

Beauty and the Age of Abundance

The world is a beautiful place, and I'm no longer afraid to die.

What Is Beauty?

Beauty is indescribable.

Yes, I can confirm to you right now—as I'm walking through the park, looking at the trees, feeling the sun on my skin, watching the way the leaves fall, and the squirrels scurry throughout the grounds—that *this* is beautiful.

But to go beyond beauty, to the sublime, to the **eternal Form of Beauty itself**, to absolute perfection—the Absolute Good, the Beautiful, God—is where my mind gravitates when I contemplate beauty.

The things within the material plane are imperfect.

I'm not perfect, you're not perfect, and nobody on this earth is perfect or absolutely beautiful. We all have inherent flaws; we all cut, we all bleed, we are all built of flesh.

Flesh is impermanent.

The trees are impermanent.

The leaves will fall.

The plants will decay.

And when you die and your body decomposes into the ground, you become decomposing organic matter.

And so within this world, we merely experience **imperfect reflections** of the eternal Form of Beauty—which is God, the One, the Good, the Absolute.

The Sublime

Sometimes when I walk through the Fashion District mall on Market Street, I get goosebumps on my body and experience some deep emotional response to the most mundane situations.

For instance, when I pass through the mall and watch people rushing home after work to catch a train, I genuinely still can't believe that we have achieved the ability to form a transportation system that allows this to occur with ease—without even thinking about it.

Like seriously—

How is the city even functioning right now?

How is all of this occurring?

How is the earth located at the particular place in space, with the particular tilt of its axis, and the perfect distance from the sun, that allows life to exist at all?

And so when I pass GameStop and look at the list of imaginative worlds we've created through video games—simulations of reality—I think about the infinite possibility not only within this world that we embody and walk through each day, but the different worlds that we can create through beauty, through art.

The Goal of the Artist

The goal of the artist is to **transcend the material world through the act of creation.**

As an artist working in embodied reality—physically, with a camera in hand, walking through the streets, recognizing patterns and people and things to photograph—I'm not only trying to uplift humanity by creating something beautiful.

The goal is this:

Through the experience and act of creating beautiful things, the artist strives to have a dialogue with the Divine.

The beautiful things we create are reflections—imperfect reflections—of the eternal Form of Beauty, God, who created you.

Created in the Image of God

And so when you consider that you are created in the image of God—the eternal Form of Beauty itself—the things you create are direct reflections, imperfect representations of Beauty.

As imperfect beings, we create imperfect representations of Beauty itself.

But that imperfection **is** perfection, because we are created from the eternal source of Beauty.

When you pass through City Hall in Philadelphia and look up at the grand architecture—the sculptures, the columns, the intricate detail worked within the laws of physics, striving upward despite being bound by gravity—you witness our desire to transcend.

We place sculptures on the tops of towers and build incredible structures because we seek to transcend the material world of space and time through leaving something behind that honors the Divine.

When you step foot in a cathedral—surrounded by this sacred space with an impossibly tall ceiling—you feel as though you can touch the sky.

There's a reason why the Pantheon in Rome opened the dome, allowing the light to shine down upon the ground:

We once sought communion with God.

Summon Your Daemon

Mix up Achilles and Jesus in a cup.
Be a savage wolf, but also a pup.

We flesh and bone—but we demigod.
Disobey like Prometheus and steal the lightning rod.

Yeah, yeah, be meek, be humble—
But when the money lenders come, you know I'm ready to rumble.

The ultimate adventure: take the arrow to the knee.
Until death do us part—strive for beauty.

When you create anything—music, art, poetry, photography—you are a creator.
You are **not** just a consumer, not just a cognate machine.

You are **divine**.
You tap into the inner spiritedness that carries you to create.

When you wake up in the morning, do you really think the strength in your physical
body merely comes from flesh and bones—from muscles and atoms that bind you
together?

Do you truly believe that deep sleep alone gives you that feeling of power and
strength?

While the physiological effect and cultivation of a strong physical foundation is
critical, you can still **lack spirit**.

And when you lack spirit—even with a strong body—you are merely a puppet with no guiding hand.

The Guiding Hand

So let's say you're a puppet on a stage, as a fun and autistic thought experiment.

Well, if that's the case, there's obviously someone guiding you—giving you the ability to move, to do, to create, to speak. Giving you life. Animation itself.

So what is that?

Who is the guiding hand?