

Social Beauty—A Definition

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Social Beauty refers to any social arrangement, social activity, or social behavior that, when witnessed or experienced, warmly touches the human heart, uplifts the human spirit, reminds us of the best behavioral capacities of our human nature (e.g., our capacities for empathy, compassion, altruism, kindness, and creativity), elevates feelings of gratitude for Life and each other (including gratitude for opportunities to contribute to the well-being of others), and makes one proud to be a part of humanity. (A See example below.)

Social Beauty is the product of Kind Social Arrangements (and the social activities and social behaviors generated by those arrangements) and those Kind Social Arrangements are, themselves, things of Social Beauty.

Social Atrocity, the opposite of Social Beauty, refers to any social arrangement, social activity, or social behavior that, when witnessed or experienced, sickens the heart, crushes the human soul, and dampens the human spirit. Social Atrocity reminds us of the unkindest capacities of our human nature---e.g., our capacities to be mean, uncaring, greedy, ungrateful, and even violent. Social atrocity is the result of Mean Social Arrangements (and the harmful social activities and behaviors those mean arrangements create) and those Mean Social Arrangements are, themselves, Social Atrocities. (See example below.)

The Kind Social Arrangements that create Social Beauty are reflections of a deep love and respect for Humanity and the Earth, and these arrangements beget even deeper and more practiced love and respect. These kind arrangements enable, encourage, and give practice to escalating levels of individual and collective kindness.

The Kind Social Arrangements and the social activities and other effects generated by those arrangements move our hearts and minds via the senses and emotions, as well as intellectually. Like beautiful music, great visual art, and Nature's Beauty, Social Beauty touches and stirs our humanity. Kind Social Arrangements and the Social Beauty created by them awaken, motivate, and liberate. They address profound social longings, deepen the meaningfulness of life, provide clarity, enliven imagination and conscience, and give us confidence in ourselves and in the goodness of Humanity. These kind arrangements and associated activities transform people, individually and collectively, as all increasingly participate in the creation of ever-more Social Beauty.

The opposite of Kind Social Arrangements are Mean Social Arrangements that dehumanize us, seduce us, exploit us, oppress us, demoralize us, and alienate us, individually and collectively.

These “Mean Arrangements of Man” (as Victor Hugo would call them), and the activities and effects associated with them, are reflections of a lack of deep love and respect for Humanity and the Earth, or at least inadequately practiced love and respect, and they increasingly beget further lack of love and respect. These mean arrangements enable, encourage, and give practice to escalating levels of individual and collective unkindness.

Example of Social Beauty: When a mother with very limited financial resources brings her sick child to a children’s hospital and knows that she will not be charged a fee for the care provided-- that relief, created by the kind social arrangement of “publicly-funded national healthcare,” is a thing of Social Beauty. When that same child receives compassionate, unrushed, expert care--- that experience is a thing of Social Beauty. When, during that child’s hospitalization, she and other patients are treated to an after-supper flute concert performed by 20 young children (from the community) who had learned to play the flute through a Public Arts Program that provided them (and any child) with free instruments and lessons---that concert and the Public Arts Program that made it possible are things of Social Beauty. When that child leaves the hospital and wants to give a thankful goodbye hug to the kind janitor-- who not only mopped the floor of her room each day but also cheered her up each day with his pep talks and kind assurances that she would soon get well---that embrace and the behaviors of both the child and the janitor are things of Social Beauty.

The children’s hospital itself, including its Kind Social Arrangements, the altruistic dedication and expertise of its entire staff, and the many kind experiences it generates---are all things of Social Beauty that, when witnessed or experienced, warmly touch the human heart and uplift the human spirit.

Example of Social Atrocity: When a 50 year old man with little or no financial resources, despite his hard work as a manual laborer, becomes ill, knows that he desperately needs to go to a medical clinic, but is afraid to go because of the financial debt it will create for him (because his society does not provide “publicly-funded national healthcare,” and he could not afford health insurance)---that fear and that financial indebtedness are Social Atrocities created by a Mean Social Arrangement (absence of “publicly-funded national healthcare). When that man goes to a clinic and an uncaring employee asks for his health insurance information (which he does not have) and then callously explains that he will need to go elsewhere unless he can pay upfront--- that encounter is a Social Atrocity. When that employee adds, “By the way, for future reference, our doctors don’t accept Medicare or Medicaid, because those programs do not sufficiently reimburse us” that message is a Social Atrocity. When such a man eventually dies because of delayed or never-provided healthcare---that is a Social Atrocity.

Note: The main reason that a children’s hospital creates Kind Social Arrangements and Social Beauty is that it practices the Children’s Hospital Public Economy Model (CHPEM), which is

foundationally based on and guided by a set of wise social understandings regarding Human Nature, motivation, leadership, competition, and freedom.

The main reason that a clinic, hospital, or health care system that practices a corporate capitalist economic model tends to create Mean Social Arrangements and Social Atrocity is that its economic model is foundationally based on a set of inaccurate and unwise social (mis)understandings regarding Human Nature, motivation, leadership, competition, and freedom.

Comparison of Social Beauty with the Beauty in Nature (Nature’s Beauty):

Most people understand and can relate to the Beauty in Nature (Nature’s Beauty). For example, when one stands on the shores of an alpine lake, among tall fir and hemlock, with trillium and twin flowers adorning the mossy forest floor, and marvels at the surrounding evergreen-covered mountains, the high blue sky, the setting sun glistening on the quieting lake, and the snow-capped mountains in the distance, one recognizes and appreciates that they are witnessing and experiencing Nature’s Beauty. Nature’s Beauty, including its scents and sounds, uplifts our spirits, inspires us, and fills us with deep gratitude for not only the privilege to be Nature’s guest but also the privilege of Life itself. Such are the powerful positive effects that Nature’s Beauty has on the senses, emotions, thoughts, and beliefs of a human. Similarly, Social Beauty, when witnessed or experienced, has powerful positive effects that uplift and inspire us and elevate feelings of gratitude for Life and each other.

For further explanation of Social Beauty, see the following Chapters in ***Sowing Seeds of Social Beauty—The Untold Story of the Children’s Hospital Public Economy Model:***

- Chapter 11: Social Beauty
- Chapter 12: The Social Beauty of Children’s Hospitals
- Chapter 13: The Children’s Hospital Public Economy Model (CHPEM)
- Chapter 14: The Foundational Pillars of the CHPEM
- Chapter 15: Human Nature
- Chapter 20: Mean Arrangements of Man
- Chapter 37: The Achilles’ Heel of Capitalism



A Scene of Social Beauty: Dr. H congratulating her patient's successful conquering of leukemia at Victor Hugo Public Children's Hospital

Acknowledgements:

- The author first became aware of the phrase "Social Beauty" when he noticed it in Victor Hugo's novel *Les Misérables*, published in 1862.
- The phrase "Mean Social Arrangements" is based on Victor Hugo's use of the phrase "Mean Arrangements of Man" in *Les Misérables*.
- The above drawing is based on a pediatric ward at Beijing Children's Hospital in the late 1970s-early 1980s. The images of Dr H and the little girl are based on drawings by Kathe Kollwitz (1867-1945). Victor Hugo Public Children's Hospital is a fictitious children's hospital, named in honor of Victor Hugo's commitment to "Creation of Vast Fields of Public Activity" and the compassionate care of mothers and children.