

DECEMBER '82

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THEME UP AND OUT

What happens when a dozen scholars in as many disciplines exchange views on a common subject? Such a recent gathering at the State University of New York at Stony Brook brought together physicists, musicologists, artists, historians, mathematicians, sociologists, writers and others. Their topic was...The Perception of Beauty. Their thinking together resulted in some profundities, some disagreement, some humor...and an exposition of the academic mind that might be described as...well, beautiful.

Hi, everybody. This is Al Oickle and the program is "Here at Stony Brook." Today, we'll be listening to a couple of Nobel Laureates, a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and several other noted members of the faculty, here at Stony Brook, as they explore their perceptions of beauty. The program's moderator was Dr. C. N. Yang, Einstein professor of physics at the State University at Stony Brook. He gave the audience in the campus Art Gallery a hint, in his opening remarks, of how difficult the participants would find describing their perceptions of beauty. TAPE / Cassette 1, Side 1 - 028 - Yang: "I know that..."

to 037 - Yang "useless exercise."

AFO LIVE : Professor Yang, nevertheless, encouraged the panelists to give their own definitions. Louis Simpson, a professor of English, here at Stony Brook, and a Pulitzer Prize winner in poetry, had prepared his remarks.

TAPE // Cassette 1, Side 1 - 047 - Simpson: "Beauty is a thing we..."
to 085 - Simpson: "before it is started."

AFO LIVE: There was, of course, no danger that this conversation would end before it was started. Professor Simpson went on himself to give several definitions and uses of the word "beauty":

TAPE/ Cassette 1, Side 1 - 180 -- Simpson: "On the high-school level"
to 199 - Simpson: "desire sets the artist to work."

AFO LIVE: Professor Simpson referred to several others who have defined beauty and then concluded:

TAPE 1, Cassette 1, Side 1 -- 314 - Simpson: "Beauty is style..."
to 319 -- Simpson: "we share with the universe."

AFO LIVE: Charles Rosen was next in this discussion at Stony Brook.

A musicologist, a classical pianist, a Ph.D in French literature
and an expert in music & language, he examined the subject of beauty
from many sides. ~~He~~ traced the disappearance of beauty as a
"respectable" subject for discussion."

TAPE/ Cassette 1, Side 1 - 331 -- Rosen: "I would like to address..."
to 361 -- Rosen: "there was a convention for this."

AFO LIVE: Professor Rosen went on to say that beauty has not existed
in aesthetics since the 18th Century. He added:

TAPE/ Cassette 1, Side 1 -- 424 - Rosen: "Let me put it in a simpler way..."
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to 443 -- Rosen - "you want for personal approval."

AFO LIVE: Professor Rosen introduced ~~to~~ this discussion of beauty
the subject of mathematics, which he described as being "only slightly
outside the arts."

TAPE/ Cassette 1, Side 1 - 488 - Rosen: "I can remember one time..."
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AFO LIVE: The discussion continued on the perception of beauty
~~at~~ at the State University of New York at Stony Brook with two natural
scientists, Dr. Maurice Goldhaber of the Brookhaven National Laboratory,
who is an adjunct professor of physics at Stony Brook, and Dr.
James Watson, the Nobel Laureate from the Cold Springs Harbor Laboratory.
Dr. Goldhaber introduced some humor to the discussion:

TAPE/ Cassette 1, Side 1 - 538 - Goldhaber: "I recently..."
to 542 - Goldhaber: "...more complicated." (laughter)

AFO LIVE: Dr. Goldhaber commented on science and beauty, compared
mathematics and beauty, and quoted three well-known scientists:

TAPE/ Cassette 1, Tape 1, Side 1 - 576:- Goldhaber: "The famous Felix..."
to 623 - Goldhaber: "...called it even poetic."

AFO LIVE: "One of them called it even poetic," Dr. ~~_____~~ Goldhaber
quotes, suggesting an even higher level of beauty. Nobel Laureate
James Watson, in describing the Double Helix, his discovery ~~in~~
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AFO LIVE: Dr. Watson went on to discuss exploring solutions to the
DNA problems, an ugly model and the beauty of the Double Helix idea:

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to 228 - Watson: "It had to be truth." (Fast cut needed here.)

AFO LIVE: Reacting to ~~his fellow physicists'~~ ^{Some of these} statements about beauty, Professor Yang talked about Einstein's relativity theory and about a sense of religion:

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to 339 - Yang: "...deeply religious sense."

AFO LIVE: You are listening to the radio program, "Here at Stony Brook."

Today we are bringing you excerpts from a 2½-hour conversation about the perceptions of beauty held by faculty members and others, here at Stony Brook. Among the ~~participants~~ ^{panelists} was Professor Patrick Heelan, a philosopher, who expanded the definition of beauty through the analogy of game-playing.

TAPE/ Cassette 1, Side 2 -- 372 - Heelan: "The notion that..."

to 380 - Heelan: "...and other things."

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to 418 - "to participate in a liturgy."

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to 501 - "...in ~~literature~~ literature, in pictures, and in math."

AFO LIVE: A mathematician, Professor Blaine Herbert Lawson, disagreed with Professor Heelan's characterization of math as a game.

TAPE/ Cassette 1, Side 2 - 620 - Lawson: "...As a mathematician..."

to 650 - Lawson - "...profoundly beautiful."

AFO LIVE: ^{in many disciplines} Scholars now are discussing the ^{concepts} perception of beauty. Here again is ^{usage} Professor Charles Rosen after hearing ^{molecular biologist} physicist James Watson and philosopher Patrick Heelan:

TAPE / Cassette 1, Side 2 -- 810 - Rosen: "~~I think~~ I must disagree..."

to 853 - "...very dubious." (Laughter)

AFO LIVE: Yes, Dr. Rosen has suggested, the uncertainty principle holds also when artists attempt to define perceptions of beauty.

This discussion at the State University of New York at Stony Brook continued as others joined the conversation. We have time to hear

~~Dr. Aldona Jonaitis,~~ Dr. Aldona Jonaitis, a professor and head of the Department of Art here at Stony Brook:

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AFO LIVE: When Professor Yang ^{religion,} related beauty to ~~pleasure~~ pleasure, he drew ^{A strong} a strong ~~reaction~~ reaction from Dr. Watson:

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to 271 - Watson: "...can't connect together."

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AFO LIVE: Towards the end of their discussion, the Stony Brook scholars turned to the possibility that people are embarrassed to talk about beauty.

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to 707 - Yang: "...not being able to define what beauty is."

AFO Live: Yes...we began with a question and we end with a question... about the definition of beauty. How do you define beauty?

THEME UP AND UNDER

AFO LIVE:! Next week, we will be talking about teaching with four master teachers at the State University of New York, here at Stony Brook. I hope you will be here to enjoy it. Later this month, we will be talking about those special characteristics of this holiday season... faith and hope and optimism, with a physicist who writes poetry. And before 1982 ends, Here at Stony Brook will take a look back at the year with some of our faculty members. Until next week, then, this is Al Oickle. So long, everybody.

*Prof. Hal Pekarby of Art
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