

# Is beauty a pure perfection?\*

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**Abstract.** „Is beauty a pure perfection?“ What is the real nature beauty? This is for everyone a very important question, because there seems to be a deep interrelation between beauty and love. Is beauty merely *subjectively* important, or is beauty important *itself*? Is it possible to love authentically “something” merely *subjectively* important? We distinguish certain kinds of beauty and argue that beauty has an objective nature, is important *itself* and is therefore an objective value. So we have to “answer” to beauty with an adequate value response. Furthermore we should notice that beauty is in some respect objectively related to other “things”. This is for example expressed in the “old trinity of Truth and Good and Beauty”. If we “see” the objective nature of beauty more precisely, we might be able to understand better Dostoyevsky’s sentence: “Beauty will save the world”.

**Keywords:** beauty, objective value, pure perfection, love, happiness, pleasure, important itself, subjectively important, archphenomena (Urphänomene).

## 1. Beauty an objective value?

We might ask ourselves what beauty is, as most people have sometimes done in their life. This question aims at the essence, the «quidditas» of beauty and is a complex question. We must realize that we do not want to know which things seem or are beautiful, but what beauty is.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore we should notice that we cannot talk about beauty only in an abstract and theoretical<sup>2</sup> sense. We have to imagine a concrete object, which we call beautiful, because then we have a «Sachkontakt» (a contact with the things themselves) which allows us to speak about the essence of what we want to speak about. We are able to talk about the essence of things in an objective way, inasmuch as we intuit the objective things. It is not enough to think, read and understand, we have to see the essence for itself.<sup>3</sup> «[W]ithout the possibility of a reference to a common *Sach-*

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Platon «Hippias Maior» 287d ff. Platon, *Philosophische Bibliothek, Sämtliche Dialoge, 7 Bde*; In this dialogue the sophist Hippias Maior says that beauty is a beautiful girl.

<sup>2</sup> We mean here with «theoretical» not the same as «theoreo», we mean only an pure negative meaning of «theoretical», as it is common in slang. In another meaning it is possible to speak of beauty in a theoretical sense e. g. if we say that a higher love is more beautiful as a lower one.

<sup>3</sup> Geiger, “Phänomenologischen Methode in der Ästhetik”; Seifert und Gueye, *Anthologie der realistischen Phänomenologie*, 390.

*kontakt* and to *intuition* which goes beyond sense-perception, disagreements between persons - at least disagreements in regard to»<sup>4</sup> the essence of beauty cannot be resolved.

Imagine a dark red rose, with a wide open blossom; the sun is rising and its sunbeams are reflected in the dewdrops of the dark red rose. In the background of the dark red rose with a magnificent flowery scent is a snowcapped mountain. We notice the whole impression and find it gorgeous. Why did we find it so gorgeous, so beautiful? What makes the impression so beautiful that we feel a deep happiness?<sup>5</sup> What makes the dark red rose with dewdrops so sublime and beautiful?

We enjoy this impression and are grateful for it. There is a dignity of this moment, which makes it unusual. We respond to the beautiful objekt, affirm it and are affected. We say «this objekt is so beautiful». We notice «the deep interrelation between the intentional act and the specific nature of the object to which it is directed»<sup>6</sup>

We see that beauty is an objective value and we give to this objective value an affective value response. Someone might now object that the beauty of the dark red rose with dewdrops seems beautiful only to us, but is not beautiful in an objective sense. The beauty of the rose is only a subjective one (in a pure negative sense)<sup>7</sup>. To refute this objection, we should first analyse our own common language. We said already, as it is common, «this painting is so beautiful», we do not say this dark red rose with dewdrops «seems» so beautiful «to me». Notice there is a difference if we say that this landscape is beautiful «to me» and the statement that after a hot and busy day a cold beer is pleasant «for me», because it satisfies my desire. Usually a beer or a cold bath is something neutral for me, but under certain circumstances it becomes pleasant for me.<sup>8</sup> Then it is not a neutral thing for me, because it is physically pleasant for me. This does not mean that the same thing is also pleasant for other people. It is absolutely different with the beauty of the dark red rose with dewdrops mentioned above. The beauty of the snowcapped mountain in the sunrise has a radically different kind of «importance»<sup>9</sup> than the cold beer. The beauty of the snowcapped mountain in the sunrise is an intrinsic value of the object. This value is important in itself; it does not become important only in relation to a person, like the cold beer, which is in itself not important.<sup>10</sup> «If we compare these types of importance, we will soon discover the essential difference between them.<sup>11</sup> The [one] ... is merely *subjectively* important; while the [other one]

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<sup>4</sup> Seifert, *Back to Things in Themselves*, 74.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Hildebrand, von, *Ästhetik*, 25.

<sup>6</sup> Hildebrand, von, *Ethics*, 207; Seifert, *Aletheia*.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. The different distinctions of «subjective Hildebrand, von, *What Is Philosophy?*; Hildebrand, von, *Was ist Philosophie?*, ch. 5.

<sup>8</sup> We have to distinguish between two different types of «pleasant for me»: a) things which are pleasant for me only under certain circumstances and b) things which are generally pleasant for me, like not too bright or not too dark lighting conditions when reading. Both types of «pleasant for me» are different to the intrinsic value of the object, which is important in itself.

<sup>9</sup>The prise *de conscience* (clear and distinct philosophical understanding of something) between three different kinds of «importance» is the merit of Dietrich von Hildebrand. He had worked out that there 1. Objective values, which are important in itself. 2. Objective goods for persons, which is the importance for a person, but something *objectively good for her*, that is distinct from *intrinsic value* of which it would not be meaningful to say that it is as such good for someone. 3. Things, which are merely subjectively important and neutral things. To each value can be attributed a possible negative value (Unwert). Cf. Hildebrand, von, *Ethics*.

<sup>10</sup> We do not mean here that the cold bear has no value in itself inasmuch as it *is*. (omnes ens est bonum).

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Aquinas knows that there is a difference between the *important itself* and the merely *subjectively* important like the cold beer. But he does not speak of a value: «nam honesta sunt delectabilia (...) Dicuntur tamen illa proprie delectabilia, quae nullam habent aliam rationem appetibilitatis nisi delectationem, cum aliquando sint et noxia et inhonesta. Utilia vero dicuntur, quae non habent in se unde desiderentur; sed desiderantur solum ut sunt ducentia in alterum, sicut sumptio medicinae amarae. Honesti vero dicuntur, quae in seipsis habent unde desiderentur.» Thomas, *Opera omnia, Summa Theologiae, Textum Leoninum Romae 1888 editum ac automato translatum a Roberto Busa SJ in taenias magneticas denuo recognovit Enrique Alarcón atque instruxit; cf. Von Hildebrand, Christian Ethics*.

... is *important itself*<sup>12</sup> But if we say «pulchra sunt quae visa placent»<sup>13</sup> it seems to be different. The sentence «pulchra sunt quae visa placent» is correct, if we understand it in the right way. «If it be asked whether an agreeable object is beautiful because it pleases us or whether it pleases us because it is beautiful»<sup>14</sup> we have to answer, as it is evidently given to us, that e.g. the beauty of the firmament is an objective beauty of the object themselves and because of that it pleases us.<sup>15</sup> Objective beauty is comparable to truth. Just as it is not correct that something becomes true only because we think that something is truth, so it is incorrect to say that something becomes beautiful, because we think that it is beautiful. And if we say that something is beautiful «to me», we do not mean that it is beautiful because of the relation with us, as after a hot day a cold shower is pleasant, but then we have realized the objective beauty of a thing. Others might not notice the objective beauty of the thing and therefore they may regard it as «not beautiful».<sup>16</sup> A further proof for this «Sachverhalt» (state of affairs) is that we are affected by the the dark red rose with dewdrops. We recognize the objective beauty, the objective value. It is a real cognition of beauty, an intentional act, a real «Bewußtsein von». Further we might ask why we are affected by the beautiful object.

[W]hen the beauty of noble music or the nobility of a moral act moves us, a grasp of the

object and a perception of its value are presupposed. Moreover there exists a meaningful intelligible relation between the object affecting us and the effect created in our soul (when, for instance, a friend's compassion consoles us, a deep, intelligible affinity is to be found between the qualitative content of his compassion and our consolation), their natures are so akin that the fact that compassion is able to bestow consolation is self-evident. This is a highly intelligible relation radically opposed to brute causality<sup>17</sup>. Similarly, there exists a meaningful, intelligible relation between the beauty of great music or the nobility of a moral action and the quality and nature of our being moved. Apart from the capacity to engender such an experience in our soul, there exists an intrinsic affinity between both object and effect, a correspondence in their nature and meaning. And this intelligible relation of inner correspondence is at the basis of the real engendering, at the basis of the ontological dependence of this affective experience on the object engendering it.<sup>18</sup>

There are many reasons why someone does not recognize objective value and objective beauty.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Hildebrand, von, *Ethics*; Hildebrand, von, *The Dietrich Von Hildebrand Lifeguide*, 9.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas, *Opera omnia, Summa Theologicae, Textum Leoninum Romae 1888 editum ac automato translatum a Roberto Busa SJ in taenias magneticas denuo recognovit Enrique Alarcón atque instruxit.*; Thomas, *Summa theologica. English translation by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, in three volumes*: «beautiful things are those which please when seen.»

<sup>14</sup> Chapman, *Doctor thesis of Philosophy: St. Augustine's philosophy of beauty*, 174.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. A. Augustinus, *De vera reli. religione*, XXXII, 59; P.L. V.34, col. 148: «Et prius quaeram utrum ideo pulchra sint, quia delectant; an ideo delectent, quia pulchra sunt. Hic raihi sine dubitatione respondebitur, ideo delectare quia pulchra sunt.» in Ebd., 195.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Hildebrand, von, *Ästhetik*, 28.

<sup>17</sup> «Brute causality» only means the contrast to be affected by any objective value. There are differences between the affection of objective values, like a beautiful landscape - an intentional act, a real «Bewußtsein von» and the pure causality of e.g. the «happiness» when we smoke a cigarette. In this case we do not have to know why nicotine cause «happiness» for «feeling happy» when we smoke, but this is different, if we recognize objective beauty.

<sup>18</sup> Hildebrand, von, *Ethics*; Seifert, *Aletheia*.

<sup>19</sup>Cf. Shakespeare's Sonnets 137: «Thou blind fool, Love, what dost thou to mine eyes,/That they behold and see not what they see?/They know what beauty is, see where it lies, /Yet what the best is take the worst to be. /If eyes, corrupt by over-partial looks, /Be anchor'd in the bay where all men ride, /Why of eyes' falsehood hast

It is further interesting to ask why we have cognition of beauty and what allows for this cognition. This question is comparable with the question about the «Erkenntnisgrund» of the truth and equally difficult.

## 2. Different kinds of beauty

- I. As we have seen in our example above, we are able to distinguish different forms of beauty. The lowest form of beauty is a pure «sensorial beauty» (*Sinnenschönheit*). For example the beauty of dark red or the beauty of a tone<sup>20</sup>
- II. A higher kind of beauty is a beauty of the «second potency» (*Schönheit zweiter Potenz*)<sup>21</sup>. This is a spiritual quality of beauty<sup>22</sup> which is similar to the third kind of beauty the metaphysical beauty. For the beauty of the «second potency» is the sensorial beauty grounded, but it is a totally different form of beauty than the sensorial beauty. This kind of beauty is more than a mix of sensorial beauties. It is a great and natural mystery how it is possible that material things have this spiritual quality of beauty, which we have e. g. notice in the beauty of our object above. We can find this beauty in many things like the firmament, the human body, in certain landscapes, in certain phenomena of nature and in art, e.g. in paintings or musical works. This form of beauty is transcendental to the material basis, so material things can assume a value like high human acts such as forgiveness. The discrepancy between the «material» and the value because of its beauty becomes significant in great compositions.<sup>23</sup>

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thou forged hooks, /Whereto the judgment of my heart is tied? /Why should my heart think that a several plot,  
/Which my heart knows thewide world's common place? /Or mine eyes seeing this, say this is not, /To put fair truth  
upon so foul a face? /In things right true my heart and eyes have erred, /And to this false plague are they now trans-  
ferred. » in Shakespeare, *Works (Riverside Edition): Sonnets. Shakespeare: Complete Works*, 12112. (Zeno.org).

<sup>20</sup> This form of beauty and the metaphysical beauty are mentioned by Platon and in Plotin. (cf. e.g. the Symposium and the Enneads). In contrast to Hildebrand, they did not notice the second form of beauty we mentioned above.

<sup>21</sup> Hildebrand, von, *Ästhetik*. We follow here in the terminology Hildebrand; it is philosophically clear and easy to understand. He says: «The beauty of the second potency of the visible and audible is qualitatively equal to the metaphysical beauty, but not in the degree of reality. » in Ebd., 244.

<sup>22</sup> It is a spiritual quality of beauty, but it is spiritual quality of beauty of a material thing. So this kind of beauty is a mixed perfection. Cf. Seifert, *Leib und Seele. Ein Beitrag zur philosophischen Anthropologie*, 20 ff.

<sup>23</sup> This form of beauty means Cardinal Newman when he said in a sermon: « Sieben Noten hat die Tonleiter, mach vierzehn daraus, gleichwohl, welch spärliches Rüstzeug für ein so gewaltiges Beginnen. Welche Wissenschaft bringt aus so wenig soviel hervor? Aus welch dürftigem Grundstoff erschafft ein großer Meister eine neue Welt? Sollen wir sagen, dass all diese überfließende Intensität nur irgendein Kunsttrick, wie ein Spiel, eine Eintagesmode ohne Wirklichkeit, ohne Sinn? Oder ist es möglich, dass das unerschöpfliche Hervorbringen und Anordnung der Noten – so reich und doch so einfach - so kompliziert und unerschöpflich und

doch geordnet, so verschiedenartig und doch so majestätisch, ein bloßer Schall sein soll, der vorüberzieht und vergeht? Können jene geheimnisvollen Erschütterungen des Herzens, jene heftige Erregung, jenes seltsames Verlangen, nach wie wir wissen nicht was, jene erhabenen Eindrücke, wir nicht wissen woher durch etwas Wertloses in uns erzeugt werden, das kommt und geht und in sich selbst beginnt und endet? Es ist nicht so; Es kann nicht so sein! Nein, diese Töne sind einer höheren Sphäre entsprungen, sie sind der Erguss der ewigen Harmonie das Gefäß des geschaffenen Tons. Sie sind das Echo unserer Heimat, sie sind die Stimmen der Engel, das *Magnificat* der Heiligen oder die lebendigen Gesetz der Herrschaft Gottes oder göttlichen Attribute. Sie sind etwas über sie selbst hinaus, das wir nicht umfassen, das wir nicht aussprechen können und dass ein sterblicher Mensch, vielleicht durch nichts

III. Then there is a metaphysical form of beauty, the «splendor» of a value. For example the beauty of love, justice, a person etc. It is evident, that a higher love and a major justice are more beautiful as minor love or justice is.<sup>24</sup>

We may ask ourselves whether there is something, which is common to all these types of beauty. We notice that there are certain properties like number, form, order and unity which are common to every beautiful thing, but we recognize also that beauty is more than number, form, order and unity. There must be a harmony between number, form, order and unity, if it should be beautiful. So we can say that beauty is a kind of illumination.<sup>25</sup>

### 3. *What is a pure perfection?*

If we want to answer the main question of this essay, we have to understand what the essence of a pure perfection is, in order to be able to say whether beauty is a pure perfection or not.

There are many *phenomena*, like life, love, justice, wisdom, person, freedom etc. which we are not able to define in a strict sense. Johann Wolfgang Goethe has called this *Urphänomene* (*ur-phenomena*).<sup>26</sup> We have an intuitive knowledge (Einsicht) of *Urphänomene*, we see that there are «irreducible data» given to us. Beauty is such an *Urphänomen*, we can see it, if we contemplate the inner essence of beauty, if we contemplate beauty itself. As there are certain properties of life, like «Self-Motion», «Being itself» etc. and the truth that life is not reducible to its properties<sup>27</sup>, beauty is also not reducible to its properties like harmony, number, form, order and unity.

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anders von seinen Gefährten ausgezeichnet, die Gabe hat, sie hervorzulocken.» in Newman, *Sermons and Discourses II* (1839-1857); Hildebrand, von, *Ästhetik*, 199-200.

<sup>24</sup> This kind of beauty is the theme of the following poem: O ew'ge Schönheit: Es glänzt so hell die Welt mit Pracht und Macht./Was heut' gleißend' glänzt – morgen ist's verblasst,/umgarnet von Spinnweben des Vergessens - /zerfressen von Motten – heut' „Leben und Schönheit“ -/morgen köstliche Labsal der Würmer des Todes./Doch nicht so mit der wahrer Schönheit und Pracht!/Wunderbar im Lichte der ewigen Sonne erstrahlt,/gleich einer entzückenden Blume in herrlicher/Farbenpracht, bekränzt mit goldenem Blütenduft /-Ein jeder Tugendakt von Dir!/Nicht neidisches Vergessen – nicht der Tyrannenmacht,/nicht Tod, Unglück und Leid können Dich verderben/liebende Seele, vertrauend auf des Höchsten Macht./Schöner als geschliffene Kleinode, süßer als lieblicher/Rosenduft, mächtiger als alle eitle Macht der Welt,/bist Du, noch unerkannt, doch nicht minder schön –/kommen wird die Stund', die letzte Erdenrund'/Dann wird erstrahlen hell – Dein wahres Antlitz,/ schöner als das schwarze Firmament in seiner Sternenpracht. (of the author).

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Chapman, *Doctor thesis of Philosophy: St. Augustine's philosophy of beauty*, 169.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. «Wäre denn aber auch ein solches *Urphänomen* gefunden, so bleibt immer noch das Übel, daß man es nicht als ein solches anerkennen will, daß wir hinter ihm und über ihm noch etwas Weiteres aufsuchen, da wir doch hier die Grenze des Schauens eingestehen sollten. Der Naturforscher lasse die *Urphänomene* in ihrer ewigen Ruhe und Herrlichkeit dastehen, der Philosoph nehme sie in seine Region auf, und er wird finden, daß ihm nicht in einzelnen Fällen, allgemeinen Rubriken, Meinungen und Hypothesen, sondern im Grund- und *Urphänomen* ein würdiger Stoff zu weiterer Behandlung und Bearbeitung überliefert werde.» Goethe, *Zur Farbenlehre*. *Zeno.org: Deutsche Literatur von Luther bis Tucholsky*, 175340. (vgl. *Goethe-GA Bd. 16, S. 69-70*). The same phrase of Goethe: «...The scientist should allow [the archphenomena (*Urphänomene*)] to stand there in their eternal tranquility and glory and the philosopher should let them enter into his region» in Seifert, *Discours des Méthodes*, 19.

<sup>27</sup> Seifert, *What Is Life?*, 10ff.

Beauty belongs to the «things», which Duns Scotus called pure perfection.<sup>28</sup> What are the characteristics of pure perfections? «dicatur, quod perfectio simpliciter est, quae est simpliciter et absolute melius quocumque impossibile»<sup>29</sup> (It is said, a pure (simple) perfection is that which is simply and absolutely preferable to any other thing or property which is incompatible with it)<sup>30</sup> These «perfections», which are not pure perfections like the species tree, are called mixed perfections. Mixed perfections are necessarily finite, they have a finite essence. In contrast to that pure perfections might be infinite, might have an infinite essence. How do we know that there are such pure perfections» with a possible infinite essence? It is a great property that the human spirit is able to

abstract precisely these pure perfections from all the limitations which accompany their realization in finite beings. What is more, human knowledge can penetrate to the pure and unique essential form, to the “ratio formalis,” and even to the essential core, of the perfection in question, which on the one side constitutes the formal essence which is the form of this perfection, and on the other is pure form and free of its accidental limitations in finite objects. In the knowledge of the “ratio formalis” of the pure perfections, we abstract not an in itself limited and surpassable “ratio formalis from the object in which is found the perfection we experience, as is the case with the knowledge of the “perfectiones limitatae.”

Rather, the knowledge of the “ratio formalis” of the pure perfections penetrates to the corresponding essential form in its purity, that is, to being in itself, to life in itself, to knowledge in itself, to freedom in itself, etc.<sup>31</sup>

Now we want to sum up the necessary proprieties of pure perfection so that we may be able to prove whether beauty is a pure perfection or not. Above we have mentioned three important proprieties of pure perfections.<sup>32</sup> We can deduct all these properties (except this property itself) of this property of pure perfection: «dicatur, quod perfectio simpliciter est, quae est simpliciter et absolute melius quocumque impossibile».

- a) «a pure (simple) perfection is that which is simply and absolutely preferable to any other thing or property which is incompatible with it»
- b) a pure perfection is an irreducibly simple (*simpliciter simplex*)<sup>33</sup>
- c) every pure perfection admits of infinity
- d) every pure perfection is compatible to each other

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<sup>28</sup> Notice that not every «Urphänomen» is a pure perfection, like e.g. the color red. Cf. Anselm von Canterbury, *Monologion*, ch. XV; Duns Scotu refined the philosophical «understanding» of pure perfections: Cf. Duns Scotus, *Opera Omnia*.

<sup>29</sup> Duns Scotus, *De Primo Principio*, ch. 4, concls. 3. in Ebd., III, 237.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Seifert, *Essere E Persona*, ch. V.

<sup>31</sup> Ebd., unknown translator; ch. V.

<sup>32</sup>Cf. Seifert, *Essere E Persona*.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Duns Scotus, *Opera Omnia*.

#### 4. *Beauty as a pure perfection*

We begin this part with a famous citation from St. Augustine's «Confessiones» in which he describes in the light of faith that the absolute being, that Good is the perfect, absolute beauty. Afterwards we have to prove whether we are able to say the same from a philosophical point of view.

Belatedly I loved thee, O Beauty so ancient and so new, belatedly I loved thee. For see, thou wast within and I was without, and I sought thee out there. Unlovely, I rushed heedlessly among the lovely things thou hast made. Thou wast with me, but I was not with thee. These things kept me far from thee; even though they were not at all unless they were in thee. Thou didst call and cry aloud, and didst force open my deafness. Thou didst gleam and shine, and didst chase away my blindness. Thou didst breathe fragrant odors and I drew in my breath; and now I pant for thee. I tasted, and now I hunger and thirst. Thou didst touch me, and I burned for thy peace.<sup>34</sup>

As we have imagined at the beginning the beautiful impression, we are able to say that it is «absolutely preferable to be beauty to any other thing or property which is incompatible with beauty.»

(1) The main «argument» why we are allowed to speak reasonably of beauty as a pure perfection is no real argument in a strict sense, but a direct intuition (unmittelbare Einsicht). We see by a direct intuition that the essence of beauty itself (the «ratio formalis» of beauty) is not limited. The essence of beauty itself is open for infinity. We find no self-contradiction if we think of an absolute being which is infinite beauty.

Above we distinguished three forms of beauty: «sensorial beauty» (*Sinnenschönheit*), beauty of the «second potency» (*Schönheit zweiter Potenz*) and a metaphysic form of beauty. We have to understand that beauty as such is a pure perfection, but the sensorial beauty or the beauty of the «second potency» are mixed perfections because e.g. the beauty of the «second potency» is the spiritual quality of beauty of a material thing. Things which are beautiful in this way are finite like the color or a certain tone. So we see that beauty is a pure perfection which can exist in the finite beings, but only in an imperfect way. We also notice that there is an essential difference between the first and the two other forms of beauty we have mentioned above.

Moreover we have to distinguish between two different differences: There is an essential difference between the pure and the mixed perfections and there is also an essential difference between the pure perfections which exist in the finite beings and the pure perfection of the infinite being. Both differences are insurmountable.

The beauty of the second potency is, as we have said, based on the sensorial beauty. If we are aware e.g. of the beauty of the red colour, we understand the finite character of this kind of beauty. It is contradictory to think of the most beautiful colour. The colours and the tones compared which each other are equal.

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<sup>34</sup> Augustine, *Confessions and Enchiridion*, X, ch. 27; «sero te amavi, pulchritudo tam antiqua et tam nova, sero te amavi! et ecce intus eras et ego foris, et ibi te quaerebam, et in ista formosa quae fecisti deformis inruebam. mecum eras, et tecum non eram. ea me tenebant longe a te, quae si in te non essent, non essent. vocasti et clamasti et rupisti surditatem meam; coruscasti, splenduisti et fugasti caecitatem meam; fragrasti, et duxi spiritum et anhelum tibi; gustavi et esurio et sitio; tetigisti me, et exarsi in pacem tuam.» in Saint, Bishop of Hippo Augustine und commentary by James J. O'Donnell, *Confessions*.

Next we ask: Is infinite beauty compatible with the beauty of the «second potency»? We understand that there is not any most beautiful (infinitely beautiful) island. There might be the most beautiful island of our world, but there cannot be any absolute beautiful island, because it would be a *Contradictio in terminis*. So we see that as well as the first, the second kind of beauty cannot be a pure perfection in a perfect way. The character of this kind of beauty is quite difficult. On the one hand we might think that this form of beauty is compatible with infinity, because of its spiritual character, but on the other hand we understand that this beauty is not compatible with infinity, because of its foundation in the sensorial beauty and in the material things.

If this is equal between the first and second form of beauty, we are allowed to ask, where the essential difference between the first and the second form of beauty is, which we mentioned above. We also mentioned that the second form of beauty is much more similar to the metaphysical beauty than to the sensorial beauty, but why are we allowed to say so? They are similar, because they are both spiritual forms of beauty. The beauty of the «second potency» is transcendental to its bearer. The bearer of this beauty becomes enormously valuable, much more than the material is valuable.<sup>35</sup>

The beauty of the second potency is, as we imagine, an opportunity to express the infinite beauty, the absolute beauty (the beauty itself) in the finite beings, like the huge sun is reflected of the smallest water surface.<sup>36</sup>

(2) In contrast to the beauty of the second potency, the metaphysical beauty is, as we see easily, open for infinity. There are other pure perfections like life, justice or love<sup>37</sup> etc. It is evident, as we have mentioned that a higher justice, love etc. is more beautiful than a lower one. Although the beauty of love or justice is a «splendor» of the particular essence, the beauty of this particular essence is a new entity, a datum<sup>38</sup>, which is not reducible to the essences of love or justice.

So a being which is love, justice etc., which is a pure perfection itself (in a perfect sense) must also be the absolute beauty itself. Now we find the fourth propriety of the essence of pure perfection (cf. d) confirmed.

(3) There is a deep qualitative relationship between love and beauty in several respects. This deep relationship is made clear, if we think of Wagner's third act of «Tristan und Isolde» in which Tristan says to Isolde: «Ach, Isolde! Isolde! Wie schön bist du!»<sup>39</sup> It is an authentic testimony of the close relationship between love and beauty. Furthermore we understand, if we contemplate the essence of love that love is a value response to beauty.<sup>40</sup> The only adequate response to the value of beauty is love. We notice that everything we love (I mean real love) is in a particular way beautiful. We are not able, if we really love, to love something which is

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<sup>35</sup> This is the deeper sense why in a strict way any masterpiece of art is inalienable like human act as love or forgiveness are inalienable. It is only allowed to shed this sort of beauty as you shed your love. It is not an accidental similarity, but it engenders, as we will see, the essence necessarily. This thought is also expressed in: «Song of Solomon 8:7 Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised.» in *The Holy Bible*

<sup>36</sup> This metaphor uses also Bonaventura, but in a slightly different way. Cf. Seifert, *Gott Als Gottesbeweis*, 229. Cf. also Geiger, «Phänomenologischen Methode in der Ästhetik.» : «Sie sieht ihn [den Gedanken über den ästhetischen Wert] mit Platon an als eine Ab Spiegelung eines Überirdischen im Irdischen, mit Schelling als eine Darstellung des Unendlichen im Endlichen» in Seifert und Gueye, *Anthologie der realistischen Phänomenologie*, 393-394.

<sup>37</sup> Seifert, «Die Liebe als reine Vollkommenheit - Eine Metaphysik der Liebe als philosophisches Hoheslied der Liebe»; Hildebrand, von, *The Heart*; Hildebrand, von, *Das Wesen Der Liebe*.

<sup>38</sup> If someone objects that in God cannot be any difference between beauty and the other perfection, we answer that it is right, but we have to say that beauty is not the same as e.g. love, so even in God we make a «*distinctio formalis cum fundamentum in re*». Cf. Duns Scotus, *Opera Omnia*.

<sup>39</sup> Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*. *Zeno.org: Deutsche Literatur von Luther bis Tucholsky*, (vgl. *Wagner-Musikdramen*, S. 376), 557270.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Hildebrand, von, *The Heart*; Hildebrand, von, *Das Wesen Der Liebe*

totally bad or ugly like real hate. We might say that we «love» someone to hate, but then we mean actually something else than love.

Equally, the «splendor» of love and of beauty is similar to each other.<sup>41</sup> This deep relationship between love and beauty is, as we have shown, a necessary one, so if love is a pure perfection<sup>42</sup> beauty must be a pure perfection too.

(4) Another consideration shows that beauty has to be a pure perfection because of close and deep relationship to eudaimonia (felicity or happiness), which is a pure perfection too.<sup>43</sup>

We human beings need beauty in our surrounding to feel happy and be healthy. Without any beauty no one can feel happy. And moreover we notice if we contemplate beautiful things we feel the happier the more beautiful the things are which we contemplate. So it is obvious to us, that the contemplation of the absolute being makes us most happy.<sup>44</sup>

(5) There are many more deep relationships and connections e.g. as it is expressed in the «old trinity of Truth and Good and Beauty»<sup>45</sup> Furthermore it can be shown that there is a deep connection between the «*unum*» (the one) and beauty.<sup>46</sup>

The Supreme Being is, as we mentioned identical with the pure perfection, it is the pure perfection. We can find an intimate relation, which can here only be mentioned, between beauty as a pure perfection and the «*id quo maius nihil cogitari possit*»<sup>47</sup> (something whose nothing can be thought greater), the Supreme Being. The infinite holiness of the Supreme Being, of God is deeply and necessarily correlated with beauty as a pure perfection, because in a strict sense we are only allowed to say that the holiness and goodness of the Supreme Being is absolute beautiful.<sup>48</sup>

So we notice that we have to distinguish between different spheres of beauty and that we have spoken of beauty in many different meanings.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. Hildebrand, von, *Ästhetik*, ch. 21.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Seifert, “Die Liebe als reine Vollkommenheit - Eine Metaphysik der Liebe als philosophisches Hoheslied der Liebe.”

<sup>43</sup> Aristotle knows that eudaimonia is a pure perfection, this is a reason why he attributes it in his Metaphysic to God.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. «There we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise. This is what shall be in the end without end.» Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, XXII, ch. 30; translated in Augustine, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*.

<sup>45</sup> Solzhenitsyn, “Beauty Will Save the World.”

<sup>46</sup> We have to notice that whole «material of the pure perfection» is quite complex and deep. And that our human cognition is very limited, that is the reason why it exists true apories for us. «The irreducible simplicity of every pure perfection as well as of their other essential characteristics give rise to difficult and unsolved, in fact unsolvable, problems, problems which bear, as we shall later see, the character of an apory. We have already touched on some of these questions, such as the problem of reconciling the difference and ultimate noncomposed unity of every pure perfection with the ultimate simplicity which it simultaneously possesses in the highest forms of its realization. ... The highest simplicity does not dissolve all irreducible differences between essence and existence, justice and mercy, etc., but rather preserves them in their distinction, uniting them however in an indivisible and supreme unity. The closer understanding of this escapes our limited power of understanding. This however should not surprise us when, as Descartes noted, we consider adequately the infinity of being and the limitation and finitude of our comprehension. That there must be such ultimate unity, simplicity and oneness of the absolute infinity » in Seifert, *Essere E Persona*, ch. 5.

<sup>47</sup> Anselm, *Opera Omnia Ad Fidem Codicum Recensuit Franciscus Salesius Schmitt*, 101-102: «Et quidem credimus te esse aliquid quo nihil maius cogitari possit. ... Existit ergo procul dubio aliquid quo maius cogitari non ualet, et in intellectu et in re.»

<sup>48</sup> «Im Personsein Gottes liegt ... die tiefste Begründung dafür, daß das objektive göttliche Wesen objektive Wertvollkommenheit und notwendiges Dasein einschließt. Nämlich nur „die Person und nur die in ihrer Freiheit und Reinheit des Wollens wurzelnde sittliche Gutheit kann ein *id quo maius nihil cogitari possit* sein.» in Bexten, “Da Gott Gott ist, ist Gott (Si Deus est Deus, Deus est).” Cf. also Seifert, *Gott Als Gottesbeweis*.

<sup>49</sup> Sometimes we have used nearly the same words for very different meanings of beauty, so someone might object that it is quite paradoxical, but it is not, because we have meant different kinds of beauty. In this small reflection

## 5. *Final conclusion*

We want to finish our small reflection about beauty as a pure perfection with the following thesis.

If the mixed perfection, the beauty of the second potency, the spiritual beauty is, as we imagine, an opportunity to express the infinite beauty, the absolute beauty (the beauty itself) in the finite beings, like the huge sun is reflected of the smallest water surface<sup>50</sup>, the spiritual beauty helps us to understand that there is an absolute beauty.<sup>51</sup>

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about the question whether beauty is a pure perfection or not, we are not able to work every different meaning of beauty out, but we have given enough references for a deeper study.

<sup>50</sup> This metaphor uses also Bonaventura, but in a slightly different way. Cf. Ebd., 229. Cf. also Geiger, “Phänomenologische Methode in der Ästhetik.” : «Sie sieht ihn [den Gedanken über den ästhetischen Wert] mit Platon an als eine Abspiegelung eines Überirdischen im Irdischen, mit Schelling als eine Darstellung des Unendlichen im Endlichen» in Seifert und Gueye, *Anthologie der realistischen Phänomenologie*, 393-394.

<sup>51</sup> In this light becomes the beauty of the second potency, the spiritual beauty enormously valuable and with it the artist too.

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