

A Course on Sowing Seeds of Social Beauty

Presentation 2:

Social Beauty

Slide 1:

This presentation, which explains what is meant by “Social Beauty,” is the second presentation of ***“A Course on Sowing Seeds of Social Beauty.”***

Slide 2:

The course is based on a book entitled ***“Sowing Seeds of Social Beauty,”*** which is posted on my website (www.notesfromthesocialclinic.org) where all 54 of its chapters may be downloaded and read for free. Here are the front and back covers of the book.

Slide 3:

In a minute I will explain what I think this phrase means. But first, where did this phrase come from? Have you ever heard of this phrase before? And what does it mean that the phrase “Social Beauty” is not part of the lexicon of our culture?

Slide 4:

I had never heard or thought of this phrase until I happened to notice it in Charles Wilbour’s translation of Victor Hugo’s novel, ***Les Misérables***. Victor Hugo’s novel was published in 1862, in French, and Charles Wilbour, who was a close friend of Victor’s, published an English translation of the novel in that same year. The phrase struck a chord with me. I have wondered ever since why I had never heard the phrase before and why it has not been part of the lexicon of our culture.

Slide 5:

Here is my definition of “Social Beauty:”

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.

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.

Slide 6:

The opposite of Social Beauty is Social Atrocity. Social Atrocity 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.

Slide 7:

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.

Slide 8:

The Mean Social Arrangements that create Social Atrocities are reflections of an absence of deep love and respect for Humanity and the Earth, and these arrangements beget even deeper and more practiced disregard and disrespect for Humanity and the Earth. These Mean Arrangements enable, encourage, and give practice to escalating levels of individual and collective unkindness.

Slide 9:

The Kind Social Arrangements and the social activities and social behaviors 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, when we witness or experience it, 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.

Slide 10:

This is a scene of social beauty: Dr. H, a kind and devoted hematologist/oncologist, is gently congratulating her little patient's conquering of leukemia. This scene is created by a wonderfully Kind Social Arrangement, namely a public children's hospital that provides compassionate, unrushed, expert care to all children at no expense to their parents.

Slide 11:

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

Slide 12: In Victor Hugo's novel, *Les Miserables*, the miserable life that Cosette was forced to endure under the cruel treatment of the Thenardiers is an example of Social Atrocity resulting from a Mean Social Arrangement. Indeed, Hugo wrote *Les Miserables* in response to the widespread Mean Social Arrangements and Social Atrocities he witnessed in France during the first half of the 19th century.

Slide 13:

Here is another example of Kind Social Arrangements and Social Beauty:

A mother with limited financial resources brings her sick child to a Public 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 gives 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.

Slide 14:

Here is an example of Mean Social Arrangements and 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.

These are Mean Social Arrangements that lead to Social Atrocity.

Slide 15-17: (Photos of an alpine lake)

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 (16) one marvels at the surrounding evergreen-covered mountains, the high blue sky, the setting sun glistening on the quieting lake, and (17) the snow-capped mountains in the distance, one recognizes and appreciates that they are witnessing and experiencing Nature’s Beauty.

Slide 18:

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.

Slide 19:

When I tell people about my book, “Sowing Seeds of Social Beauty,” a common reaction, delivered with a quizzical and skeptical facial expression is “What is Social Beauty? I have never heard that phrase before. What does it mean?”

What does it say about our society that a phrase like “Social Beauty” is not a part of our lexicon, seems so strange, and is seemingly hard to comprehend?

Slide 20:

It says a lot. Among other things, it shows the extent to which our attention has been focused on the negative aspects of our Human Nature and the Mean Social Arrangements and Social Atrocities that a small and undeservedly powerful percentage of human beings has created, as if these are the primary characteristics and inclinations of Humanity as a whole and will always prevail. It shows the extent to which our attention has been turned away from the positive aspects of our Human Nature and our potential to create Kind Social Arrangements and Social Beauty, as if those aspects and that potential are negligible and the goal of creating greater Social Beauty is unrealistic, a waste of time, and even dangerous.

The purpose of this course is to shift the focus from the negative to the positive. A goal of this course is to add phrases like “Social Beauty,” “Social Clinic,” and “Vast Fields of Public Activity” to our society’s lexicon and give them prominence in our public dialogue about the pressing issues facing Humanity.

Slide 21-22:

So, what does “Sowing Seeds of Social Beauty” mean? It means:

- Choosing “kernels of truth,” as best as we can determine them. (These are the seeds);
- Preparing soil that is fertile for reception of new ideas, new ways of thinking, even new phrases, like “Social Beauty,” “Social Clinic,” and “Vast Fields of Public Activity;”
- Planting and nurturing seeds that will blossom into expressions of the best aspects of our human nature;
- Imagining “Vast Fields of Public Activity;”
- Promoting and cultivating healthy dialogue about new social and economic understandings;
- Shedding light on that which has been kept in the dark; **(Go to Slide 22)**
- It means helping new understandings to grow, mature, and produce fresh fruits;
- Then widely distributing those fruits (new understandings and new plans);
- Offering them for consideration and potential implementation wherever desired;
- It means being farmers who produce the ingredients for an abundance of Social Beauty for all to enjoy.

That is what “Sowing Seeds of Social Beauty” means.

Slide 23:

Thank you---For your attention---And for your interest in “Sowing Seeds of Social Beauty.”

FURTHER READING:

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
- The Social Beauty of Beijing Children’s Hospital—A PowerPoint Presentation
<https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://notesfromthesocialclinic.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/SSoSB-The-Social-Beauty-of-Beijing-Childrens-Hospital-China-Lecture-2023-PPT.pptx&hl=en>
- The Social Beauty of Beijing Children’s Hospital—A Slide-by-Slide Narrative of the PowerPoint Presentation
<https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://notesfromthesocialclinic.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/SSoSB-The-Social-Beauty-of-Beijing-Childrens-Hospital-China-lecture-2023-NARRATIVE.pdf&hl=en>
- 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