes, there are inherited characteristics—those that we are born with— as well as acquired characteristics—those that we attain during the course of our lives.

But some will disagree when I go on to say that beauty is only a characteristic. It is nothing more or less than that. It is nothing more special, more blessing than that suggests. When we understand the nature of beauty as a characteristic like hundreds of others with which each of us must live—we shall better understand what it really means and how to deal with it.

By definition a characteristic—any characteristic—is a limitation. A white house, for example, is a limited house; it cannot be green or blue or red; it is limited to being white. Likewise every characteristic—those we regard as strengths as well as those we regard as weaknesses—is a limitation. Each one freezes us to some extent into a mold; each restricts to some degree the range of possibility, of flexibility, and very often of opportunity as well.

Beauty is such a limitation. Are beautiful women less limited than others? Though, like any other characteristics, beauty offers some compensation for its restrictions, it painfully remains a limitation. In fact, at times more limiting than others. Again, a common quality of all characteristics.

Let us make a simple comparison. Take a beautiful girl with an average mind (something not too hard to locate); take a homely girl with a superior mind (something not impossible to find)—and then make all the other characteristics of these two persons equal (something which certainly is impossible). Now which of the two is more limited?

It depends, of course, entirely on what you wish them to do. If you asked them to catwalk in a fashion show, then the plain girl is more limited—that is, she is “handicapped”. On the other hand, if you are seeking someone to teach history, science, or to figure out some

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problems, then the beautiful girl will be more limited--that is, "handicapped".

Many human characteristics are obvious limitations; others are not so obvious. Poverty (the lack of material means) is one of the most obvious. Ignorance (the lack of knowledge or education) is another. Old age (the lack of youth and vigor) is yet another. Blindness (the lack of eyesight) is still another. In all these cases the limitations are apparent, or seem to be. But let us look at some other common characteristics which do not seem limiting. Take the very opposite of poverty—that is, wealth. Is wealth limiting? Indeed, it is, for rich people are deprived of a simple, easy-going life. They are compelled to keep up with unending social expectations to maintain their status and prestige. As they are thought of as special, their individual lives are narrowly scrutinized. This restricts their personal freedoms. The wealthy are also more likely to suffer from stress owing to lack of true happiness which is based on love, trust, friendship (which cannot be bought through money). This is because most of those who crowd the rich are frequently driven by selfish motives like the hope for being tipped with money, material things etc. Consequently, wealthy people find it hard to obtain "friends in need". The fact that rich people often get their way in matters makes them to lose their creativity and endurance as well.

Let us take another unlikely handicap—not that of ignorance, but its exact opposite. Can it be said that education is ever a handicap? The answer is definitely yes. For example, which one would have served better in a primary school library from a college graduate with a B.A and one with high school Diploma? I believe the high school graduate would have performed better. Because he would take the job joyfully and he probably would have stayed at the same job for a long period of time believing that it was the right position for him. As for the college graduate with a B.A, he will stay for some time till he gets a better offer and even then he would feel that the job was too inferior. We have a bureaucratic term for such case—over-qualified. It appears even the over-qualified could be handicapped.

But let me return to my main subject, beauty. How does it impose limitation?

Throughout the human race, there is the notion of (even unconsciously): "If you can't have then befriend someone who has." Consequently, people desiring certain qualities and things which they lack try to compensate by getting closer to those who possess. Another reality is, people view that which looks attractive to the eyes, that sounds wonderful to the ears, that smells sweet to the nose, and feels good to touch as inherently good—something to be yearned and to be owned if possible. In so doing, they neglect that there are side-effects to everything.

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Beauty is valued in all human cultures. Accordingly, people endeavor to acquire the best structure, coloring, posture-whatever in their capacity to look impressive and attractive. Even feeling that it would add up to their image try endlessly to win those who look attractive especially from the opposite sex. Boys flock toward beautiful girls and girls on their part flirt and try to charm handsome guys...

Those beauties and handsomers, often enough, get puffed up by the attention and delicacies bestowed on them by their admirers. They, too, forget that beauty is only one characteristic and that it can't perfect and complete a person on its own—become snared by their resource.

At first, it may look all glamorous and heavenly. But then, when realization dawns on the beauties who are being hunted that it is not really that they are loved or liked as human beings but that it is they are a means to an end, tears flow, hearts broke and joy becomes misery. Beauty, instead of a blessing, becomes a handicap.

If people associate with a female for her beauty without considering what she may be in her mental capacity and spiritual gifts, how could we say it is a blessing? After all, isn't it what differs human beings from animals their ability to think and reason? Nor am I arguing that beauty is a curse. No, not at all. What I am saying is that it is simply a characteristic like the many others with which we have to live, sometimes advantageous and at other times a limitation. Before I bring this article to an end, I would like to point out the leveling effects scientific developments are inducing in putting people of unattractive appearance on the same footing as those that are endowed with natural aesthetics. In fact, Jerome K. Jerome, in his essay "Should Women be Beautiful?" expresses the view that it is likely that there will be no more pretty women in the years to come. The reason is simple. In the future, it seems there will be no plain girls against which to contrast them. Thanks to ever-growing technological and scientific advances, when the plain girl submits to a course of treatment, which includes a combination of lotions and cosmetic surgery, she is bound to burst upon Society an acknowledged beauty not long after. The maiden has only to proceed to choose the style of beauty she prefers. Will she be a Juno, a Venus, or a Helen? Will she have a small, sloping nose, or one tip-tilted like the petal of a rose? Let her try the tip-tilted style first. The specialist has an idea it is going to be fashionable. If afterwards she does not like it, there will be time to try the small, sloping version. It is difficult to decide these points without experiment.

Depending on whether she would like to look the original intelligent type, or the common meek sort, she can go either for a high or a low forehead. Fanciful eyes with depth and passion will not be hard to manufacture with sufficient financial investment. The hair can be

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made to look curly or straight with a diligent adherence to the prescription. Eyebrows and eyelashes to match the hair; can be achieved by neatness combined with taste. A dimpled chin, or a square-cut jaw, in accordance with the demand, can be brought about under the guidance of the expert. As to the shape of the mouth, a lady may opt for a firm, sweet one, or a rosebud looking one. Complexion is perhaps the most durable of all the personal changes when applied with some patience. In consultation with the dress maker, the figure, too, can be made lithe and supple. Never be bothered with stoutness or thinness. It can be adjusted to the desired thickness. Age, apparently, makes no difference. A woman, after all, is as old as she looks. It is likely that all women will look five and twenty not far in the future. Color of the hair? Unless one clings to grey hair, one can obtain without great difficulty a rich wavy-brown, or a delicate shade of gold hair by strictly following the tricks offered in the market.

All signs read the same: "soon there will be no need for a young man to look about him for a good-looking girl to be his wife." All he will need to do; shall be to take the nearest girl, and tell her his ideal. Then if she really cares for him, she will go to the shop and have herself fixed up to his pattern. Girls might even have the upper hand in mate selection. When the maiden of the future thinks that Yacob is the one for her, gently, coyly, she will draw from him his ideal of what a woman should be. In from six months to a year she will burst upon him, the perfect She; height, size, weight, right to a T. And what choice will he have, but to clasp her in his arms. And if he does not change his mind, and the bottles do not begin to lose their effect, there will be every chance that they will be happy ever afterwards. Might not Science go even further? Why rest satisfied with making a world of merely beautiful women? Cannot Science, while she is about it, make them all good at the same time? Jerome K. Jerome pleads: Science should proceed still further, and make women all as beautiful in mind as she is now able to make them in body. May we not live to see in the advertisement columns of the ladies' magazines of the future the portrait of a young girl sulking in a corner—"Before taking the lotion!" The same girl dancing among her little brothers and sisters, shedding sunlight through the home—"After the three first bottles!" May we not have the Caudle Mixture: One tablespoonful at bed-time guaranteed to make the lady murmur, "Good-night, dear; hope you'll sleep well," and at once to fall asleep, her lips parted in a smile? Maybe some specialist of the future will advertise Mind Massage: "Warranted to remove from the most obstinate subject all traces of hatred, envy, and malice.

"As I read these lines, I couldn't help murmuring "amen!" Only, that science would also extend its beneficence to men as well. Although society seems not to bother much with the outward appearance of men, surely men could do with some inward improvement! Perhaps, some more kindness, gentleness, sensitivity, understanding, good-will...will go some way toward perfecting them.