

“Beauty, Consonance, Proportion”

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For this inaugural essay composed for the launch of *Lena’s Fabulous Frequencies*, I oddly was transported back to the medieval world. Of course it is pure fantasy on my part. For I know the “medieval” and the Classical age that influenced it only through fiction and its close cousin, historical scholarship. The ghost of the late Umberto Eco came to mind since he enjoyed success both as a writer of fiction and as a scholar. I thought of Eco because he embraced medieval aesthetics at a moment in civilizational history where dissonance, malformation, and brutality in both the fine arts and in the larger popular culture have become the norm.

The technology that promised to relieve the tedium and toil of the pre-modern age now threaten humanity and the natural world with annihilation. But in the fiction-world of Eco, letters and manuscripts as wielded by schemers and intriguers are the most effective weapon in the dispatch of rivals and enemies. His best-selling mass-market debut *In the Name of the Rose* (1983) and later novels such as *Foucault’s Pendulum* (1989) and *The Prague Cemetery* (2011) exemplify his being steeped in a medieval aesthetic suffused with beauty, consonance, and proper proportion.

Both the literary and scholarly contributions of Professor Eco rest upon the philosophical foundations that formed the medieval European worldview. In a slim but weighty volume that Eco that Yale University Press reissued as *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages* (1986), his reverence for medieval aesthetics shines brightly. He writes, for example, of the ideally proportioned *homo quadratus* of Pythagorean cosmology that found its way into the famed drawing by Leonardo as “Vitruvian Man.”

Beauty as it was understood during the medieval age assumed the existence of objective criteria integral to heightened aesthetic experience. In *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas* (1988), Eco dared to invoke the concept of “consonance” as articulated in *De Institutione Musica* by Boethius. The insights of Boethius in turn inspired the development of music theory by Pythagoras that formed the basis of the Western tonal system while exerting an influence on literary classics by both Dante and Chaucer.

Against the gleeful corruptors of beauty, proportion, and harmony of that today are making their final push to consolidate total power under the guise of a global health crisis of their own making, I am revisiting the inestimable contributions of the classical humanists. With all its vices, sins, poxes, and plagues, even the most devious of the medieval alchemists would have envisioned the horrific expressions of destructive energy that now have become routine in the prosecution of the undeclared Cybernetics war on humanity. With the inauguration of *Lena’s Fabulous Frequencies*, I join battle against the destructive forces now on the move against all sentient creatures and the natural world.

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