



The Way of Beauty: Five Meditations for Spiritual Transformation

By François Cheng

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The Way of Beauty: Five Meditations for Spiritual Transformation By François Cheng

Five meditations on the role of beauty in human life and its direct connection with the sacred

- Looks at how beauty has the power to elevate and counterbalance the negative side of the reality facing us
- Presents the role of beauty in transforming individuals and transforming the world from a Taoist perspective

In a time of mindless violence and widespread ecological and natural catastrophes, François Cheng asks if talking about beauty may not seem incongruous even scandalous. Yet this is actually the most appropriate time to revisit a subject that was a philosophical mainstay for millennia. The power of beauty to elevate and transcend counterbalances the negative side of the reality facing us. As John Keats noted in “Ode on a Grecian Urn,” beauty is inseparable from truth:

“Beauty is truth, truth beauty,--that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.”

The ultimate human reality pivots on these two extremes of the living universe-- beauty and evil.

Cheng begins his teachings with the intrinsic sense of beauty revealed by the landscape, symbolized by the staggeringly beautiful Lu Mountain of his native province in China. His five meditations carry the reader from the understanding of beauty being in the mind of the beholder to its intimate relationship with the sacred, both from a Western and Taoist perspective. He shows that the most telling indication of the importance of beauty in human life and for individual spiritual realization can be grasped by simply imagining a world without it.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Cheng moves with indescribable ease from Alfred de Musset to Saint Augustine, from Chinese poetics to Sufi story. . . . This collection of Cheng's subtle reflections drawn from many traditions is highly recommended." (*Library Journal*, Oct 2009)

"The carefully worded essays/meditations average twenty pages and showcase Francois Cheng's resplendent language skills." (*ForeWord Reviews*, Sept 2009)

"[Francois Cheng] describes beauty as a state of being, and of becoming - not of 'having' - and refers to the traditional Chinese perspective that beauty is part of the essence of a thing. He notes that it is from society's devotion to consumption that beauty becomes a something one attempts to have rather than to be. Thus, he elevates beauty from a cosmetic and manipulated product and restores it to the nature of things aligned with their essence. The author appears to have been inspired by nature and infused with wisdom of contemplation, and is able to convey that inspiration to the reader." (*Karl Schlotterbeck, MA, CAS, LP, The Henge of Keltria*, August 2010)

"Cheng's *The Way of Beauty* seems to prove that, in fact, meditations on beauty lead inevitably to what we may deem 'the important things,' embracing as it does the questions we should ask, but seldom acknowledge. With a quiet joy in his discoveries, Cheng carries the reader along on his journey toward the center of the soul, making *The Way of Beauty* not only a personal vision, but a collective experience in enlightenment." (*Deborah Adams, Curled Up With a Good Book*, Sept 2009)

From the Inside Flap

MEDITATION / SPIRITUALITY

The Way of Beauty

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FRANÇOIS CHENG was born in 1929 in Shangdong Province, China. He moved to France in 1949 and was

elected to the Académie Française in 2002. A poet, essayist, calligrapher, and translator, he has also written several novels, two of which have been translated into English: *The River Below* and *Green Mountain, White Cloud*.

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