

My intention for this [Ways of Knowing](#) homework was to investigate Beauty as personal experience rather than as a defined idea, and see what concepts might appear from that. For several days I tried to pay attention, such that I might "catch it in the act." I'm not trying to make a theory or try for a definition at this time.

### Observations

We talked in PlayAsBeing about things being "new" as an experience... perhaps though they are really of a timeless nature and flow in appearing as "new" while at the same time we know or suspect there's something more to it. For me that sense of things resonates with Beauty too. The "excitement of the new" (and the beautiful) is like an old friend returning home with fresh new stories.

Two things I felt a "beauty response" to were a red batik fabric I have draped over a table, and my cat. The cat is mixed tabby and siamese with a whiteish fur with subtle brown stripes, turning into rings on her tail. I like the way you can't quite see the pattern and it emerges from the background fur in a subtle way. I like that it has a somewhat regular pattern -- that I find soothing -- but not obvious or predictable -- which makes it exciting. The pattern is a manifestation of the whole cat, not something that stands alone. I note the combination of these two conceptual opposites (soothing and exciting) in one experience. With the batik, the whole has a collective texture and interesting figures with a feeling just on the edge of regularity, but I can't see a repeating pattern. In each case there's a relationship between parts and whole that is dynamic and reverberating between the two with neither clearly defining. I contrast this with the non-beauty effect of a "fake" natural pattern like a second life grass or like printed "wood-grain" surfaces in which the pattern is obvious and seems defined by something other than the object.

I'm reminded of the poem [Pied Beauty](#) by Gerard Manley Hopkins - <http://www.bartleby.com/122/13.html>

All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change

I read that as referring to some of the same senses of beauty that I have -- especially the mysterious Source, and the presence of opposite qualities mixed together into a dynamic whole -- transcending paradox, which is more a linguistic construct than an experienced reality.

There's a beauty in faded surfaces also -- they speak of depth and of the relationship their object has had to time.

I had a dream with two different beauty experiences that had something in common. After exploring the hallways of a complex building I came to a hallway with small, open, arch-topped windows in it, that looked out into a large, cathedral like hall with a high ceiling and many galleries -- a concert hall full of people. The light was muted and the colors were a subtle and shadowed tan and brown. Going on, things changed (as they do in dreams) and I was on a hydrofoil boat moving at high speed -- looking out the window over a cityscape with blue water and green hills and bright sunlight. This couldn't have been more different than the concert hall scene but it aroused a similar feeling. I contemplated what it had in common and there was the theme of looking out a window at an expansive scene and being surprised by the unexpected magnificence of what was there.

**Comments**

I think there are frequent qualities associated with Beauty. (Perhaps to understand Beauty is to contemplate Quality) I've noticed this in my experience of other human beings as well as with objects or places or scenes. These are -- something unexpected, surprising but not overwhelming, a subtle feeling of awe, seeing something that has its own "force" and unity and essence -- that comes from outside one's own "frame" -- and some unification of opposites within a larger whole. Beauty also has a quality of "calling" that invites or becons some new relationship, involvement, or way of being. In stating these criteria, it occurs to me that they also describe (at least part of) the experience called Love. If that is so, Beauty and Love open doors to one another. Maybe Beauty and Love are a more objective / external and a more subjective / internal description of the same state of being. Beauty opens a doorway to some new vista, not just a picture or image, but a landscape that one may inhabit and act within.