

Nefer

The Aesthetic Ideal in Classical Egypt

Willie Cannon-Brown



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Dedicated to

*My parents
Robert and Joanna Cannon*

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Chapter One

Introduction

Extensive works have been undertaken on the study of ancient Egypt from anthropological and archeological perspectives. Some of these works include the writing system (hieroglyphics), art, architecture, sculpture, models, pyramids, temples, and tombs, mummification, and the daily lives of Egyptians. A large body of literature focuses on religion. Even though Serge Sauneron (1960) and others recognized that to understand ancient Egypt, it was necessary to understand other African cultures; no studies have been conducted on the aesthetics of ancient Egypt from an Afrocentric perspective.

Aesthetics, derived from the Greek work *aisthētikos*, generally means a sense of perception. Alexander Baumgarten (1714–1762) was “the first to coin the term Aesthetica and to use it to connote a “special science” in his dissertation on nature of beauty in poetry. Some early contributors to the field of aesthetics include Plato, Aristotle, Giambattista Vico (1668–1744), Immanuel Kant, and Benedetto Croce (1856–1952). Later writers on the nature of beauty include Hans-Georg Gadamer (1977/1986), Wassily Kandinsky (1977), and S. (Subrahmanyam) Chandrasekhar (1987) and Kariamu Welsh-Asante (1994).

The aim of this work is to use an African methodology, specifically the Dogon methodology, to discover the aesthetic ideal in ancient Egypt. *Giri so* (fore-word), *benne so* (side-word), *bolo so* (back-word), and *so dayi* (clear-word), are the four degrees of word knowledge.

To apply the *giri so* level to this study, it is necessary to examine existing literature. Chapter Two deals with a review of the aesthetic tradition. The next level, *benne so*, requires using information from *giri so* to reveal new knowledge. The application of this level is the identification of Afrocentric elements for methodological consideration, which are delineated in Chapter Three. The meaning of the Divine, the Beautiful from an African perspective discussed in Chapter Four uses knowledge from the two levels

to reveal *bolo so* (back-word). *So dayi* (clear-word) is achieved at the end of the final investigation. Chapter Five deals with the internal framework that will lead to comprehensive view of the aesthetic ideal in ancient Egypt from inside. The word Egypt can be traced to Amarna “Hikuptah.” Notice ptah, the god responsible for naming things and the god of crafts, is included in this word. Aigyptos from Greek and Egypte from French are more familiar terms to identify ancient Egypt but the people themselves used the word *Kmt* (Kemet). Kemet is the term used to refer to the country, and the people of Kemet are referred to as Kemetians.

The proposition is that the aesthetic ideal in Kemet is the divine concepts of *maat* (truth and justice) and *nefer* (beauty, perfection, and goodness). Although it has been said that *nefer* is one of the most used words in the language, the people of Kemet did not leave a definitive definition of beauty; *maat* and *nefer* are apparent ideal themes in the style of life for people of Kemet.

RATIONALE

Early European scholars, forerunners of modern anthropology, established the paradigm of anthropology by observing phenomena and recording their observations. Champollion the Younger, a Frenchman who deciphered the hieroglyphics from the Rosetta Stone in 1822, and other European scholars have contributed to a lens through which one knows or learns what the Kemetians said and how they lived their daily lives. However, it has been since the 1960s that Africans have undertaken a study of ancient life and culture; so new insight has been gained about the true understanding of the language, life, and culture of the Kemetians. The aesthetic ideal of Kemetians and how aesthetics is influenced by their values and beliefs and manifested in their daily lives is one area that remains to be investigated.

Molefi Kete Asante (1991), as quoted by Ama Mazama (2003), defines Afrocentricity as “the study of the ideas and events from the standpoint of Africans as the key players rather than victims” (p. 5). This study is a study of Kemetetic aesthetic philosophy; therefore, the use of the Afrocentric paradigm is necessary. It will add to the body of literature that will help to “rescue and reconstruct ancient history and culture as part of African history and culture” (Cheik Anta Diop 1981, p.12).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Although a number of studies have looked into the various ways the Kemetians viewed art, there is no adequate Afrocentric understanding of what

constituted Kemetian aesthetics. Most studies of Kemet have used an anthropological and archeological lens to examine the lives of the people of Kemet. Writers who have been interested in the archaeological or anthropological aspect of the society have not ventured into the causes of the failure of the society conceivably rooted in the spiritual decay of the community. Thus, the problem is how to gain an insight into this process. A number of questions can be formulated to reach a conclusion. What constituted Kemetian aesthetics? Why did the Kemetian civilization fail? Was the failure caused by a decay of spirituality in the behaviors of royalty and/or the society at large? Was it a breakdown of the divine aesthetic ideal in the society?

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between *maat* and *nefer*, i.e. (perfection, goodness and beauty), and *maat* (truth and justice) in both social character and the aesthetic ideal in Kemetian life. It is no secret that *maat* and *nefer* were concurrently tangibly manifested in the Kemetian pyramids, temples, tombs, obelisks, and system of writing. Moreover, *neferu* is obvious in the elaborate rituals, festivals, business affairs, governmental affairs, military affairs, and personal adornment of the gods, as well as in the behaviors of living and transcended humans.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

An extensive investigation of *nfru (neferu)* and *maat* as the ancient Africans in Kemet's aesthetic ideal can be investigated on individual aspects of the society. *Maat* and *nfru (neferu)*, or the aesthetic ideal, is a complex ancient African philosophical concept that is boundless, interrelated and circular. This study will treat the aesthetic ideal from a holistic perspective rather than examine isolated parts of a whole. For the Africans in ancient Kemet, the Greek definition of aesthetic does not sufficiently describe the African concept of beauty; hence, the concept *nfru (neferu) and maat will be used throughout the study to replace the Greek word aesthetics, derived from aisthētiko.*

Chapter Two

The Aesthetic Tradition: A Review

HISTORY OF AESTHETICS

Aesthetics, derived from the Greek word *aisthētikos*, means “of sense perception.” Perception is how individuals think, feel, and make decisions based on, for the most part, the thoughts and feelings of the group to which they belong. This sense of perception comes out of the lower right quadrant of the brain, which governs emotions about tastes and feelings that are attributed to beauty in a creative or imaginative activity, especially the expressive arrangement of elements within a medium.

Although Plato (427–387 B.C.) was the first to express a need for standards of beauty in artistic expressions as a philosophical problem in Greece after his visit to Egypt, the term *aesthetica* was first coined and used by Alexander Baumgarten (1714–1762) in his doctoral dissertation on the nature of poetry, published in 1735. So the quest to understand the nature of truth and beauty in Western art forms ensues.

Benedetto Croce (1856–1952), an Italian philosopher, credits Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) as “the first discoverer of aesthetic science.” Croce, however, “made the field itself of aesthetics philosophically respectable, as a result of his having made an excellent case for its primacy in the understanding of human life.” (Romanell 1965 p. ix) For Croce, philosophy is defined as the “Methodology of historiography.” (xxiv) Croce’s aesthetic philosophy is spiritual in nature; hence, for him the first phase of the spirit corresponds to aesthetic form, the second to its logic, the third to its economy, and fourth to its ethic.

In Part I of his book, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1977/1986) explicates the relevance of the beautiful in art as play, symbol, and festival. In Part II, he addresses the festive character of theater, composition and interpretation, image and gesture, the speechless image, art and imitation, on the

contribution of poetry to the search for truth, poetry and mimesis. He also discusses the play of art, philosophy and poetry, aesthetic and religious experience and intuition and vividness.

Wassily Kandinsky (1977) in his book, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, examines the spiritual revolution in art, the psychological working of color, the language and form of color, and finally, art and artists.

S. (Subrahmanyam) Chandrasekhar's (1987) book, *Truth and Beauty: Aesthetics and Motivations in Science*, is a collection of lectures that deal with questions of aesthetics and motivation, the aesthetic base of the general theory of relativity, and the final lecture deals specifically with "Beauty and the Quest for Beauty in Science." The major themes in the lectures are the quest for beauty in science and the origin of the different patterns of creativity in the arts and in the sciences.

WESTERN CONCEPT OF BEAUTY

Beauty . . . How is it defined? How are standards set to judge the value of beauty? Who sets the standards for how beauty is to be perceived? The etymology of a relatively modern word (c. 1275) beauty, from the Latin word *bellus*, suggests judgments of appearances, especially of women and children. One abstract definition of beauty is for the greater part, some quality in bodies acting mechanically upon the human mind by the intervention of the senses. Another definition is combined perfection of form and charm of coloring as affords keen pleasure to other senses, e.g. sight or hearing. A concrete definition of beauty is "A beautiful person or thing; esp. a beautiful woman." It is also used colloquially to mean an exceptionally good specimen of something. The concrete meaning "a beautiful woman" is first recorded in 1483. The definition of the word beauty has been expanded and applied in several ways.

After careful consideration of beauty as a philosophical concept, George Santayana (1955) calls

the "philosophy of beauty a theory of values" . . ."the definition that should really define must be nothing less than the exposition of the origin, place, and elements of beauty as an object of human experience. We must learn from it, as far as possible, why, when, and how beauty appears, what conditions an object must fulfill to be beautiful, what elements of our nature make us sensible of beauty, and what the relation is between the constitution of the object and the excitement of our susceptibility (p. 11).

THE MEANING OF ART

The etymology of the word art “can be traced to the Greek word “*ἀρετή*,” which means excellence of a person, an eminent endowment, property or quality. It also means ability, fitness, solidity, soundness, and proficiency. Socrates linked the meaning of the word “*aretai*” with self-knowledge as well as with moral excellence or virtue.” (John C. S. Kim 1994, p. 20) Art is generally defined as high quality conception or execution found in works of beauty; such as that found in productions such as plastic art, architecture, music, dance, poetry, literature, religion, festival, celebration, science, and religion. Croce (1962) cautions “the doctrine which defines art as the pleasurable has a special name (hedonistic aesthetics) . . . it appeared back in the Greco-Roman world during the period of romanticism, prevalent in the eighteenth century and flourished again in the second half of the nineteenth century. . . .” (p. 11). The intent of medieval art was to educate the followers of the faith; therefore, art and religion as opposing concepts were introduced to the Western world because of the dualism created by Christianity (bear in mind, not by the Greeks) between body and soul. In this context, to invest in one’s body was to take the focus away from the soul; therefore, beauty and art in depictions of the body were deemed profane and sinful.

THE MEANING OF THE BEAUTIFUL FROM AN AFROCENTRIC PERSPECTIVE

In the African context, the concept of beauty and good are synonymous. Dona Marimba Richards (as cited in Welsh-Asante, 1996, p. 73) says, “The meaning of Western aesthetics and standards of beauty implies the development of ‘taste,’ which can be created.” Welsh-Asante (1996) argues that “Aesthetics reflects and expresses cosmology, sometimes explicitly” like those in the Kemetian creation scene and “as in the headdress of the *Gelede* (Nigeria) and sometimes only by implication. Explicit in the cosmology are symbols that permit us to follow the patterns that connect or tie it to the general aesthetic (p. 16).” Welsh-Asante has selected the *Kiswahili* word *Nzuri*, which means good and beautiful, to talk about African aesthetics. *Kiswahili* and other African languages use the same word to refer to the concept of beauty and good interchangeably. *Iwa* is the Yoruba word for good and beautiful. For example, one might say *Ōlẹwā*, which means s/he is beautiful and has good conduct and is reflected in selected African languages such as Igbo, Aja, Nhosa, Lingala, Fon and can be used to show evidence of linguistic and cultural connections to ancient Kemet. In his essay,

“*Mpai*: Libation Oratory,” Abu Shardow Abarry points out that for the Ga people of West Africa “to be good or moral then is to do things that bring dignity, satisfaction, respect, peace, happiness and prosperity to fellow humans and the community” (as cited in Welsh-Asante 1996, p. 88). African character is beautiful character. Good character and physical beauty are logically concatenated.

One example of the African concept of feminine beauty is found in Sylvia Ardyn Boone’s (1986) study of feminine beauty among Mende females. Beauty for the Mende is physical, metaphysical, and an historical fact. “Beauty as a concept in Mende thought operates on three planes of existence—in the world of spirit, in the world of nature, and in the life of humans. . . . *Haenjo* is the person who in her appearance most approximates the canons of perfection.” *Nyande* means both to be good and to be beautiful. Women are expected to be beautiful, graceful, delicate, curvaceous, pretty, clean, fresh, perfumed, groomed and adorned. Moreover, they are expected to be good, kind, sweet, patient, gentle, modest, loving, helpful, cheerful, honest, and understanding (Boone 1986, pp. 129–138). An Igbo woman said that in her culture beautiful would never be used to describe a woman’s physical beauty if she displayed what the community determined to be bad character.

Another example of the concept of African beauty is further illustrated when Malidoma Patrice Somé (1994) writes:

His [the priest of the earth shrine] appearance was unearthly . . . *Kyééré* had abandoned any notion of external aesthetics, but one could see beneath the surface of his wasted body a spirit far more beautiful than any representation of the divine. The experience of such a spirit made me disregard the ugliness of his body as something superfluous to the expression of beauty, integrity, honesty, and genuine life that glowed all around him.

Kyééré was an old man, so Somé says he abandoned any notion of external aesthetics, not that he never paid attention to outer appearances. Somé continues to ponder how outward beauty is viewed and what it really reflects about the reality of lives (p. 184).

TRADITIONAL AFRICAN ART

Willie Abraham (1962) helps in understanding the role of Kemetian “art” in the people’s lives when he talks about Akan art form:

The Akan expressed their philosophico-religious idea through art, through the timeless, immemorial, silent, and elemental power so characteristic of African traditional art. Indeed this is the main reason why it was not lifelike in a representational sense. Forms had to be distorted. In art there was a moral-philosophical preoccupation, which led it to portray forces of the world. To portray a force, it was essential that it should not be treated like something assimilated, and consequently like something overcome, as the rendering of it in lifelike figures would have been (p. 111). Moreover, Kofi Awoonor, (1976) says, “It is in the relationship between man and the first ancestor, the Creator, that art becomes a proper instrument of man’s world and an expression of the world beyond the grave” (p. 54).

In an article titled “Elements of the African Aesthetic” (The Global Gallery Online, 2004, May) presents four elements of the African aesthetic:

The first element is the **resemblance to a human being**: African artists praise a carved figure by saying that it “looks like a human being.” Artists seldom portray particular people, actual animals, or the actual form of invisible spirits. Rather, they aim to portray ideas about reality, spiritual or human, and express these ideas through human or animal images. The next element is **luminosity**. The lustrously smooth surface of most African figural sculpture, often embellished with decorative scarification, indicates beautifully shining, healthy skin. Figures with rough surfaces and deformities are intended to appear ugly and morally flawed. The third element is **self-composure**. The person who is composed behaves in a measured and rational way; he or she is controlled, proud, dignified, and cool. The final element is **youthfulness**. A youthful appearance connotes vigor, productiveness, fertility, and ability to labor. Illness and deformity are rarely depicted because they are signs of evil.

For this discourse, it is useful to recognize that Western philosophical nomenclature leaves room for a worldview without God as the beginning of existence; therefore, Western philosophical nomenclature is inadequate to examine and explain concepts within an African worldview. In an article published online titled “Locating a text: Implication of Afrocentric Theory,” Molefi Kete Asante argues: “words have function, meaning, and etymology.” For Cheikh Anta Diop (1981), “in order to understand a people, it is necessary to understand three cultural factors—historical, linguistic, and psychological” (pp. 211–219); hence, it is imperative that vocabulary from African languages be selected and defined to describe

African Phenomena. African vocabulary and the origin of African worldview must be sought and explained despite difficulty. Moreover, Somé's (1994) position is that "it is difficult to talk about things from an African perspective in a language that has a very different mindset about reality" (p. 2). African languages ought to be used to describe African phenomena; so from this juncture on, the African word *nefer* will be the primary term used to refer to the philosophical notion of aesthetics, beauty, and/or good and *maat* in social and moral form.

Considering that the classical starting point for Afrocentric inquiry is ancient Kemet, there is no better place to begin an inquiry than to examine and explain the philosophical foundation of various genres of art/beauty under the umbrella of African aesthetics. For Afrocentric scholars, the discussion of whether Egypt is Africa is a moot point; so Welsh-Asante (1996) simply states, "There can be no distinction between Egyptian Art and African Art. Egyptian Art is African Art, and African Art encompasses Egyptian Art. It is historically and culturally accurate to include Egypt in Africa" (p. 14). This very same sentiment applies to aspects of beauty, both tangible and intangible. One cannot speak of the philosophy of aesthetics "beauty" within Kemetian culture without talking about the cosmological beliefs and traditions of the Kemetian people. Théophile Obenga (1992) takes a strong stand for Egypt as a perfect model of artistic and intellectual organization.

Art (sculpture, painting, music, dance, etc.) is codified in such a way that it can play a high social and moral function. Obenga says, "This attitude emerges clearly from The Laws II, 656d. The beautiful figures, the beautiful melodies are rigorous, "exemplary" models, and it is strictly forbidden to revolutionize or to imagine in an unorthodox manner other models contrary to the ancestral canons, contrary to *Maât*." He says further, "This is in fact a highly philosophical problem: the strict regulation of art, the calendar established according to the festivals of the gods, the consecration of every dance and all music, and the Egyptian educative methods. . . ."

"Beauty is in the eye of the beholder," since taste in what is perceived to be beautiful is created by shared thoughts and feelings of the majority of members belonging to specific groups, i.e. cultures.

GENERAL FRAMEWORK OF THE ROLE OF MAAT

Vincent Tobin (1989), Meeks and Favard-Meeks (1993) stress *Maât* as divine or cosmic order established at the time of creation. Their work will serve as the foundation for the investigation of *Maât* for this study. Meeks

and Favard-Meeks quote from Coffin Text 2 regarding the origins of life. “. . . The Primeval Ocean replies to the creator-god: Kiss your daughter *Mā'et*, put her to your nose, that your heart may live, for she will not be far from you; your daughter *Mā'et* is your daughter and your son is *Shu* whose name lives. Eat of your daughter *Mā'et* ; it is your son *Shu* who will raise you up” (p. 14). Here *Maāt* is depicted as the giver of life, the breath of life. *Rā*, the solar god, lived by *Maāt*, i.e. Truth and Justice. Furthermore, the following inscriptions from temples and tombs will set the stage for understanding the many interrelated and interdependent roles of *Maāt*.

In an inscription from the tomb of Queen Taouset (feminine Pharaoh) and Sethnakht, her successor (tomb n° 14, The Valley of the Kings, Thebes) *Maāt* is called the lady of the sky (*M3ct nebet pet*), i.e. universe. In another inscription from Sety I (1291–1278 B.C.E.), Tomb KV17, The Valley of the Kings, Thebes reads “*Maāt*, daughter of *Rā*, lady of heaven, mistress of gods,” i.e. forces and powers. Finally, an inscription from the Temple of Sety I (1291–1278 B.C.E.) at Abydos, Upper Egypt reads: “*Maāt*, daughter of *Rā* (*sat Rā*), lady of heaven (*nbt pr*), and mistress of the land (*hnwt n t3*).”

The glyph is the same for truth as it for justice. However, E. A. Wallis Budge (1920) defines *Maāt* as “a goddess, the personification of law, order, rule, truth, right, righteousness, canon, justice, straightness, integrity, uprightness, and of the highest conception of physical and moral law known to the Egyptian” (p. 271).

P. Johnson’s (1999) work recognizes *Maāt* as the guiding principles of law, order, justice and morality. Johnson says:

”Their word for right order was *Maāt*, which also stood for justice and morality. The pharaoh embodied *Maāt*, and also dispensed it. His divinity enabled him to determine what was *Maāt* and what was not . . . *Maāt* was also the form of justice dispensed when a man died and appeared at the last judgment: his soul was then weighed in a pair of scales against *Maāt*. There was, in short, a very close association in the Egyptian’s mind between moral goodness, mundane justice, and artistic order. To break an artistic canon, to infringe pharaoh’s law or to sin against god were similar activities; all were a denial of *Maāt* (p. 50).

Jan Assmann (2002/1996) explains the axiology of style and canons. Canonization is valuable to a society since it is “the institutionalization of permanence, a strategy for foiling time, and hence one of the most favored cultural techniques for constructing a specific chronotope” (p. 65).

In *The Ancient Gods Speak*, Paul John Frandsen (as cited by Redford 2002) delineates the dichotomy between *maat* and *bwt*, (good and evil) both forces present from creation of the universe. *Maat* represent things good, world order, true, plenty and abundance of food, whereas *bwt* (abomination) was considered things not *maat*. “If nourishment is *maat*, then excretion becomes *bwt*.” All things that were not *maat* were deemed *bwt*; the king, as god, was empowered to render acts *bwt* to restore the original world order in the society (pp. 350–351).

Further, Frandsen (2002) points out that the concept of *bwt* could be followed for more than two millennia—at the end of which time coincided with the Greco-Roman period. During the transition between the Old and Middle Kingdom, Kemetians found it necessary to focus on the problems of *bwt*. In earlier times, visitors who experienced *bwt* were not permitted to visit temples and tombs because of the harmful impact on the dead or gods; however, during the Middle Kingdom, *bwt* became detrimental to both living and dead.

Boyo Ockinga (1983) says, “The monarch was responsible for the maintenance of *Maāt*—the order of the universe, both cosmic and social, as established by the creator at creation—that included the maintenance of the relationship between the gods and humankind.”

Cyril Aldred (1987) identified the divine attributes of the goddess *Ma’et* as “creative utterance, superhuman, understanding, and rightness” (p. 177).

In *The Mind of Egypt*, Assmann (2002/1996) proposes to translate *ma’at* as “connective justice.” Even though *ma’at* was used in many Old Kingdom texts, it was not until the Middle Kingdom that the term was more clearly delineated. The role of *maāt* in one’s personal life was documented in a royal inscription from the Thirteenth Dynasty (ca. 1700 BCE), which established reciprocity for the individual. The inscription cited by Assmann reads: “The reward of one who does something lies in something being done for him. This is considered by god as *ma’at*.” Assmann translates *ma’at* as connective justice—since “In this conceptual universe, justice is what holds the world together, and it does so by connecting consequences with deeds” . . . but also links “individuals to his or her fellows.” Connective justice as translated by Assmann was evident in the political system, in pharaonic Kingship, wrath and love, force, magic, equality, and finally, in the hereafter (pp. 143–168). *Maāt* was included in offering rituals.

In the words of Christian Jacq (1955) “Magic was considered to be a primordial activity by the state of Egypt. The books of magic . . . were rather the work of official institutions such as the House of Life . . . One of the first objectives of magic, in fact, is to protect the pharaoh from all

negative influences. The first principle of magic is the necessity of making offerings to the gods . . .”Give *Maāt* (universal harmony) to the Master of *Maāt* (the Creator)” (p. 8). Jacq depicts the role of *Maāt* in elaborate rituals and spells for the preparation of the Pharaoh, the King magician. Among the demands of the ritual as laid down in the Book of the Heavenly Cow found written in columns of hieroglyphs in the Royal Tombs of the New Kingdom: . . .”a picture of the goddess *Maāt* (Universal Harmony) painted in fresh ink on his tongue.” When all the rituals and spells have been carried out, the magician enters ‘the chamber of the two *Maats*,’ (that is the two truths, cosmic and human)” (p. 37) to make his offering.

In contrast, Joyce Tyldesley, (1996) defines the role of *Maāt* as “an abstract concept” used by Egyptians to represent “the ideal state of the universe and everyone in it; the status quo, or correct order, which had been established by the gods at the time of creation and which had to be maintained to placate the gods. . . .” To better understand the concept of *Maāt*, Tyldesley quotes David O’Connor’s (1983) definition of *Maāt* in *Ancient Egypt: a social history*.

The appropriate arrangement of the universe and human . . . Centuries old by the time of the New Kingdom, the concept of *Maāt* was a crystallization of a myriad of religious and secular ideas, and its continuity depended upon their continuity; nevertheless, its very existence as a formalized statement of Egyptian beliefs helped to perpetuate the ideas and attitudes on which it was based (p. 8).

The *Maāt* principle or concord, for Sergio Donadoni (1997, pp. 132–133) “describes the balance between the visible world and that of the gods.” The role of the king was to “ensure benevolence to the country over which he governed by means of cult activities and the presentation of offerings in the temples.” *Maāt* is an ecological ideal that can be seen through Donadoni’s interesting point which states:

Nature and state both share *Maāt* as their common basis, which is binding for all social levels, including that of the king, and on which justice, truth, and all cosmic and social life are founded. This notion is evidenced in creatively designed buildings and pyramids, which do not violate nature. Actually they seem to be a part of nature (p. 311).

While T. G. H. James’ (2003) book, *Pharaoh’s People: Scenes from Life in Imperial Egypt* does not focus on a philosophical concept of *Ma’at* specifically, it does illustrate how *Ma’at* is incorporated in the daily affairs

of the people on all stratum of the society. In his chapter titled “Justice for Everybody,” he depicts the moral and ethical ideal of *Ma’at*. In what he calls “the semi-autobiographical text found in the tomb on the south wall of the transverse hall of the visir, Rekhmire,” he illustrates Rekhmire’s devotion to *Maāt*. James says that Rekhmire’s autobiography exemplifies “ideas of justice, charity, understanding and kindness which formed the guiding ethic of Egyptian public life . . . Ideas of vengeance and retribution are subdued almost to the point of disappearance.” The text reads:

The hereditary prince, steward of stewards, master of the secrets, who goes into the sanctuary, from whom the god keeps nothing excluded; there is nothing he does not know in heaven or earth or in any secret place in the underworld . . . He says: ‘I was a noble, being second with the king . . . occupying a forward position in the privy chamber, praised at every moment . . . first in the estimation of the ordinary people . . . I was called again into the presence of the good god, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Menkheperre [Tuthmosis III] . . . His majesty opened his mouth and spoke his words before me . . .’ You should act according to all that I say and *Ma’at* (Truth and Order) will rest in her place” . . . I acted according to his orders . . . Now I was the heart of the Lord, may he live, be prosperous and healthy, the ears and eyes of the Sovereign. Truly I was his very own skipper; I knew not sleep by night as by day . . . I raised up *Ma’at* to the heights of heaven; I made her beauty circulate over the breadth of the land, so that she rested in their [i.e. men’s] nostrils like the north wind when it has driven out evil from heart and body. I judged both [the insignificant] and the influential; I rescued the weak man from the strong man; I deflected the fury of the evil man and subdued the greedy man in his hour . . . I succored the widow who had no husband; I established the son and heir on the seat of his father. I gave [bread to the hungry], water to the thirsty, and meat, oil and clothes to him who had nothing . . . I was not at all deaf to the indigent. Indeed I never took a bribe from anyone . . . (pp. 56–57).

In business and political matters, bribery is in violation of *maat*. Mariam Stead (1986) says, “All metals were precious to the ancient Egyptians.” In a workshop, from the tomb of Apuki and Nebamum at Thebes, the head of *Maāt*, the goddess of truth, crowns the balance beam “to ensure that the metal is weighed truly” (p. 36). Beyond the notion of simply weighing for accuracy, the conclusion can be drawn that in matters of business, *maat* (truth and justice) prevailed.

Maulana Karenga (2003) points out that “a basic conceptual pillar in *Maatian* anthropology is the sociality of humans.” In autobiographies such as Rekhmire’s as well as the priest *Wr-huu* in the Fifth Dynasty “one begins one’s moral self-presentations by first locating oneself in community and then declaring what one has done worthy and who benefits from it and bears witness to it.” The self-presentation (autobiography) of *Wr-huu* (Urk. I:46.8ff) cited by Karenga begins: “I descended from my district. I spoke truth there. I did justice there. I never did what was harmful to people.”

Asante (1990) views *Ma’at* as:

proper relationship between a human person and another person. Thus, *Ma’at* means that which perfectly established, fixed in the position of good because it possesses the quality of a force, energy which regulates the relationship of the universe. So the kings of Egypt were not *merely* [emphasis mine] kings, they were the embodiment of the concept of *Ma’at*, and the goddess *Ma’at* stood with them so long as they stood with *Ma’at*. They did not have empirical testing and quantification of the type often thought of today; they had evidence of the truth in the proper relationship of things, in the propriety of human beings to the order maintained by the gods.

Therefore, our understanding of *Ma’at* in the Kemetic tradition is predicated on our appreciation for the concept of order, measure, limit, and form; that is, form in the sense of order and justice. *Ma’at* confirmed the stability of society and nature (p. 90).

Karenga’s monumental work, *Maat: An Ethical Ideal* (2003) deals with *maat* as an ethical philosophical concept. His work focuses on the *Declarations of Innocence of the Book of Coming Forth by Day*, the *Declarations of Virtues*, the *Sebait* (The Instructions) and the *Book of Khun-Anup*. After a thorough historical investigation of *Maatian* ethics, Karenga concludes:

There is no separation in conduct and character in African Ethics. Rather, there is interrelatedness and interactiveness between the two. Thus, in *Maatian* ethics the deed is also central. But the deed is both rooted in and reflective of character. One must do *Maat*, speak *Maat*, and practice *Maat* in one’s character . . . *Maatian* moral literature states that the good deed is the will of God and essential to the creation and maintenance of the good person and the good society (p. 330).

In this same text, Karenga discusses the ontological anchor of *Maat*. He says, “the world grounded in *Maat* and ruled by *Maat* was a realm

of positiveness and possibilities especially for righteous. As the ground of being, *Maat* was goodness and beauty (*nfrw*) which embrace the entirety of existence.” Hence, from an ontological stance, *Maat* can be understood as an aesthetic ideal.

In *Icons of Maāt*, Obenga (1996) reveals five realities of *Maāt*, which encompass “all the spheres of reality.” These realities include the divine or sacred world, the cosmos or the universe, the state or the governance, the society or the human community (humanity), the human being (family). Each of these realities has five dimensions of significance, i.e. religious, cosmic, political, social, and anthropological. He says, “The five realities have together 125 dimensions of significance. One hundred twenty-five (125) is *Maāt*’s number.” For Obenga, *Maāt* is philosophical and spiritual and interrelated. He goes on to say that “Egyptian people built a civilization connected to the sacred world, to the entire cosmos, to their temporal and spiritual leaders, (priests and priestesses) and to **ankh** (life), **udja** (prosperity), **aut-ib** (joy), **neferu** (beauty), **merut** (love), **hotep** (peace), **seneb** (health), **sa** (protection), **djedet** (durability), **was** (power), **djet neheh** (forever and ever)” (pp. 93–94).

Some major works on Egypt have discussed in some detail the role of art and aesthetics in Kemet. Obenga reminds us that “Egyptian symbolism always emphasized the perpetuation of life” (p. 47). Rundle Clark (1978) (as cited by Graham Hancock and Robert Bauval 1996) suggested “that Egyptian art ‘is nearly all symbolism,’ that ‘the architectural arrangements and decorations were a kind of mythical landscape’ worked down to the last detail, and that everything had a meaning”:

The shrine [tomb or pyramid complex] of the god [king], for instance, was the ‘Horizon,’ the land of glorious light beyond the dawn horizon where the gods dwelt. The temple was an image of the universe as it now existed and, at the same time, the land on which it stood was the Primeval Mound which arose from the waters of the Primeval Ocean at Creation . . . At the close of the daily temple service, the priests raised a small figure of *Maāt* (the goddess of Law and Order) in front of the divine image. This act was meant to assert that rightness and order had been re-established, but it was also a repetition of an event that took place at the beginning of the world . . . of some mythical happening in the time of the gods . . . (p. 141).

In his discussion of the structure of temples, Richard H. Wilkinson (1994) illustrates the aesthetic relation of *Maāt* to temples when he says, “The elevated position of the temple’s innermost area also symbolized the

relation of the structure to *Maāt*—the underlying “order” upon which the world rested. For although the fact has rarely been considered, the ramps and stairways leading up to the temple’s entrance and its inner sections formed visual reminders of the ramps or plinths upon which statues of the gods were placed—and which were made in the form of the hieroglyph used to write the word *Maāt*” (p. 28). Obenga (1996) sheds light on the structure of temples and their aesthetic relationship to *Maāt* when he writes:

In order to create the temple as a spiritual space, Pharaoh was required to determine four corners of the temple in relation to specific stars. The ceiling of the temples was decorated with stars and constellations as a duplication of heaven. So the temple was constructed based on the principles of *Maat*—Cosmic order and reality, divine truth and human conduct, which brings about balance between heaven and earth (p. 2).

Furthermore, Johnson (1999) points out that “Since art was ordered by a geometrical sense, it is therefore not surprising—almost inevitable—that its supreme expression, to the Egyptians should have been that purest of solid geometrical forms, the pyramid, a symbol for them at one and the same time of *Maāt* or order, of pharaonic status and of eternity (p. 51).

“The symbolic use of gesture is among the most fascinating and important aspects of the symbolism inherent in ancient Egyptian art. . . .” (Wilkinson, 1994, p. 198). Henry Fischer provides an example gesture when he shows the symbol of the King making an offering: “I give you *Maāt* with my left hand, my right hand protecting her” (As quoted in Wilkinson, 1994). In fact,

Many scenes depict the king offering a small figure of this goddess, who personified the qualities of truth, justice, and order before the supreme deities of the land. Because this quality was regarded as one of the gods’ supreme gifts to humanity, it was incumbent upon the king as shepherd and protector of the people to preserve and foster *Maāt* and to return her to the gods—or at least vouch for her continued existence—for the absence of *Maāt* would result in chaos, evil, and unrest in the cosmos (p. 175).

In Sacred Sexuality in Ancient Egypt: The Erotic Secrets of the Forbidden Papyrus, Ruth Schumann Antelme and Stéphane Rossini (1999/2001) contribute another reason why the king offers *Maāt* during divine worship. *Maāt* is another [emanation] of the Sun, symbol of balance and the cosmic

plan, of which he is the guardian on earth. They say, “The ‘heretical’ pharaoh, Amen-hotep IV (Akhenaten), expressed this interaction even more forcefully” (p. 52).

Maāt was also mistress of the Other World (*Imenett “the West”*), where she also had authority. Among the finger rings found on the royal mummy of Tut’ankhamūn, Wilkinson (1971) says a “massive gold (ring) with the bezel in the form of a cartouche on which is engraved a portrait of the king kneeling on a neb-sign meaning ‘Lord,’ and offering a figure of *Maāt*” (p. 131). Even in the Place of Truth (set *Maāt*), Tut’ankhamūn as *akhu*, i.e. a “splendid spirit,” gives *Maāt* to the Lord of *Maāt*.

There are no works that deal with the relationship between *maat* and *nefer* and the aesthetic ideal. After a careful review of the literature in Egyptology and Kemetology, this researcher has found no works that adequately address this issue. However, there are a number of works that have dealt with the role of *Maāt*, while others have discussed aesthetics in Kemet from a Western anthropological platform.

Chapter Three

Afrocentric Elements: A Methodological Consideration

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE APPROACH

In *Kemet, Afrocentricity, and Knowledge*, Asante (1990) suggests three key elements that make up a cultural framework, which will allow a reader to discover specific aspects of African Culture. First is the **epistemic** element, which includes ethics, politics, and psychology (modes of behavior). Second is the **scientific** element, which includes history, linguistics, and economics (methods of investigation). And third is the **artistic** element, which includes icons, art, motifs, and symbols (types of presentation) (p. 20). These elements are evident in the study of African cultural framework, yet they interact in a harmonious way so that all of these isolated elements may be intertwined in a single episode.

Worldview, which is a caveat of culture, helps people to determine how they fit into a larger scheme of things, e.g. the universe and how things are ordered and arranged in the universe. Ontology, epistemology, cosmology, and axiology are Western philosophical nomenclatures that are used to examine the African worldview. Cosmology, for example, explains the origin and structure of the universe. Ontology seeks to explain the notion of existence. This branch of philosophy poses questions like, “Do things really exist and how they came to exist?” Epistemology helps to locate knowledge and truth in issues and answers to questions like, “How do we know what we know?” Axiology helps to determine the worthiness of things. These terms have been useful as a beginning point for dealing with the abstract elements of a people’s culture. Western philosophical nomenclature is inadequate, though, to examine and explicate African worldview and delineate implications between Africans in antiquity and contemporary society. Western philosophical nomenclature leaves room for a worldview without God

as the beginning of existence. This can never be a reality for the African Kemetic consciousness as evidenced by the Kemetic concept of *nfr* (*nefer*) “beauty, perfection and goodness.”

Asante argues for three major classifications or categories, i.e. cultural/aesthetic, social/behavioral, and policy issues, of inquiry for the Africologist (1990, pp. 18–19). Since *nfr* (*nefer*) is embedded in Kemetic cosmology, which is reflected in all aspects of Kemetic life, this study will examine how the concept of *nfr* is one thread which runs through all the classifications.

METHODOLOGY

Afrocentric methodology is rooted in the idea that all discussions of African history, art, culture, and motif must be centered in the context of African people. Consequently, the centrality of the African context has been established to yield an understanding of the relationship between *Maat* and *nefer* as the aesthetic ideal. After reviewing the options for gaining access to information regarding the question of beauty, the method first articulated in Asante’s (1990) work, *Kemet, Afrocentricity, and Knowledge*, is necessary to provide meaning in this African project.

In *Kemet, Afrocentricity, and Knowledge*, Asante suggests three key elements that make up a cultural framework which will allow a reader to discover specific aspects of African Culture; therefore, aspects of the epistemic, the scientific, and the artistic elements will be applicable in this study. According to Asante, the epistemic element includes ethics, politics, and psychology; hence, modes of behavior. The scientific element includes history, linguistics, and economics; hence, methods of investigation. The artistic element includes icons, art, motifs, and symbols; hence, types of presentation. These three elements represent the framework for my critical analysis of the relationship between *maat* and *nefer* as the aesthetic ideal.

In order to determine what information is conveyed by a historical text or an artistic object, the researcher must have a methodology. Moreover, in order to determine relations between a major concept like *maat* and *nefer* and the aesthetic ideal, it is necessary for the researcher to use methods appropriate to this discourse. Afrocentric methods permit the researcher to define the boundaries and context of the text, object, or relationship within the framework of African centrality. It also allows the researcher to find the proper tools for analysis based upon what is fundamental to African realities, thus, bringing about a richer understanding of the meaning of the object, text, relationship, or subject. The assumptions of this method are:

1. The meaning of a concept is fully the product of its own historical milieu, and the contemporary researcher can only incompletely understand it.
2. Afrocentric methods deny the imposition of Eurocentric claims on African concepts by positing African ideals at the center of the investigation.

Even with these assumptions, the advocate of Afrocentric methodology would not assume that all conventional ideas could be or need to be reinterpreted with Afrocentric methodology. However, it is a fact that all information related to African people that have not been interpreted from the standpoint of Afrocentricity might contain seeds of misorientation and misinterpretation.

Epistemic Elements

Clearly the discussion of the concept of beauty in Kemetic society involves issues of politics, ethics, and the psychology of the culture. This means that the Afrocentric method will be used to help the researcher organize the historical and cultural data in such a way that it can be useful to rendering an interpretation of the relationship between *maat* and *nefer* and the aesthetic ideal within the context of the Kemetic society's ethics, politics, and psychology. What is the meaning, for example, of Nefertum, the god of Perfume, when we understand that "*nefer*" is variously translated as "good," "perfect," and "happy"? How does the concept of *maat* fit into the explanation of the idea of the good as beautiful?

Scientific Elements

What are the methods of investigation? Here it is important that the researcher concentrates on historical and linguistic aspects of the concept. Inasmuch as this is not a historical or linguistic study, the researcher simply must demonstrate an understanding of the large context; that is, macro-text of the discussion of beauty as well as to show an understanding of how the Kemetic people saw the concept and idea of beauty. This involves, as has been discussed, the meaning of the notion of beauty, good, happy, perfect, and so forth. These are ways to apprehend meaning, not studies in and of themselves.

Artistic Elements

Asante sees the artistic element as dealing with types of presentation. What form is the concept presented? It was important for the researcher

to appreciate the difference between form and structure in this study. Although the distinctions can be elusive, clearly “form” was associated in the ancient times with those organic shapes that one sees in nature such as a rose, a star, a lake, a papyrus plant, or a lotus. But structure tends to have the **meaning** of something created or artificially constructed. Thus, the connotation of structure carries with it the idea of something that a person has been involved with in a creative way. The idea of beauty is essentially a constructed idea; hence, icons, motifs, and other created structures must be relied upon to lay bare the use and meaning of beauty in Kemetic society.

Asante argues for three major classifications for African study: cultural/aesthetic, social/behavioral, and policy issues (1990, pp. 8–19). This study falls within the cultural/aesthetic classification and seeks to add to an understanding of the African aesthetic view.

SPECIFIC PROCEDURAL STEPS

The three elements in Asante’s cultural framework analysis will provide the basis for specific procedures in this work, and they are articulated as follows:

Modes of Behavior

The first step for the researcher is to ascertain the general outline of Kemetic political society. This means that the researcher will answer the questions: What chronological periods exist in ancient Kemet? What constituted the main mythological structure of this society? What was the key element in its ethical development? In order to ascertain this information the researcher will explore all of the works in the literature review and additional works as led by the research questions themselves.

Methods of Investigation

Since the study will involve the relationship between *maat* and the aesthetic ideal, it is important that the researcher presents an informed discussion of the meaning of *maat* and *nefer*. Thus, the next step is a critical examination of the relationship between *maat* and the aesthetic ideal in order to provide a historical context for the emergence of this relationship. Therefore, the methods of investigation; that is, the scientific element, will concern the overall historical framework for discussing the relationship, even with definitions and extensions of some terminology. Furthermore, *MDW NTR* is used as a tool for exploring the meaning of aesthetics from an Afrocentric point of view.

Types of Presentation

The third step in the procedure is to examine the role of aesthetics, the meaning of aesthetics in daily life, and the meaning and significance of the divine, the beautiful. This discussion will be based upon both primary and secondary sources that reveal information about the various ways that *maat* and *nefer* are expressed through art, icons, and motifs.

Chapter Four

The Divine, the Beautiful: An African Perspective

According to William A. Foley (1997), “Anthropological linguistics view language through the prism of the core anthropological concept, culture. As such, it seeks to uncover the meaning behind the use” of words (p. 3). The meaning of divine and beautiful then requires a cultural system that will give to it a *so dai* ‘clear-word’ (comprehensive meaning). The people of Kemet left no definitive definition of the divine or the beautiful, only statements and customs of its centrality in their lives. In his book, *Serpent in the Sky*, (as cited in Browder, 1995 p. 105) John Anthony West writes “Egyptian knowledge is always implicit, never explicit.” Consequently, to interpret the meaning of some statements and customs, it is necessary to turn inward toward other more immediately accessible African cultures.

E. Sapir argued (as cited in Foley 1997) that “. . . No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached.” Diop, Obenga, and others have proven through their linguistic studies that language used by the people of Kemet and other African languages plus cultural continuity are sufficiently similar worlds so as to be safe to use motifs from African cultures in general to give specific meaning to social realities in Kemet.

Finally, one major factor to consider when analyzing African data is that of symbolism. “Behind the symbol is the object or vehicle, and behind the vehicle is the definition” (Addison Gayle, Jr., 1971 p. 45). It is the definitions, i.e. the meanings that are internalized and become transformative.

THE DIVINE IN AFRICA

In order for the researcher to adequately reflect the Afrocentric methodology in this study, it is necessary to investigate the meaning for the divine, the beautiful for various topics in selected African societies. A conclusive meaning of the divine, the beautiful from this perspective will ensure greater integrity in analyzing Kemetic phenomena, thus an accurate meaning of the divine, the beautiful in Kemet.

Moreover, the meaning arrived at for the divine, the beautiful will provide the framework for dealing with the meaning and role of aesthetics in daily life in Kemet. Furthermore, to capture an Afrocentric meaning of the divine, the beautiful, agency analysis will be consistently applied where African systems and behaviors will form the core of my investigation.

THE DOGON MODEL

To investigate the aesthetic ideal in Kemet, the Dogon epistemological method of arriving at the truth will be employed because it speaks to us over the African continuum with precision. In *The Pale Fox*, Marcel Griaule and Germaine Dieterlen (1965/1986) tell us how Dogon priests help initiates arrive at knowledge of Dogon philosophy of cosmogony. From an Afrocentric perspective, this is a sound method because it is rooted in African culture and used to study African phenomena. They outline *giri so*, *benne so*, *bolo so*, and *so dai* as four levels or degrees of word knowledge.

The *giri so*, 'fore-word' is a first source of knowledge with simple explanations in which mythical personages are often disguised, their adventures simplified or fantasized, . . . it deals with visible things and deeds, with rituals and modern materials.

The *benne so*, 'side-word,' includes the 'words which were in the *giri so*' and the deeper explanation of certain parts of the rites and representations. Its coordination appears only within the greater division of knowledge, which remains partly unrevealed.

The *bolo so*, 'back-word,' completes the preceding knowledge . . . and furnishes syntheses applicable to greater parts of the whole . . . It does not, however, contain the very secret parts.

The *so dai*, 'clear-word,' concerns itself with the edifice of knowledge in its ordered complexity (pp. 69–70).

Since the people of Kemet left no definitive meaning of *maat* and *nefer*, the search for episteme about an aesthetic ideal must necessarily

begin at the beginning. Therefore, in order to arrive at *so dai*, ‘clear-word,’ in establishing *nefer* and *maat* as the aesthetic ideal in Kemet, the aim in this chapter is threefold: First, I will define *ntry* (divine) and *nfr* (beautiful) as a Kemetic philosophical concept. Subsequently, it is important to establish the role of *maat* and *nefer* as a divine ideal for truth and beauty in abstract and concrete manifestations. Finally, a holistic approach to this issue will delineate and explicate the intrinsic nature of *maat* and *nefer* in the daily lives of the people of Kemet.

It is well recognized that Kemet was a society that sought the sacred in life; hence, the ultimate problem at hand is to arrive at a *so dai* word that explicates the epistemology of the *ntry* (divine) as the force behind the (divine aesthetic) ideal. The epistemology of the aesthetic ideal in Kemet can best be explored using *Maāt*, *Djhuty*, and *nefer* as standards of excellence and goodness. Moreover, the etymology of *Djhuty*, *Maāt*, and *nefer* will help to explain the motivation of Kemetians’ devotion to truth and beauty as themes and ideal norms in the sacred society.

GENERAL FRAMEWORK FOR AFRICAN IDEAL

In the Dogon context, the *giri so*, ‘fore-word’ will deal with visible things and deeds, e.g. definitions available and modern texts written about ancient philosophical concepts. Hence, a simple dictionary definition of divine will be useful to begin discourse on the meaning of the divine.

A common definition of divine, derived from the Latin word *dīvīnus*, means foreseeing. Some adjectives associated with the divine include being a deity; of or relating to a deity; superhuman, godlike, supremely good; magnificent. The verb form of the word means to prophesy through or practice divination. Lexis such as this seems to suggest that only those things chosen from the material world by humans below can be divine. Moreover, the definition of deity, derived from the L. Latin word *deificāre*, means to make a god of; or to worship, exalt. Generally, in modern Western theology, deities are mythological while humans are saints who have been deemed holy, from the Latin word, *sānctus*.

These definitions relating to divine fall short in an African context since Santayana (1955) argues for a definition, “to be nothing less than the exposition of the origin, place, and elements . . .” (p. 11) of divine and beautiful. Furthermore, it should serve some useful purpose. The proposition posited for this discussion, first and foremost, is that the origin of the divine from an African perspective is that the Creator God is the substance and sustenance of all beings; hence, all forms of existence, both abstract and concrete, are divine.

THEMES IN THE AFRICAN FRAMEWORK

The Pale Fox, *Muntu*, *Conversations with Ogotemmêli*, *African Religions and Philosophy*, and the *Breast of the Earth* are sources that will be used to discover general themes in African philosophy to arrive at the *benne so* 'side-word' meaning of the divine.

Humans as Divine

In African "religious" thought, the main motif that seems to emerge is that the first humans are descendants of the Creator God; as such, they partake of the essence of the creator, thereby rendering humans as divine. Regarding humans as divine, in *The African Aesthetic*, (as cited by Welsh-Asante, 1996) Abarry says: "There is no rigid dichotomy between the human and the divine, the sacred and the profane. What makes all this possible is the multi-dimensionality of the African cosmos" (p. 86). Somé (1994) puts it this way, ". . . every person is an incarnation; that is, a spirit who has taken on a body. So our nature is spiritual" (p. 20).

Awoonor (1976) describes traditional African spirituality (religion). He sums up the underlying structure of many traditional African societies that will explain the main motifs in the meaning of the divine. He writes:

The earliest myths of most African peoples are those of the coming of man or of his creation and establish the existence of certain preternatural powers. These powers invariably identified as the primal force, the Creator God, or the all-powerful, summon out of their indeterminate will or create from their own hand the first parents. Man himself derives his essence from the Great Ancestor, The Supreme Deity, and the source of life (pp. 49–50).

This description of the birth of the first "parents," i.e. male and female beings, shows humans partaking of the divine essence from the creator, ultimately they are divine.

John S. Mbiti (1969) outlines five categories of an African anthropocentric ontological existence which is inherent in all African religions.

1. God as the ultimate explanation of the genesis and sustenance of both man and all things.
2. Spirits consists of extra-human beings and the spirits of men who died a long time ago.

3. Man including human beings who are alive and those about to be born.
4. Animals and plants, or the remainder of biological life.
5. Phenomena and objects with biological life.

According to Mbiti, these categories are interrelated and interdependent. To take away one, including God, destroys all the others (pp. 15–16). Here, the Bantu philosophy of *Ntu*, a bounded system which integrates all beings so logically concatenated that to subtract one item from the whole is to paralyze the structure of the whole, is applicable.

J.D. Clarke (1939), Superintendent of Education in Nigeria, outlines the complex Yoruba religious tradition. In his article, he illustrates that the Yoruba believe that humans and animals were created by *Olorun Oloдумаре*. *Ifa*, the first *Babalawo* and the god of palm-nuts, or the god of divination, were created by *Oloдумаре* and given responsibilities on the earth and represented good.

The Dogon genealogy shows humans descending from the creator god, *Amma*. The genealogy illustrated in *Conversations with Ogotemmêli* (Griaule, 1965 p. 167) shows God without a wife and with a wife. The genealogy also includes the jackal in the earliest stages of creation; hence, animals were a part of the first beings.

The creation story of the Kuba (Bakuba) in Zaire as summarized by Jan Knappert (1995) shows that in the beginning while the earth was covered by water, *Mbombo*, the White Giant, who ruled over the chaos (watery mass), was impregnated with all beings. J. Knappert (1995) summarized the belief that all beings were born from *Mbombo* this way:

One day he felt a terrible pain in his stomach, and out came the sun, the moon, and the stars. The sun shone fiercely and the water steamed up in clouds. Gradually the dry hills appeared. *Mbombo* again brought up things from his stomach: this time it was the forest, trees, animals, and people. The first woman appeared, the first leopard, the eagle, the first falling star, the monkey Fumu, the first man. Then the first tools appeared too: the anvil, the razor, and the medicine (p. 137).

This description is analogous to an impregnated female. The description includes both animate and inanimate beings; therefore, not only are humans and other animate beings divine, but material objects designed to help humans in their survival are of divine origin. For the Bakuba, it

appears that four elements, sun, moon, stars, and water, were the first phase of creation and the multitude of earth beings was the second phase. It also suggests that all terrestrial beings, both animate and inanimate, were considered equal.

Divine Creatures

In African culture, animals, birds, reptiles, insects, etc., were included in the cosmic design of the world; as such, these categories of animate beings are supremely good. They behave, each according to its nature, the way in which they were designed to behave. Ogotemmêli makes an interesting point when he says that animals are superior to man, which is contrary to most beliefs about the superiority of animate beings. First of all, they do not have to work, and second, lack of the ability to use speech as man does seem to be major attributes that contribute to their divine nature (Griaule, 1965 p. 126).

In a class lecture on the language and culture of Kemet, Theophile Obenga said that “baboons and monkeys in Africa know when the sun rises before humans; at sunrise, he said, they begin to clap.” They are pure, in that their actions remain consistent to the original plan for them by the creator, especially if left alone in their natural environment. Animals also have qualities quite like those of humans; for example, humans who seem to have an extra sense of wisdom, who are said to be nocturnal, may be associated with an owl.

Moreover, in African societies, especially animals and birds are identified as human doubles. For example, lions and tigers were associated with kingship. Skins or feathers were/are worn to recognize and remember human association with a particular animal or bird.

Thousands of years ago, animals, birds, reptiles, etc., were recognized as double or twin spirits of humans and were established as a major component of a cultural system in Africa. Ogotemmêli’s intricate conversations with Marcel Griaule about the creation shed light on understanding animals and ancestors as divine. At the dawn of creation, eight pairs of animals were created by God *Amma*; and “when the eight ancestors . . . were born to the first pair; eight different animals were born in heaven.” These first pairs established twin pairs of man and animal. According to Ogotemmêli, “Every human family was part of a long series of creatures, and the whole aggregate of human families was connected with the whole animal kingdom. And behind that was a dim suggestion of vegetable series” (Griaule, 1965 p. 128).

Moreover, in this conversation, Ogotemmêli explains that the ancestors “could use the animal which was, so to speak, his twin, to make himself known to the living men whom he wished to help” (pp. 123–129). Awoonor

(1976) provides information about the trinity of humans. He says links are formed among ancestors, now living, and those to be yet born through blood. Ancestors, in the African context are deities, thus divine.

Good and Evil as Divine

Deviants at birth are divine and have a role in society even though they appear to negatively impact society. Humans who are considered good based on societal norms and humans who are evil create balance and harmony to the society. Hence, both groups portray elements of a divine plan. To strike a balance in existence, there is not always good; there must be an opposing force.

Two examples of good and evil in the divine plan are *Ifa* and *Eshu* in the Yoruba religion and *Apap* or *Akuj* and *Edeke* in Uganda. In the Yoruba's explanation of the beginning of the world, *Ifa* and *Eshu*, also known as *Elegba*, were messengers of *Orunmila*. *Ifa* represented good, while *Eshu* represented evil. Awoonor (1976) calls *Eshu* the trickster, the mischief-maker, and Clarke says *Eshu* was "the father of witchcraft" (p. 72). This is not exactly the case, since *Eshu* was the concept that stood for decision, i.e. the crossroads. In addition, the Teso of Uganda believe in the sky god, *Apap* or *Akuj* as the "Good Creator," while *Edeke* is the god of evil (Knapert, 1990 p. 241). In Dogon philosophy, *Amma* planned for perfection and imperfection in nature (Griaule & Dieterlen, 1965 p. 140). Good and evil are opposing forces within an individual and among all beings.

Humans will be born: no matter how the child is presented to the material world, that life has a function. For the Dagara people, in the "hearing ritual," a few months before a child is born, the expectant mother falls into a deep trance. The unborn child takes the voice of the mother and answers priests' questions such as "where the soul is from, why it chose to come here, and the gender of the soul." The name given to the child helps it to remember why he/she was born. "A name is the life program of its bearer" (Somé 1994 p. 20). Therefore, if a child is born deformed, and if medical science discovers ways to correct the deformity, then that deformed person has fulfilled his/her divine purpose. Knowledge, skills, and techniques of a physician's expertise are increased, which usually lead to further innovative ways to help more people in society. On the other hand, a human being with deformities who learns how to live with and adjust to the deformity builds character and strength within him/herself and serves as a role model for others. Perhaps humans who are not deformed can learn from a deformed individual to appreciate their physical conditions in life.

In society, those individuals who demonstrate superhuman abilities and make monumental contributions to society can be thought of and

defined as divine. These are the people who appear perfect in their ways, i.e. they behave according to established norms for righteous behavior. On the other hand, individuals who are deviants (such as mass murderers, thieves, etc.) who commit terrible crimes in the society, are not considered divine. Yet, on a grand scale, they play a divine role. Oftentimes, atrocities cause people to reassess themselves, make positive changes in their lives, or grow and develop in ways that would not have happened if the atrocity did not occur. As we shall see later, in the African context one purpose of ritual is to create time and space for the community to come together and restore order and harmony in the community once an atrocity occurs.

Before the moment of conception of any being(s), divine thought is given to a specified purpose for that being(s). Flora, a living being with spirit, was part of the original plan of creation and each kind has functions; for example, trees can be used for oxygen; their roots, leaves, and bark are good for food and medicine.

Awoonor (1976) quotes the Ijaw poet J. P. Clark regarding medicinal use of flora. He says, "For every ailment in man, there is a leaf in the forest" (p. 82). Somé (1994) provides an interesting conversation on the use of medicine. He says "Grandfather's space housed the pharmacy of the entire Birifor clan—an array of roots, daily collected, nightly prepared, to face emergencies of all sorts. These little dwellings contained the prosperity—spiritual, material, and magical—of the Birifor. "Some of these roots were good for physical illness, but most of them were good for illness of the soul . . ." (p. 31).

Not only is flora good for medicine, trees can also be for building shelter, and a multitude of other structures. When trees are used to carve gods, it is believed that the god will "intervene and impose the form he wishes it to take" (p. 60). Sculptors often say that the form of the object is already inside the piece of wood or stone; their work is simply to expose the embedded form. When flora is used for decorative purposes, we can say that it is good because they are meant to add beauty to a particular environment which will be pleasing to the eye. On the other hand, trees can be detrimental when roots, leaves, or bark are used or misused.

The sun's rays and rain are two examples of natural elements that can be viewed as good and bad. The sun, for instance, is good when it provides the amount of heat and light conducive to the "seemingly" good of the environment. When the correct amount is dispersed for these needs, the sun is viewed as good. Yet when the sun's rays are against the needs of a particular environment, it can be viewed as bad by human inhabitants.

Rain can also be viewed as both good and bad. When rain brings moisture to the earth when there has been a drought, we are happy to see

it. On the other hand, when there is too much rain which causes flooding or drowns vegetation, it is deemed destructive. Mbiti (1969) tells us “among peoples like the Akan, Ila, Ngoni, Mende, Tswana, Akamba, Tiv and many others, God is known as the “Rain Giver or Water Giver.” Furthermore, he says “some of these even say that rain is God’s spittle, this, in African societies, being the vehicle of blessing” (p. 41). Somé (1998) tells us that when natural or cosmic occurrences such as an “earthquake, plague, or drought takes place, the Dagara people try to determine the message that “Mother Earth” is conveying to humans even though they may not understand the message. The message, even though it is not understood, causes them to “come down on our knees with prayers of consternation and mourning, expressing the willingness to understand this event in the natural world and our lives are connected.” It moves the community to rituals and all “village life is suspended until all prescribed rituals are done” (pp. 165–166). If functions yield what humans in specific areas determine to be benefits to the environment, it is said to be good; however, if the function yields what they determine to be detrimental or causes adverse effects to the environment, it is said to be bad/evil. For humans, the ideal state in nature is balance, equilibrium, and harmony.

Spirits in Natural Elements

In his discussion on spiritual beings, spirits, and the living dead, Mbiti provides examples of how the totality of nature is perceived as spiritual. He says “weather and natural phenomena are generally associated with divinities, or personified as such . . . the sun, mountains, seas, lakes, rivers and boulders, are also attributed to have or to be spiritual beings or divinities” (p. 76). The following drum prelude of the Ashanti illustrates the primacy of the river as well as its divinity:

The path has crossed the river.
The river has crossed the path.
Which is the elder?
We made the path and found the river.
The river is from long ago,
The river is from the creator of the universe.
Kokon Tano,
Birefia Tano,
River-god of the King of Ashanti,
Noble river, noble and gracious one . . .
(Awoonor 1976 pp. 102–103)

Somé (1994) says the following about natural elements. In his grandfather's pharmacy, “. . . each one of us existed in the form of a stone, silent, docile, available. The stones represented the birth certificate of every person in the clan” (p. 31).

Divine Inspiration, Illumination

There are humans who seem to have knowledge of the future without the benefit of historical data. The information about a particular matter may be obtained by a sudden thought that comes in their minds, it may be a feeling, or it may appear in a dream. On the individual level, one may know, for example, what a fellow human will experience or is experiencing. They have the ability using telepathy to make connections with another human who may be hundreds, even thousands of miles away. Moreover, clairvoyance and telepathy used to travel in the astral planes requires nerves and determination as Somé (1994) depicts in *Of Water and the Spirit* in his initiation experiences and how his sense of perception was heightened. Well-known prophets and shamans are most noted for this extraordinary ability, but in fact, this ability is evident and even common in all humans. For Dr. Richard King (1994), this notion is explained as the “collective part of the human mind” (p. 20).

Words as Divine

Janheinz Jhan (1961) points out that the thing that separates humans from other beings is their level of cognition and their words (p. 161). It is part of the African belief system that humans have the cognitive ability to transform one thing into another or to use the creative process to be innovative, i.e. there are people who have the ability to use the power of spoken words to heal others. Innovation also denotes improving on a thing which was made before. Words can be spoken in such a way that they cause the nonexistent to come into existence. In physics, all things are made of molecules. Molecules have energy, and changing the energetic relationship between the molecules makes things change. For example, an ice cube given heat will turn into fluid form because the heat changes the heat in the molecules. If more heat is given, then the fluid form will become vapor. From the latter, it can be concluded that Ogotemméli was correct when he recognized that words have heat energy; therefore, they have power to transform reality just like heat can transform a solid shape into a gas, so words have energy.

Africans in antiquity believed that it was the power the *Nommo*, the spoken word and sound, which gives life to everything. Ogotemméli tells us that “the life-force of the earth is water” (p. 19). Words produced as sound mixed with spittle (water) produce energy that gives them force.

Pitch, resonance, articulation, tempo, volume, and rhythm are the vocal components of speech. The way these components are used yields varying intensities of word force. For this reason, one human can issue the command “Come!” and cause millions, both humans and animals, to obey the command; and another human can say “Come!” and may not receive a response at all. Humans with abilities to use spoken words that transform and or transcend are thought of as divine or godlike because they use the same guttural force from within themselves to bring the nonexistent into existence that the Creator used in the original plan for creation of the universe. A prime example of the use of spoken words and the creative force is demonstrated by African rainmakers.

Rituals

The ritual creates a particular place in time and space for a specific purpose. In the African context, rituals are usually linked with cosmogony and are performed at the community (village) level, the family level, and the personal level. Somé (1998) describes the wedding ritual as one that “melts two young people into wedlock for a life.” He says:

A whole family escorts a bride to the groom after making an offer at the altar of the ancestors. At the groom’s house the ritual welcoming begins with another gathering of the elders at the shrine of the groom’s ancestors. The invocation prayer is aimed at protection, good health, children, and harmony. They offer sacrifices of chickens, pour water for peace and continued reconciliation, then distribute ash for protection against bad spirits. After this, the bride’s village must sing songs of praise to the bride and demand that the groom’s village and family members prove their worthiness. For long hours a chanted dialogue occurs between villages and families, where the bride’s people investigate in songs the economic, social, and political worth of the groom’s people. The bride’s people will not enter the groom’s house for the first refreshment of the day until satisfied that the groom’s people check out well on every item. . . . then the priest or minister asks a bride and a groom if they want to take each other as partners . . . the responses need to be made public (pp. 143–144).

Another important ritual in African societies is the funeral ritual. Yaya Diallo and Mitchell Hall (1989) describe funeral rituals for the Miniaka people. Death is not considered a catastrophe, but it does cause an imbalance in the community. Funerals bring the community together and rituals and celebrations along with music help to relieve the pain that death causes

and help to restore balance. Funerals of young people and particularly the very young are especially sad. Several rituals take place within the general funeral ritual. "Each death, he says is ritually observed on two occasions, first in a three-day celebration at the burial and again during the dry season in a three-day celebration for each person who died during the preceding year" (p. 137). Funeral rituals and celebrations are a common practice in African societies.

Divine Magic in Creativity

Magic, the ability to invoke the supernatural through the use of rhetoric and oratory has long been a part of African culture. According to Somé (1994), for the Dagara people "there is a close connection between thought and reality. To imagine something, to closely focus one's thoughts upon it, has the potential to bring that something into being . . . In the realm of the sacred, this concept is taken even further, for what is magic but the ability to focus thought and energy to get results on the human plane (p. 8).

Magic can be interpreted to mean not magic, but the outcome of using natural laws. Even though paraphernalia is designed for a specific purpose, it must be accompanied by rituals and spoken words to become effective.

Paraphernalia used for magic and transformation include talismanic objects, amulets, and such other carvings that become the media of communication and contact with the spiritual world. *Dawa*, (medicine, translated talisman from the Greek word "telesmena, lit. 'completion,' i.e. of the ritual) was necessary in order to make the talisman work." The *dawa* is used as a protective device against those who would bring harm to the wearer, "especially if it is a magic attack by a sorcerer or witch." Somé (1994) describes his talisman as "an oval-shaped pouch stuffed with a stone from the underworld and some other secret objects collected in the wild" . . . The talisman is a powerful and dangerous tool; therefore, it is treated with respect and care by the Dagara people. It can be used to help and to hurt. (p. 4) He provides many examples of how his personal talisman has helped him scholastically and professionally. Knappert (1990) presents limited use of amulets, and that is to "protect their owners against evil" (p. 238). In addition to amulets, masks are used to perform a sacred function in ritual and magic which is to make "intangible bonds linking man with the spiritual world" (Awoonor, 1976 pp. 56-57).

Magic is performed in the daily lives of African peoples. The Oracle uses magic, a sacred activity, in the form of sounds, i.e. words, chants, invocations, dances, etc. to connect the material world with the immaterial world.

Divine Worship

Worship is an important consideration in the meaning of divine. For traditional African societies, a child is born into a community who worship, so they participate without knowing the reasons for the various worship activities. As they mature in the community, they learn the purposes of various forms of worship. “The Swahili say: *Ibada ni kazi* ‘Worship is hard work’ . . . and hard work is worship” (Knappert, 1995 p. 260). Hence, worship in the traditional sense may include sacrifices and offerings, prayers, invocations, blessings and salutations, people’s names, religious intermediaries, helpers and official specialists. (Mbiti, 1969, pp. 58–73).

Chapter Five

Kemet Internal Framework

Bolo so, ‘back-word,’ will build on and include knowledge learned about the nature of the divine in African societies in a general way to study the nature and meaning of the divine in Kemet. Serge Sauneron (1960) is aware of the concern for translations of *Medu Neter*, since he quotes the passage from Hermetic writings [tract XVI, 1–2]:

Hermes [Thoth], my master, in the frequent conversations that he had with me . . . used to tell me that those who read my books found their composition very simple and clear, even when, on the contrary, it is obscure and hides the meaning of the words, and it will become even more obscure when the Greeks, later, will get it into their heads to translate from our language to theirs, which will end in a complete distortion of the text and in full obscurity. By contrast, expressed in the original language, this discourse preserves in full clarity the sense of the words; and **in fact, even the particularity of sound and the proper intonation of Egyptian terms retain in themselves the force of things said** (pp. 126–127).

Therefore, Sauneron is correct when he says, “To understand ancient Egypt, we must abandon the idea of finding in it our own culture and own trends . . . But for Egypt, the sea marks the limit of a world—of an African world; the dreams of Ogotomméli, or the ‘Bantu philosophy,’ carry precious elements which help us to better understand certain aspects of Egyptian religious thought . . .” (p. 6). Sauneron’s concept is important from the standpoint that the Egyptian concept is different from that of Europe. His own culture, meaning that of Sauneron’s, is not based on the same ideas as those of the ancient Egyptians. Moreover, Diop (1981) argues for an interior study of Kemetic concepts in general and aesthetics in particular;

he asserts regarding the arts, “. . . in the present state of artistic education in the world, even in the realm of the plastic arts . . . substance cannot be grasped and appreciated except from the inside” (p. 226). While this is not a comparative study, a general survey of some African cultures has been invaluable for interpreting and comprehending ideas presented in various Kemetian texts. This knowledge is imperative for arriving at a *nefer-maa-tian* (a beautiful-true) meaning of the divine for Kemetians.

The concept of beauty from an Afrocentric point of view has been holistic, i.e. it has embraced all levels of Kemet society, i.e., the cosmic level (creation of the universe); the macro level (Kemet society), the meso level (nomes) and the micro level (individual). Actually, to understand any of the major ideas of Kemet thought, one must not examine them from a particularistic point of view; it is far better to have a general understanding and appreciation of as much philosophical thinking as possible.

KEMET CONCEPTION OF BEAUTY: AN AFROCENTRIC APPROACH

An obvious remark is that the concept of “Beauty” dealing with Kemet or ancient Egypt has never been scrutinized with great care to fully understand the significance of Aesthetics (beauty) of Kemet. Thus, the paramount aim of this chapter is to minutely study Egyptian aesthetic or sense of beauty.

The method to efficiently handle this problem from an Afrocentric paradigm is to closely address texts and contexts in which terms meaning “Beautiful/Beauty” occur in Kemet civilization. For this reason, it is methodologically appropriate to understand and interpret the sense of “Beauty” in Kemet by investigating as many primary sources as possible.

Actually, the manifestation of “Beauty” appears in many areas, such as in the myths of creation or cosmogony, in personal adornment, in the written and spoken word, in architecture, in sculpture, and construction of river vessels. Even the Ruler or King of Kemet, i.e. the Pharaoh (*Per aa*), holds office titles in which terms meaning “Beautiful/Good/Perfect” are included.

For this study, aesthetics is used interchangeably with beauty and the good. The meaning of the divine, the beautiful within Kemet relies on the underlying assumption that the Great God or the Creator God is the origin of all things. This assumption was the world view of the people of *Kemet*, which became the *telos* of the style of life. “An ideal theme is a conception of a quality of life that forms the *telos* of a style of life . . . As a *telos* of a style of life, an ideal theme functions as a standard of inspiration . . . by providing a point of orientation . . . An ideal theme is a quasi-aesthetic

vision, a *telos* of a style of life to be developed with no priori directive guidance” (A. S. Cua, 1978 pp. 134–138). *Telos* refers to the achievement of goals; perfection; end. *Telos* connotes that nothing can be added nor taken away, which really means that a thing cannot be improved. As Obenga has poignantly pointed out, *maat* permeated all dimensions and spheres of society. Since Kemet was established as a sacred or divine-inspired society, perfection became the ideal norm for the creation of material manifestations and behavior in their personal lives. Hence, the cosmic ideals of *maat* and *nefer* were epitomized as central themes in all levels of the society where the Divine King of Kemet represents the macro level of society; nomes (cities and towns) represent the meso level; and individuals represent the micro levels.

The way the people of *Kemet* perceived the divine world was intricately interwoven in personal lives, rituals, festivals, celebrations, architecture, shipbuilding, jewelry and business administration. Colors, materials, quantities, flora, and fauna were also important parts of the aesthetic infrastructure. Nothing was left to chance. The entire ordinary universe of living, the way the people decorated the walls of the temples, the creation of objects for ritual, the daily tasks of constructing boats and irrigation equipment were all done in accordance with the demands of *maat*.

THE MEANING OF THE DIVINE

Several *Kemetic* texts which include *Pyramid Texts*, (PT) *Coffin Texts* (CT), *The Book of Coming Forth by Day* (*The Book of the Dead* BOD), and selected papyri will be used to determine the meaning of divine on the cosmic level. The Pyramid Texts, the oldest sacred and funerary literature, now extinct, were carved on the walls of the pyramid of King *Wenis* at the end of the Fifth Dynasty and rulers of the Sixth Dynasty. Coffin Texts, many of which were derived from Pyramid Texts, were inscribed on coffins during the Middle Kingdom, particularly the Eleventh and Twelfth Dynasties. Pyramid Texts and Coffin Texts were collections of ritual words and expressions used to create energy and power in accordance with the requirements of the ceremonies for the dead. *The Book of Knowing the Forms of the Existence of Ra and Thus Killing Apop* is recorded in the *Bremmer Rhind Papyrus*.

In MDW *NTR*, the language of Kemet, the word for divine or sacred is *ntry* 𓂏𓂐𓂑, a derivative of *ntr* 𓂏 which means god. *Ntr* with a vertical line adheres to the written convention “ideograms that stand for the actual objects which they depict . . . are usually followed by the stroke-determinative.” (Gardiner Egyptian Grammar § 25) *Ntr* 𓂏 with the vertical stroke

determinative means god in actuality; therefore, *Ntr* is the etymological root for other words, which relate to god, as divine. As a result, one can see the construction of complex words, such as *Netcherw* (gods and goddesses) 𓂏, *Ntr* 𓂏 (god); *ntrt* (goddess) 𓂏𓂏, *ntr* (godhood, divinity) 𓂏, *ntrt* (divine eye) 𓂏𓂏, *ntrw* (sacred pole), 𓂏𓂏 *ntry* (magic cord) 𓂏𓂏 *ntrty* (adze), used in ‘Opening of the Mouth’ are glyphs, transliterations, and translations found in Faulkner’s *Middle Egyptian Dictionary* (pp. 142–43). Consequently, it would be correct to transcribe these words within the *Kemetic* context using god rather than divine. For example, 𓂏𓂏 *ntrt* would be transcribed god’s eye, 𓂏𓂏 *ntry* (god’s magic cord), etc. Using the actual *Kemetic* words would make it clearer that divinity begins with and includes god. Thus, for the people of Kemet to make something or to create something good and beautiful was to touch the very source of the divine.

The origin of the conception of divine, as perceived by the Kemetians, begins with *Ntr* (God) at the birth of the universe. Chapter 17 in the Book of Coming Forth by Day (The Book of the Dead) says: “It is I (who am) the Great God who came into existence (*hpr*) by his own effort” (*ds.f*). Another salient illustration of the origin of the divine is depicted in *The Book of Knowing the Forms of the Existence of Ra and Thus Killing Apop* as recorded in the *Bremmer Rhind Papyrus*, (pp. 68–69), for it reads: “I came to existence for I was anterior to the Anterior *Netcherw* that I had created. I was anterior to these *Netcherw*.” It goes on to read:

I thus came to existence in the anterior era and a multitude of forms of existence had come to exist in this world. I made everything alone before any being (other than myself) manifested itself to existence to act with me in these places. Therefore, I made forms of existence from the force (which is in me). There I created the Nun being (still) dormant and (I), not having found a place to stand up yet.

Maāt and *Shu* are the daughter and son of *Atum*, and they were together with him as attested to in *Coffin Text 2* “. . . raise her to your nostrils so that your heart may live. May they not be far from you, your daughter *Maāt* and your son, *Shu*, whose name is Life.” That your heart may live can be interpreted to mean God’s thoughts or the mind of God. Perhaps, too, the reason that brains of the deceased began to be removed through the nose was because it may have symbolized the return of *Maāt* to the creator since she was inhaled in the nostrils of the Creator.

This passage explains that the Creator came to existence first, and then created gods and goddesses of the Ogdoad, the first phase in the creation of the universe. According to PT Utterance 301, titled “An address to

the primeval gods,” *Niu* and *Nēnet*, *Amūn* and *Amaunet*, *Atum* and *Ruti*, and *Shu* and *Tefēnet* are the names of the eight primeval gods and goddesses. *Nefertum*, the lotus god, along with *Maāt* and *Shu*, were identified as celestial beings before the Ogdoad came into existence. It was believed that the fragrance of the lotus was in the nostrils of *Rā* at the dawn of creation while he was yet in the primordial waters. So truth and justice, and sweet smells, i.e. goodness, are fundamental to all forms of existence.

The Great God envisioned a master plan or a blueprint of the universe; thus, the idea of intellect comes to mind, i.e. the thought process involved in envisioning what and how the outcome will be as illustrated by the following passage. References to the heart suggest thoughts or mind:

Then my heart proved efficient, the plan for the creation came before me and I made everything I desired to make, alone I conceived the design in my heart and I created another form of existence and the modes of existence deriving from the existence were many.

Several references are made in PT regarding the first and second *Psdt* (Ennead). Utterance 219 in PT identifies the first or Great *Psdt* (Ennead) which includes *Atum*, *Shu*, *Tefēnut*, *Gēb*, *Nūt*, *Isis*, *Seth*, *Nephtys*, *Djhuiti*, *Heru*. For example, PT Utterance 218 identifies *Seth* and *Djhuiti* (*Thoth*), *Auset* (*Isis*) and *Nephtys*, the Westerners, the Easterners, the Southerners, the Northerners, and the Lower Sky, the second *Psdt* (Ennead) as imperishable spirits.

Rā, master of all that exists (*Nb-r-dr* (*Neb-er-djer*) brings into existence a multitude of beings, flora, fauna, and humans by twisting his hands and by the word, thus creating the second genesis. All aspects of existence, all forms *hprw* (*Kheperu*), time and endurance *nbb* (*neheb*), seasons and years (calendar), good (*nfr*) and evil (*bin*, *isft*), life and death, all eternity *dt* were the characteristics of the second genesis (Obenga, 1998 p. ii).

The first occurrence of *isft* (evil) and death in the experience of the second genesis occurred between *Ausar* and *Set*. After *Heru* avenged his father's death, not only did he reconcile his differences with *Set*, he restored order, balance, and harmony in the community and government. A ritual scene depicts the reconciliation of the gods *Heru* of Lower Kemet (i.e. Delta) on the left, and *Set* of Upper Kemet on the right. Moreover, the scene illustrates the importance of the divine conception of balance, order, and harmony within oneself, within the community, and within the state or

government. The gods knot the plants of the North (papyrus) and the South (lotus) around the symbol of union of the Two Lands (*sema-tawy*, *sema-ta-wi* in Kemetian), Dynasty XII, and Middle Kingdom. As the protector of *Kemet*, *Per aa*, the Egyptian word for pharaoh, combines within himself two rival, yet complementary forces, *Heru*, the god of Lower Kemet (i.e. North, papyrus), and *Set*, the god of Upper Kemet (i.e. South lotus). The text above Set on the right reads: *di.nh ddt w3s nb Nbty*—"He gives all life, all stability and all power, He of *Ombos*." The text above *Heru* on the left reads: *di.f nh ddt w3s nb msn*—"He gives all life, all stability, and all power, the great god, lord of *Mesen*." *Mesen* is a Delta City. Furthermore, it is declared in *The Book of Going Forth by Day* (BOD) Plate 10, Chapter 17: "If Horus be respected, *Seth* will be divine, and vice versa" illustrates the restoration of *maat*—order, balance, and harmony. Reciprocity, reunification, renewal and rebirth are common themes in many African societies and were in the plan of the creator.

The statement, "plan for creation came before me" suggests that the Creator God had a vision, e.g., a strong mental image, a visual blueprint, or picture of the universe as a whole prior to creation. Then from his god/divine force within himself, that is, energy, he channeled or created a multitude of matter/material objects according to the blueprint. Embedded in is this passage is the model for human creativity; for instance, when an artist paints an original picture or a musician writes an original score, it is said to be a reminiscence of what they saw; the picture first or the sound heard of the score in their minds.

Creativity is a divine cognitive process. It is a reservoir of higher thought and wisdom. First the idea is visualized in the mind or thought, then the process of materializing takes place. For the creator of the universe, the making process of the world of matter was caused from energy force. The thought produced matter through sensory resources.

In order to build and maintain the world of matter, humans use the same divine creative cognitive process that the creator used to mirror the spirit world, i.e. the "world above" in the world of matter. The popular writer Muata Ashby (1995) recognized this idea when he presented a drawing from the tomb of Pharaoh *Tutankhamon* of the God *Tebuti-Hermes*: "As above, so below." He says, "the above is spirit . . . and that which is below is matter . . ." (p. 68). The drawing and the text suggest that *Djbuty* (*Thoth*) ascribed the role of humans and their behaviors to be doubles in the world below of the world above.

Humans and other beings are linked by a common thread to the creator; ultimately, all beings, together, partake of spiritual essence of the whole, i.e. the creator; they only differ in quantity. To illustrate this con-

cept, Kemetians linked deities to all beings. The Magis stela of *Psametik-anekh* from the Thirtieth Dynasty shows some 300 deities, headed by the sun-god, *Ra*, in the form of a winged man-hawk. Each god possessed a specific character, a sacred animal or object, some were identified with other gods, some had familial relationships, while others were attached to temples. For example, *Mut*'s character was the Mother-god; her sacred animal or object was the vulture; she was identified with *Sekkhmet*, and *Hathor*; her familial relationships were the wife of *Amun*, mother of *Khons*; and her temple was at *Asheru* (Karnak). *Ptah*'s character was Creator god of Memphis and patron of craftsmen; his sacred animal was the Apis bull; he was identified *Hephaistos Tatenen*; his familial relationship was *Ptah*, *Nefertem Sekkhmet*; and his temple was at Memphis.

Some examples within *Kemet* will support divinity in all beings and how the people of Kemet mirrored the spirit world through the use of various beings. First, the assumption is that humans are divine since the first humans descended from celestial beings; and the concept of divine Kingship (or humans as divine) has been well-established in the literature. Edouard Lambelet (1986) illustrates over 300 deities.

Nash (1918) reveals *Kemetic* human and animal relationships of the God *Heru* (*Horus*) in a paper titled "The totemic origin of the Egyptian Gods."

Invaders came from Central Africa, from whence, at some very remote period there seems to have been a great Exodus. The emigrants were divided into two bands . . . This invasion was, say the Texts, led by the God Horus in person, and the Egyptians when referring to the most remote periods, use the phrase "in the time of the companions of Horus. In reality when Horus arrived in Egypt he was not the God Horus, but only the Falcon "Ha-ur"—The Totem of a clan. The Clan of the Falcon had three allies—The Clan of the Jackal—The Clan of the Tress of hair—and the Clan of the Ibis, and these three Clans constituted, historically, what the Egyptians afterwards called "The Companions of Horus," that is the companions of the Falcon (p.4).

In Kemet, however, the word double or twin is more accurate than totem.

The elephant, jackal, ibis, and falcon were among animals found on vases made of yellow pottery, molded by hand, with ornamental drawing in red paint from predynastic times, which dated to approximately 10,000 B.C.E. These creatures of nature on vases and appeared later as icons to depict nomes of Pharaonic Kemet. Moreover, the ibis, known for its intelligence, became the emblem of *Djbuty* (*Thoth*); the falcon, rapid in flight

and with the ability to soar, became *Horus*. The ability to soar really means more than an ability to fly. Soar is defined as the ability to rise, fly, or glide high in the sky. In addition, it means to climb swiftly or powerfully. These were the attributes of *Heru (Horus)*. The jackal, cunning, quick, and eloquent, became the double of the god, *Ambis*.

The bull is another prominent animal recognized for his strength and fertility in Kemet. There is a constellation of stars for the bull, and humans, who are Taurus, are connected with this constellation. E. A. Wallis Budge (1977) illustrates many ways the bull was referred to. The bull is expressed as “Mighty Bull,” “Conquering Bull,” “Bull of Bulls,” etc. The title of bull was given to gods and kings (p. 115 and pp. 289–290). Often the leg of the bull was used in offerings as well. *Horus* is represented by the Apis bull. Here, celestial beings, i.e. stars, gods, *Horus*, kings, and humans bearing the bull epitaph, are all extricably connected. This is typically African. In fact, all African societies have used this connected sense of the celestial and terrestrial beings as a part of community.

One might see it as an epistemological issue. In this regard, stream of consciousness, intuition, meditation, incantations, libation, and teleportation are traditional African spiritual mediums used as a means of invoking knowledge and wisdom from the spirit world. These mediums, along with observations of the natural environment, provided wisdom, knowledge, understanding and ability that allowed kings and priests to perceive and emulate the spirit world above in the physical world below.

Gods and goddesses could take on animal forms, or any form, and appear to humans to help them in various ways. Moreover, ancestors, those who once lived and have transcended to the underworld, i.e. the spirit world, “could use the animal . . . his twin, to make himself known to the living men whom he wished to help” (Griaule 1965 p. 127). The prelude to Chapter 17 of the Book of the Dead conveys this idea. In addition, it admonishes humans in the East, i.e. the land of the living, to do the same to reap the benefits of the ancestors. It reads:

Here begins praises and recitations, going in and out of the God’s Domain, have benefit in the beautiful West, being in the suite of Osiris, resting at the food-table of Wennefer, going out into the day, **taking any shape in which he desires to be**, playing at Senet, sitting in a booth, and **going forth as a living soul by the Osiris Ani after he has died. It is beneficial to him who does it on earth.**

One can see that the idea of *Ausar* “taking any shape in which he desires to be” is a major statement of the aesthetic in the divine. In fact, it

is the standard by which all good and beautiful things are created. Thus, the god *Ausar* takes shape, as if to form or create, and also takes shape in a way that is desired by the god himself.

The king, as well as priests, was cognizant of being able to transform themselves into various beings for their benefit. Hence, the notion of doubles was not reserved for the dead only. Excerpts from Utterance 539 “An ‘ascension’ text” in PT show many manifestations as parts of the King’s doubles. One may be lead to believe that this passage only refers to the spirit of a dead king; however, Somé, writing in a contemporary sense about a Burkina Faso community, informs us that ascension to the spirit realm is a common practice for the Dagara. He says that supernatural experiences are “a part of our everyday lives” (p. 8). As head of the society, the king required help from many various “shapes” to assist him in fulfilling his divine role. At the end of the entire Litany, it states: “His double shall be vindicated before Geb.” The statement “I will ascend and rise up to the sky” has not been included. Notice that the language is not metaphorical.

My head is a vulture
 The sides of my head are the starry sky of the god
 My face is Wepwawet
 My eyes are the Great One at the head of the souls of Ōn
 My nose is Thoth
 My tongue is the pilot in charge of the Bark of Righteousness
 My teeth are the Souls of Pe(?)
 My chin is Kherty, foremost in Khem
 My spine is the Wild Bull
 My shoulders are Seth
 My hands (?) are . . .
 My fingers (?) Babi
 My heart is Bastet
 My belly is Nūt
 My back (?) is Gēb (?)
 My vertebrae are the Two Enneads
 My hinder-parts are Heket
 My buttocks are the Night-bark and the Day-bark
 My phallus is Apis
 My thighs are Neith and Selket
 The calves of my legs are the two Souls who preside over the Field of Dr
 The souls of my feet are the two Barks of Righteousness
 My toes are the Souls of Ōn

More than likely, the parts of the doubles presented in this text are all the king's doubles used to acquire skills and knowledge while yet alive and ruling Kemet. Chapter 42 in the BOD provides a similar rendition and is self-explanatory. It reads:

My hair is Nun; my face is Re; my eyes are Hathor; my ears are Wepwawet; my nose is She who presides over her lotus-leaf; my lips are Anubis; my molars are Selket; my incisors are Isis the goddess; my arms are the Ram, the Lord of Mendes; my breast is Neith, Lady of Sais; my back is Seth; my phallus is Osiris; my muscles are the Lords of Kheraha; my chest is He who is greatly majestic; my belly and my spine are Sekmet; my buttocks are the Eye of Horus; my thighs and my calves are Nut; my feet are Ptah; my fingers are Orion; my toes are living uraei; **there is no member of mine devoid of a god, and Thoth is the protection of all my flesh.**

In her masterpiece, *Opening to Spirit*, the popular writer, Caroline Shola Arewa (1998) sheds light on understanding PT Utterances 273–4 “The king hunts and eats the gods.” She says, “In parts of Africa . . . shamans study animals, trees, and all aspects of nature . . . The shaman leaves the lower physical realms . . . and journeys to the astral plane. In this way the shaman unites with the animal or tree spirit and learns from its sacred wisdom” (p. 20). “The king hunts and eats the gods,” includes several aspects of African spirituality.

The content of the passages shows that in this case the hunt seems allegorical. In order to provide an accurate interpretation of these Utterances, an analysis of the Dagara word *Yielbongura* will be helpful. *Yielbongura* “the thing that knowledge cannot eat” (Somé p. 8) is the closest word for African supernatural phenomena. Eat, derived from The Old English *etan*, generally, conveys an association with the ingestion of edibles. The verb to eat in an African context is used in a broader sense, so to eat can mean to take in or consume intangibles from beings outside of one's self, such as intellect, wisdom, good, evil, understanding, ability, knowledge, strength, and so forth. It may also mean to inhale these attributes in the same way that the Creator inhaled *Maāt*. “To eat the gods” means that the King ingested or inhaled various attributes from his many doubles; hence, each part of the King's body is the spirit or strength of one of his doubles.

The following excerpts from “The King hunts and eats the gods” in Utterances 273–4 illustrates how the King uses various animals and reptiles to help him to seek out the celestial gods whose intellect he will ingest. “The King's dignities shall not be taken away from him, for he has swallowed the

intelligence of every god” suggests that eating the gods connotes ingesting the spirits of the gods. In fact, the King became endowed with the same intelligence of every god which allowed him to think and behave as the gods. Moreover, the King, like *Atum*, *Rā*, and *Ptah*, could be transformed into many forms. Section 393, the first part of the litany, shows the atmospheric conditions as in any hunt. §394–397 identifies and describes the King, and §398 says, “The King is one equipped; Who assembles his spirits.” In the traditional African context, spirit exists in many types and variations (p. 228). The next section depicts the King as “A possessor of helpers.” Some helpers from the passage include:

Helpers on the day of the slaying:
 Grasper-of topknots who is Kehau,
 who lassoes them for the King;
 It is the Serpent with raised head
 Who guards them for him
 And restrains them for him;
 It is He who is over the reddening
 Who binds them for him;
 It is Khons who slew the lords
 Who strangles them for the King

Perhaps there is a contemporary analogy to the way the people of Kemet understood their world. If one looks at the current information about biological structures and human origins, it becomes clear that much of what and who we are is related to the origin of our genetic structure. One cannot divest herself of her ancestral past because all of the details of our origin on the earth are within the genetic code. Therefore, DNA contains physical characteristics, spiritual essence, and memory. In *African Origin of Biological Psychiatry*, Dr. Richard King (1994) states that:

. . .there are biological and mental records of humanities’ origin. The collective is that part of the human mind which contains the mental records of one’s ancestors . . . the mind contains the wisdom of all man’s past, present, and even future unity of universal knowledge, universal life (pp. 20–21).

Each being in each category of beings has its own DNA. Humans, animals, reptiles, insects, plants, rocks, etc. are part of the multitude of beings that came into existence at the dawn of creation and contain the essence of the Creator in their spiritual DNA.

The nature of spiritual DNA of flora can be analyzed using a tree as an analogy of God as the substance (from sub, under, and stare, to stand) in all existence. Roots are the source or origin of a tree. The tree is really the physical manifestation that there are roots; roots are the source behind the tree. The essence of the tree cannot be different from the branches. The tree is the branches and the branches are the tree. In this analogy, the Creator God is the roots, and all things in the universe are the manifested tree itself. Some branches are larger and some smaller, yet they are branches of the same tree, each a part of the whole.

Moreover, human DNA, a more familiar idea, illustrates the same idea. Once the sperm of a male fertilize a female's egg, the process of a human life begins. The essence of the male and female becomes a part of the new being. If the offspring of this union is divorced from one or both parents, it will have some characteristics from each parent. Of course, the physical attributes will be human, but beyond that, it will portray temperaments which can be identified with both parents. Moreover, modern medicine confirms the ancients' belief that both male and female elements reside in the same body, i.e. they both have appropriate levels of testosterone and estrogen specific to their sex.

Male and females were conceived in the creative thought, each with equal but different roles in the perpetuation of life. Males and females like their creator are dual each within their own natures. Modern science confirms this notion. Males and females have the hormones, testosterone and estrogen, which explains the heterosexual nature of the Creator. Furthermore, it makes the idea of spiritual DNA plausible. *MDW NTR* is gender-based, which indicates duality in the larger scheme of things.

Each and every being requires elements of the primal force, e.g. light, water, air, etc.; hence, each in its totality contains "drops of the creator." All beings are of and from the Creator, rendering all things divine with a divine purpose. In Kemetic philosophy, one cannot deny that the essence or spirit of the creator exists in all forms of beings; but one can argue whether humans are religious.

Religion, derived from the Latin word *religiō* . . . perhaps from *religāre*, to bind back: re-, back + *ligāre*, to bind, fasten. Religion is the expression of man's belief in and reverence for a superhuman power recognized as the creator and governor of the universe integrated system of this expression. To be religious implies adherence to religion in both belief and practice. Therefore, belief alone is not enough nor is practice alone enough for one to be religious; belief and practice are required. This definition allows one to choose whether they believe and or participate in religious activities. Furthermore, religion based on this definition suggests separation of man from his creator.

He believes in the creator; but he is not one with his creator. In Kemet, all beings were one with their divine creator.

The conception of the divine/sacred became a way of life for the people of Kemet. The ultimate goal was to behave as divine people to ensure their spirits' (*akhs*) return to their Creator in the form of a glorious shining light. For this reason, as Asante (2000) concludes, "the divine is everywhere" (pp. 99–105) and is expressed in all behaviors and activities in Kemet.

THE MEANING OF THE BEAUTIFUL

The meaning of the beautiful is a cognitive conception that was in the Creator God's plan for the creation of the universe. Two creation scenes from the Fifth Dynasty suggest action, i.e. the happening of events that led to the completion of the anterior eras of the Ogdoad (the first phase of creation) and the first Ennead (the second phase of creation). The glyph, *khepra nefer*, "becoming or happening" in beauty, perfection, goodness" is indicative of observation and evaluation of the creative process; while *nefer* reflects observation and evaluation of the manifestation of perfection or excellence in the beings desired. *Djhut*y records the proceedings while *Maāt* observes and assures truth and justice, i.e. accuracy is recorded; hence *Djhut*y is the judge and *Maāt* is the witness.

Basic Definitions

Nomenclature relative to the study of aesthetics includes beauty, perfection, goodness, truth, and justice. An examination of vocabulary with Indo European etymologies is necessary because *MDW NTR* is translated using these meanings. Words used in translations have etymologies in languages such as Greek, Old and Late Latin, Old French, Old and Middle English and German.

Deu, the Indo European root of beauty means "to do, perform, show favor, revere. In participial form **dw-enos* in Latin means bonus, good, useful, and efficient. It is also possible that the suffixed zero-grade form **beāre*, means to make blessed, i.e. beatific, beatify beatitude, and beatrice.

Perfection, from the Latin word *perfectus*, means finish. So perfection means to finish a thing and nothing can be added or taken away to make improvement. Other ideas associated with perfection include being without defect or blemish, completely suited for a particular purpose, and ideal. To be perfect means to be accurate, exact, precise.

The etymology of good stems from the Old English word *gōd*. *Gōd* is derived from the Old Germanic word *ghedh*, which means to unite, join,

and fit. The lengthened o-grade form **ghōdh-* in Germanic **gōdaz* means “fitting, suitable,” in Old English *gōd*, good: There are several adjectival definitions of good, some of which include: Having positive or desirable qualities; serving the end desired; suitable; serviceable: in excellent condition; whole; sound: genuine; real: bountiful: full: pleasant; enjoyable: of moral excellence; virtuous; upright: benevolent; cheerful; kind. It also means to be socially correct and proper. One can also see that from Old English the word “gōd,” which is the origin of the word “good,” is similar to the word “god” which means the “perfect one.” There is a sense here that the being conceived as perfect that is; god, is also closely related to the word in Old English from which we get “good.” If this is so, it suggests that the ancient conception of the good and the beautiful found in ancient Africa made its way into the thought processes of other people.

Just and justice is commonly associated with ethics and morals. Definitions of just and justice which can be applied to the essence of the beautiful are lawful, legitimate, suitable, and fitting. It means the quality of being just; upholding standards or canons, “the administration and procedure of law.”

The Relevance of Becoming and Being

A painting on the wall in the tomb of *Unas* (4th Dynasty) illustrates the *khepra* (becoming; what is happening) in the creative process of the first Ennead. The scene depicts the separation of the divine union of *Nūt* and *Geb*, i.e. heaven and earth. *Khunum*, the ram-headed god, stands at the left of the scene. *Nut* is posed arched over *Geb*. *Geb* lies in repose upon a scarab beetle attached to an elongated serpent. The serpent here denotes time, so the idea of becoming is a process that requires time. Above *Nut* is a scarab with outstretched protective wings that point downward in the shape of the glyph for *pt* (sky) holding the glyph for *nefer* in its hind legs. To the right and left of the *khepra* is the eye of *Heru*. Each eye of *Heru* faces a single heart attached to the windpipe. *Djhuty*, scribe of the gods, is positioned at the right of the scene as recorder.

Another drawing depicts the ontological phase of the process. In this scene, *Nut* has been separated from *Geb* and is held aloft by *Shu*. *Geb* is no longer in repose upon the serpent with a scarab for its head, but appears in an awakened state. The god *Rā*, depicted as a *ba* bird with a bearded human head, the soul of the universe, stands near the feet of *Nut* and *Geb*. Above the scene is the glyph, *nefer*; the *khepra* is no longer present; consequently, the creative or divine process of the first Ennead is no longer in a state of becoming but in a state of completeness and perfection.

The Relevance of Observation and Evaluation in the Divine Creative Process

The first phase of the evaluative process is observations; as such, the Creator looked at or examined all the desired beings that had come into existence based on a preconceived idea. Forms in this instance are to be understood as the multitude of beings which came into existence including but not limited to the sun, moon, stars, water, air, minerals, sky, earth, humans, animals, reptiles, insects, plants, and rocks.

The second phase of the process required an assessment about the quality of how beings had manifested into existence against some preconceived standard. *Djhoty* and *Maat* are acknowledged as standards in Chapter 15 Plate 21 in the Book of the Dead. Based on the standards of *Djhoty*, scribe of the gods and inventor of mathematics and science, and *Maat*, daughter of *Ra*, whose name means truth and justice, *nefer* (beauty, perfection, and goodness) was the name of the first Ennead.

KEMETIC BEAUTY TERMINOLOGY

The people of Kemet loved beauty and their language had many words to express their sense of the beautiful. Some words associated with beauty, perfection and goodness are as follows:

MDW NTR words for *nfr* (beauty, perfection, goodness)



 or  Nfr

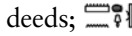


 or  Nfrt

 Nftw

Nfr in full writing is applied to appearances, quality, character or repute, conditions, fixed expressions, and as an adverb, happily, well. *Nfrt* is applied to good things. *Nfr* with the vertical stroke means in actuality beauty, good, kindness, goodness, happiness, good fortune, while *nfrw* means beauty and goodness. *Nfr* with determinative takes the meaning of the determinative. However, *nfr* is used, it connotes goodness.

Likewise, there are statements of the centrality of *nefer* and *maat* in practices that required excellence or *nefer* (perfection). Some words used for excellence in both material and social values include:

Raymond Faulkner (1981) transcribes the following MDW NTR and transliterations that point to excellence as standards of inspiration:  *mnhb hr ib*, 'pleasing to the heart'; splendid of buildings; of workmanship,  *mnhw hr dkrw*, lavish of workmanship; excellent, of occasions, of

deeds;  *mnbw*, excellence, virtues of someone.  *Men-nfr*, nome location, i.e. Memphis, which means Established in Beauty. *Ke-nfr-’Immh3t* “the pyramid [for] Amenemhēt is high and beautiful is one example of the notion of  *mnh hr ib*’ pleasing to the heart and splendid of buildings and workmanship (p. 109).

Words that connote the ontological nature of beauty for animate and inanimate objects are attractiveness of appearance, goodness of character and all states or conditions of being. In the “Recitation by Nut” it declares: “I enfold your beauty within this soul of mine for all life, permanence, dominion and health for the King—may he live forever!” (PT) Autobiographies always tell in details of the goodness of character of the deceased. As Asante says, “words have function, meaning, and etymology.” In Kemet, most often names served to convey a communication sender’s idea of the individual to the receiver of the communiqué. In PT §1208 *Maat* is called the Beautiful.

“ . . . give me these your two fingers which you gave to the Beautiful, the daughter of the great god, when the sky was separated from the earth” (PT §1208) identifies the goddess *Maat* by the name Beautiful which suggests *Maat* is beautiful even in the Latin sense to be blessed, useful, revered without defect, and godlike in addition to outward appearance. For *Maāt* to be called the Beautiful, it communicates that she met the standards of both *maat* and *nefer*. *Maāt* is the characterization of beauty for all human beings, male and female. To be beautiful necessarily takes on a divine meaning that is internal and external beauty. As a matter of fact, from an African point of view, beauty has less to do with physical characteristics; it has more to do with spiritual (the presence of the divine) characteristics.

AESTHETICS/BEAUTY OF SCIENCE

Science is the observation, identification, description, experimental investigation, and theoretical explanations of phenomena. Science is derived from the Latin word, *scientia*, which means knowledge. J. Estes (1934/1989) is correct in his recognition that science for the people of Kemet dealt more with content—the facts—hence, the beauty of science is knowledge of truth, i.e. *maat*, which they gained as a result of their extraordinary powers of observation, their perfect perception of the phenomena of the external world, and empirical knowledge. Moreover, canons of proportions were scientifically based. Using the word, *scientia*, knowledge, priests were scientists who specialized in scientific disciplines, such as physics, medicine, morphology, mathematics, engineering, and metaphysics. All sciences fell under the auspices of *Djhoty*. The aesthetic value of the science is that once

truth had been discovered and recorded, it is analogous to the step pyramid; it lays the base or foundation as the starting point for future discoveries.

One cannot forget that Ancient Kemet was an agrarian society and they depended upon the Nile for their life survival; hence, everything depended on expert knowledge of astronomy, astrology, and astrophysics. Each day was a practice in the divine, the beautiful and the good. When a family went out to their fields, they were seeking to be in synchrony with the divine as it was manifest in the shape of the fields, the use of the tools for planting and harvesting, and the science that existed was a practical, realistic science.

An exquisite illustration of the ancients' advanced astronomical knowledge is the astronomical ceiling of the funerary chamber in the tomb of *Senmut*, a brilliant architect who lived during the Middle Kingdom. The upper part of the ceiling shows the thirty-six weeks of the Kemet year; the lower twelve circles represented the twelve months. Both parts include scenes of the Anterior *Neteru*. The elements in the drawing are perfectly arranged and are proportioned with mathematical precision to achieve *maat* and *nefer*—balance and harmony since the content represents true cosmic happenings.

The southern part of the ceiling illustrates further happenings in the cosmos. Included in this scene is a constellation of four stars, possibly the constellation of Orion (*Sab*), a constellation in the celestial equator near Gemini and Taurus. *Sab*, holding an *ankh*, the symbol of life, in one hand and the *w3s* scepter, the symbol for dominion, in the other hand, stands in his boat with a star at the stem and stern. Nearby, *Auset* stands in her boat, with an ankh and (?) in her hand.

The falcon-headed god, possibly *Heru* (the morning star), is directing a staff against a bull with a tail of three stars. This constellation, representing *Meskhit*, the Great Bear, graces the northern part of the ceiling.

Finally, the constellation in the tomb of *Sety I* in the Valley of the Kings shows the Anterior *Neteru* identified by their animal heads.

Observatories were set up to study the movement of the sun, moon, and stars. They used their pictorial writing system to depict how they envisioned the happenings in the heavens.

AESTHETICS/BEAUTY IN COSMOGONY

The divine and the beautiful are interdependent concepts that began at the birth of the universe. In Egyptian language, the word for “creation” is *sep tepy*, which means the “first occasion.” In this stage of becoming, everything is divine because creation is a divine deed. So, when *Geb*, the earth

male principal, made love with Nut, the sky female principal, to create all beings in the earth and the sky, Egyptians named this love meeting *neferu*, or beauty, goodness, and perfection. This idea was beautifully documented in the creation story during the Fifth Dynasty.

The Egyptians observed the perfection of happenings in the cosmic world. They observed the sun, moon, and stars and their behaviors. For example, the regularity of the rising and setting sun, and the appearance of the moon and stars in the night skies were observed, and the occurrences were “a matter a millions times true.” Time and eternity is an aspect of the cosmos. A drawing along with text demonstrates that time and eternity was apparent for the people of Kemet.

A description of the drawing is as follows: A serpent that swallows its own tail symbolizes eternity. Two arms descending from heaven embrace the serpent, holding the young sun child within a womb-like sun disk, which symbolizes Nut the sky goddess. The disk rests upon two Aker lions seated back-to-back which represent eastern and western horizons (yesterday and tomorrow). Between the lions is the head that represents Hether (Greek, Hathor), the goddess of love, beauty, and fertility, perhaps representing the present. The goddess *Renpet* records time. She is identified as the lady of eternity and wears a headpiece with a palm branch stripped of leaves and notched to serve as a tally. The notched palm branch is the symbol of years (*rnpt* “year”).

The serpent goddess is present at the dawn birth when the sun god *Ra* rises to new life as encapsulated in images showing the young sun child secure within a womb-like solar disk, held by maternal arms. *Rā* takes three forms: *Khepri* (*khepera*) in the morning; *Rā* at midday and *Atum* in the evening. The serpent goddess plays a great part in the mysteries of the sun. When the sun god *Rā* shines in his boat at midday and when he sets down in the evening in the western horizon, the serpent goddess always accompanies *Rā* (the creator, symbolized by the sun). The day was divided into three phases—dawn, noon, and evening. Each day, the sun god journeys through these, hour by hour, changing his name and form in each one: as *Khepri* he is the scarab beetle of the East (*Kheper* “to become”), at noon, the sun god is *Rā*, triumphantly sailing across the sky in his boat; then, as *Atum*, whose name means both “The Complete One” and “The Not (yet) Existent One,” he is the Old Man of the evening appearing as a ram-headed figure within the solar disk.

The people of Kemet observed the winds, driven by cosmic action, served a good purpose. It is written in the BOD, Chapter 141, “the Storm in the sky . . . bears the god aloft . . .” Therefore, the cosmos lived by *maat*. Moreover, the moon and winds regulate the currents and tides of the

Nile River. Since sailboats were one form of travel, knowledge of the winds and waters was necessary for navigation.

Priest-scribes recognized the duality of all living beings—male and female in the terrestrial world; therefore, they linked the aspects of the celestial world with the terrestrial world as male or female principals. The cosmic beings were linked with humans, animals, plants, and other beings in the terrestrial world as well. Gods and goddesses are depicted as human bodies with animal heads and in some cases two animals represent the same god. Some examples include: *Djhut* with the head of an ibis, a baboon, or a falcon; *Hathor* with the head of the cow and sometimes she is depicted as the actual cow; Anpu (Anubis) with the head of the jackal. The goddess *Maat* is depicted with a feather and in some scenes she is adorned with the wings of a huge bird, which is indicative of her associative attribute of protection. *Nefertum* is linked with the lotus plant. Hence, the First and Second Ennead in the creative process are linked.

According to Herodotus, “The Egyptians, too, found out to which god every month and day belongs, and to tell by the day of a man’s (and woman’s) birth what fortune he will have, when he will die and what manner of man he is” (p. 122). This notion further links humans with the cosmic world.

Based on the observation of perfection in the cosmic world and their world view, the people of Kemet were motivated to build a society filled with perfection and beauty in such a way that heaven and earth were linked. They planned, designed, and built grandiose architectural structures, sea-going vessels, cities and towns. Rituals, festivals, and celebrations were developed for specific purposes and were linked with the cosmic happenings, therefore, a calendar of these events was maintained. They developed a system of writing, *MDW NTR*, divine words of god, and pictorial depictions to communicate activities concerning life and afterlife, which makes it possible to study and comprehend their style of life. This system of writing is so beautiful and perfect that it has become known as “plastic art” in the modern world.

THE AESTHETIC/BEAUTY OF WRITING

Djhut and *Seshet* were divine *sesht* (scribes). *Djhut* is well-known as the scribe of the gods, the god of wisdom, knowledge, and science. *Seshet*, goddess of writing and measurement and ruler of books, is portrayed as a female who wears a headband with horns and a star with her name written *Sš3t* on it. Her dress is a plain sheath covered by a long panther-skin with the tail that reaches her feet. *Seshet* with her name, the rosette, inscribed

appears on the obverse side of the upper register of Narmer's palette. She has also been recorded assisting the king in the ritual of "stretching the cord" associated with astronomical and astrological measurements for the location of temples and recording the king's jubilees and cattle counts and the king's campaigns as early as the 2nd Dynasty. The word *sesb*, translated scribe, is derived from the goddess *Seshet's* name. *Imhotep* was the prime minister of *Djoser*, Pharaoh of the Third Dynasty (c. 2686–2613 B.C.). Obenga (1995) points out he poured libation before beginning to write. *Limn*, derived from the word *lūmināre*, means to illuminate. So Imhotep poured libation to invoke divine illumination and inspiration. These ideas suggest that writing was, first and foremost, based on *maat*. *Djbuty* and *Maāt* were the standards for judging truth in writings.

MDW NTR, as a language, was created using words ascribed by the god, Ptah, the god responsible for giving names to all created beings. In the traditional African context, there was no distinction between sacred and secular; therefore, all words were god's words. The written language was a system consisting of limns, i.e., drawings and paintings, using manifestations of creation to express illuminations and inspirations. This beautiful system of writing was used to express thoughts, words, actions, core beliefs, and values of the people. A scene may be drawn or painted to illustrate some action or activity; but objects within the scene were also used as words and sometime the entire scene was a word. For modern thought, this made the scene complex; but it was not a complex idea in the society of Kemet, even for ordinary citizens. Narmer's palette, dated stylistically to the Protodynastic period (c.3100–2950 B.C.) held mysteries for modern interpreters; yet, the drawings held no complexity for citizens in the era which they were produced. The drawings were not considered decorations but words that resounded truth. The drawings could be read exactly the way the written word is read today.

The choice not to use the word art from the Latin word *ars*, *art-* at the outset, a term imposed on the writing system outside of the *Kemetic'* ideology, is not accidental. There is no evidence that the people of Kemet thought of *Mdw Ntr* or limns as different, nor did they conceive of it as art. Modern terminology coined for specific philosophical disciplines has been used to describe ancient crafts and can be a cause for confusion; consequently, to determine the aesthetic ideal of writing it is necessary to examine it from inside.

It seems safe to conclude that the early limners relied on divine inspiration and illumination from *Djbuty*, *Maat*, and *Seshet* to develop a sophisticated highly concatenated system of writing. The nature of the beautiful in the style of writing in Kemet can be investigated through a lens that

brings to fore the divine energies of these three deities in visual presentations. For instance, the priest scribes sought knowledge from *Djhuty*, the founder of the sciences, from *Maāt* to write truth and justice, and from *Seshet* mathematical precision. The idea of *Seshet* assisting the king in the ritual of “stretching the cord” for proportional measurement of the ground to plan for layout of temples can be advanced to explain the creation of grids to ensure *maat*, i.e., balance, harmony, and straightness of objects in drawings and paintings.

AESTHETICS/BEAUTY IN BUSINESS

The etymology of business administration rests on the shoulders of Ausar (Osiris), the first king of Kemet who took possession of the Two Lands even in the womb of Nut. He undertook government of the earth as he did in the womb of Nut and taught his people agriculture, gave them a settled existence, and introduced the hieroglyphic script, which had been invented by the god *Djhuty* (Thoth). (Browder) He also established law, order, and worship instructions for his people. His country became the most prosperous because of sophisticated agricultural techniques; and his business practices became the prototype. Mastery of the science of writing and mathematics was fundamental to the achievement of optimal business operations.

In order to determine the nature of the beauty in business affairs, a central theme must emerge. Select areas of business administration will be observed to arrive at the aesthetics/beauty of business administration. Good business ethics, managing human resources, sequencing operations, project planning for large structures, such as pyramids, temples, tombs, and other large structures, recordkeeping/bookkeeping, scheduling activities, and quality management are critical in the consideration of aesthetics/beauty in business administration.

Legal and Ethical Business Practices

First and foremost, legal and ethical business practices were paramount since the idea of laws was a divine invention. Karenga (2003) conducted an exhaustive study of *maat* as the ethical ideal in Kemet. Ethics not only concerned itself with dealings related to humans but necessarily included the environment. To maintain balance, harmony, and order with nature was a given in a sacred society. Just and fair dealings with human resources in the country can be extrapolated from autobiographies such as *Rekhmire's* when he acclaims, “I rescued the weak man from the strong man . . . subdued the greedy man in his hour . . . Indeed I never took a bribe from anyone” (James 2003). Karenga (2003) quotes from *Wr-huu's* self-presentation (autobiography) in

the Fifth Dynasty “I never did what was harmful to people.” Asante (1990) concludes that the king is the “embodiment of the concept of *Maat*,” and, as such, sets the standards for character and conduct for his people.

In order to achieve and maintain a society as perfect and as opulent as Kemet was, the well-orchestrated collective effort of human resources was needed. Much of the workforce, in all administrative categories, whether they dwelt with architectural constructions, trade (imports and exports of goods), medicine, mortuary services, or care of the gods, was headed by specialists in the field. In many cases, heads were priests. For example, in the Old Kingdom, some titles of healers were “master of physicians” and “chief of physicians”; *Wesh-Ptah* was the chief architect for Pharaoh *Neferirkare*.

Nefer is inherent in specialization in that a skill can be practiced to the point of perfection, thereby rendering the craftsman an expert. Imagine the level of skill acquired in the mortuary process as delineated in *Mummies: A Voyage Through Eternity* (pp. 38–39). The first step in the process was for a priest scribe to mark the line where the body would be cut. The next step was for the *parachistes* to make the incision to remove the viscera. Finally, the *taricheutes* desiccated the body with natron. At the appropriate time in the process, bandaging begins. The entire process which takes approximately 72 days and was carried out according to canons to ensure perfection; the ultimate goal was *maat* and *nefer*.

Another example of specialization is found in jewelry workshops. One person makes the beads, another drills the holes in the beads and another threads the beads onto papyrus string. Work specialization and sequencing of tasks or operations (assembly lines in the industrial era) were critical factors in performing activities of production that ultimately led to perfection.

Recordkeeping

Recordkeeping (bookkeeping) practices were linked with the divine. Attributes associated with the goddess, *Seshet*, consort of *Djhutj*, were writing, measurement, and counting. Texts are replete with information regarding inventory control.

In a society where humans exchanged in such a beautiful way, especially when the harvest was good, it was essential that scribes record information about exchanges. If a farmer gave a bushel of corn to a fisherman in exchange for 20 fish, the record must be kept straight for future exchanges and standards. *Maat* (truthfulness) was the expected in these exchanges as the teachings of Amenomepe warn, “Do not move the scales, do not charge the weights and do not diminish the parts of the

bushel . . . Do not create a bushel that contains two, lest you will near the abyss. The bushel is the eye of *Re*. He loathes him who defrauds.” Scenes of scribes recording amounts of grain harvested show the necessity of accurate recordkeeping, which ultimately ensures *maat*.

Taxation was imposed on business, but it was proportional. Taxation for prospective income from yield of crops was based on the level the Nile rose determined by nilometers, or steps that descended down into the river. In one scene, a senior tax assessor checks the limits of a field before beginning his survey.

Importing and Exporting

From the earliest times, importing and exporting by land and sea was carried on to improve the quality of life for the people of Kemet and to achieve and maintain *nefer* in their environment. Kemet’s major resources were foodstuffs, gold, cooper, malachite, gemstones and natron (soda); however, they lacked timber, silver, iron, and tin. The literature is replete with testimonies of expeditions to other lands. Two accounts are presented here. The first is from the autobiography of Prince Harkhuf, who lived sometime between 2300 and 2200 B.C., which describes three trips he made to the Sudan. A portion of the autobiography reads:

I did it in seven months and brought back from it all kinds of good and rare presents . . . His Majesty sent me a second time . . . I set forth [from the First Cataract] . . . and returned . . . in the space of eight months. I returned and brought presents from this country in very great quantity . . . His Majesty sent me a third time . . . I returned with 300 asses loaded with incense, ebony, oil, leopard skins, elephant tusks, boomerangs, and all good products. (Cited by Lionel Carson 1974/1994 p.28–29)

Another example of importing using ships is the expedition sent to the Divine Land and Punt by Queen Chnemtamum (Hatshepsut) (1490–1470 B.C.). Treasures from these magnificent tropical places include beautiful plants, heaps of incense, great myrrh trees, ebony, pure ivory, white gold from the country of Amu, sweet-scented woods, baboons, monkeys, and greyhounds, and skins of the panther of the south.

A relief on the walls of Queen Chnemtamum’s temple at Deir el-Bahri depicts ships that participated in the expedition to Punt. We should be reminded that Kemetians were well-educated in the science of oceanography and used various types of seagoing vessels designed for specific purposes. Erman provides this description from the Harris papyrus of the

processes involved in one of the great Oceanographic expeditions commissioned by Queen Chnemtamum.

A superintendent causes all these heterogeneous articles to be carefully piled up on the ship, where the heap reaches nearly as high as the lower yard. The monkeys are allowed, nevertheless, to run about freely; . . . “the soldiers of the lord of the two countries have voyaged home in peace and traveled to Thebes with joy,” their arrival there is the occasion of quite a triumphal pageant. With green boughs in their hands, they enter the town in festive procession and bring their gifts to their lady ruler; gifts, “the like of which had never before been brought to any other king.” Amongst them, there are indeed “two live panthers, which are to follow her majesty”; and what awakens still greater astonishment, “thirty-one growing incense trees, which have been brought over amongst the treasures of Punt for the majesty of this god, Amon Re. No one has ever seen the like since the world was created.”

Nefer and *maat* were applied to business practices of importation and exportation of goods. Accurate records were maintained of inventory, care had to be taken in the transportation of goods so that they were received in good condition; human resources had to be cared for and compensated, and the distribution of goods had to be carried out by quality standards.

Quality Management

Quality management is concerned with perfection of workmanship as well as efficiency and effectiveness of goods and services produced. A workshop scene from the tomb of *Apuki* and *Nebamum* at Thebes shows work in progress, including carpentry and cabinet making, jewelry and metal-working. *Maāt* sits on top of the scales to ensure accuracy of weight of gold rings before they are issued to craftsmen. Inspection of finished products takes place to ensure perfection. Principles established by *Djhuty*, *Maat*, *Seshet*, and *nefer* were the epitome of quality and are inherent in the implications of quality management in Kemet; consequently, the idea of quality management was pervasive. Quality was established in all crafts by *Ptah*, god of crafts, and the concept was perpetuated by priests who oversaw various projects such as building and writing. Standards were set from the earliest of times, and they were known so those involved were expected to provide quality goods. Actually, perfection in all crafts would be expected since it was known that *Ptah* was the god of crafts; therefore, the production of all crafts was a sacred process.

AESTHETICS/BEAUTY IN ARCHITECTONICS

Architectonics is the scientific systemization of knowledge required especially for the construction of large structures such as pyramids, temples, palaces, raising obelisks, tombs, and cities. Architects, or master builders, plan and design such structures. They are concerned about style, materials, layout, and location. Moreover, they concern themselves with the intended purpose for the completed structure. Hence, architecture is the art and science of designing and erecting large buildings.

Seshet, *Djbuty*'s assistant, was the keeper of ground plans and charts and was an expert in the art of sighting the stars and planets, which made it possible to orient buildings properly as illustrated in the ritual of assisting the King in "Stretching the Cord" (Meeks and Favard-Meeks, 1993:1996 p. 85) The primary layout of Kemet was based on the architects' conception of divine order; therefore, knowledge of the natural sciences was fundamental to their overall designs and plans. For example, the knowledge of astronomy allowed the architects to fix the position of the pyramid with the four cardinal points. The entrance faced the north so it was toward the North Star. One illustration of divine order reflected in planning was the East bank of the Nile that was reserved for the living, while the West bank was reserved for those who had "gone forth." This arrangement was in accordance to the rising and setting of the sun.

Another consideration of divine order in terms of location is that the Nile served as the divide, yet the link between the living and the dead. On the West Bank, the "place of the dead," complexes consisted of pyramids surrounded by other structures including temples related to the dead king. On the other hand, *Tekhens* (obelisks) graced the East bank of the Nile, or the place of the living. Texts in pyramids and tombs were reserved for the dead, while texts on *tekhsens* were reserved for the living.

Pyramids

Pyramids and tombs became the eternal homes of deceased bodies. There are many theories and interpretations of the Kemetic belief about afterlife. One popular belief is that they believed that through funerary magic, the soul would be united with the body. As has been pointed out, funerary scenes depict the *ba* (soul) hovering above the body. To postulate that the brilliant minds of the people of Kemet had not over thousands of years come to the conclusion that bodies of the deceased would return to life is problematic for this writer. "The Akh (Spirit) is bound for the sky, the khet (corpse) is bound for the earth" (PT §474). Pyramids and tombs were designed so that there could be neither entrances nor departures once the

door was sealed. So the question is, “What were their thoughts when they preserved the bodies of transcended souls and placed them in their dwelling places for millions of years?”

Texts concerning life in its transcended state exist as the soul. Although the akh (spirit) is well-known and the belief is that it will dwell among the stars as a glorious shining light, it is the *ba* (soul) that moves to and fro. Based on information provided by the people of Kemet in their writings, an argument can be made that it is the soul that becomes attached to its body, to other humans, to other living beings, places, and things. Since the soul has the ability to travel, it can revisit its former environment where it once resided. Therefore, their bodies were prepared with infinity in mind, the soul could possibly revisit whenever or wherever it chooses to. This notion is not new since many ancient cultures have shared the same belief.

Walls of dwelling places for the deceased, especially kings, queens, priests, and others were covered with familiar writings concerning their afterlife and scenes of activities from their daily lives. Since the most natural attachment would be to one’s own body, it would hover near to it where it could be a part of and participate in the activities of everyday life. Some’s account of the last words of his grandfather, “Everything is ready; . . . Though I must go, yet I will always remain here. From the realm of the dead, I will be more useful to you. I will be there and here at the same time, because I have no flesh anymore” (p. 53) sheds light on the view of life and afterlife of the people of ancient Kemet.

The earliest pyramids were built between 2650 and 2263 B.C. Some major architects and their work in Kemet include:

- *Imhotep* (*Ii-m-htp*, “Come in peace”), 2650 B.C., was the architect of King Djoser’s Step Pyramid at Saqqara, the Memphite necropolis, during the Third Dynasty. The Step Pyramid, Imhotep’s masterpiece, is a huge building or monument with cut stone.

The Step Pyramid at Medum built for Snefru in Dynasty IV about 2900 originally contained seven steps, (seven being the number for perfection in Kemetic numerology) three of which have been preserved (*The Art of Ancient Egypt*, 1936).

- *Hemiumu*, a prince who was King *Khufu/Cheops*’ architect at Gisa plateau. Here three great pyramids were constructed; they are *Khufu*’s pyramid, *Kha-ef-Ra*’s (*Chephren*) pyramid, and *Menkau-Ra*’s (Mencyrenius) Pyramid. Three is the number of the trinity. The Great Sphinx, thought to be a portrait of King *Kha-ef-Ra*

(“He appears in glory as *Ra*”). All Giza pyramids belong to the Fourth Dynasty.

- *Meby* belonged to an important family of architects and overseers of the King’s works. He lived during the reign of King *Isehy* toward the end of the Fifth Dynasty.
- *Ankh-ma-Hor* (“My Life is in *Horu*’s hands”), his beautiful name (given name) being *Sesi*, hereditary prince, was the *imy-r k3t nbt nt nsu m t3 r dr.f* (overseer of all the Works of the King in the entire country). He was an official in the beginning of the 6th Dynasty (2423–2263 B.C.).
- Prince *Khaemwese*, son of *Ramses* II, restored the pyramid of *Unas*. This pyramid was built for the last king of the Fifth Dynasty which was the earliest to be inscribed with Pyramid Texts on its interior walls.

During the Middle Kingdom—Dynasties Eight and Ten (2040–1785 B.C.)—a new architectural form was introduced. The beautiful funerary temple at Deir el-Bahari of King Montu-hotep II (“God *Montou* is Satisfied”) was a terraced structure with colonnades, surmounted by a pyramid set in the midst of a columned hall on the upper level. In front of this temple-tomb was a row of square pillars cut from the solidified gravel.

Temples

- The *Luxor* temple with its columned courts. Next to the *Deir el-Bahari* temple, it is perhaps the most beautiful of all the buildings of the New Kingdom
- The *Ramesseum* (Ramses II)
- The rock-cut temple at *Abu Simbel* (Ramses II)
- The *Medinet Habu* temple (Ramses III)

Columns

- The papyrus bundle-column (of granite): Middle Kingdom, temple of King *Sahura*
- The polygonal column (Middle Kingdom) in the rock-cut tombs at *Beni Hasan*

- Columns derived from plant forms imitating lotus flowers and buds tied together
- Stone companion from papyrus columns (as early as the 3rd Dynasty up to 18th Dynasty)
- Palm leaf column of granite (Middle Kingdom)

Ke-nfr-’Imnḥt’s admiration for the “the high and beautiful” pyramid of Amenemḥet shows that attention to external beauty of the pyramid was important. In the BOD, Chapter 19, *Chapter for opening the tomb to Ani’s soul and shade so that he may go out into the day and have power in his legs exclaims*, “O Eye of Horus, save me, establish my beauty on the vertex of Re.” The vertex of *Re* appears to be the tips of pyramids and obelisks.

AESTHETICS/BEAUTY OF HEKA (MAGIC)

Included in Table 1 is basic *heka* terminology that will be used in the discussion of the aesthetics/beauty of *heka* in the lives of the people of Kemet. *Heka* is the power of working magic with words of power for beneficent (causing good, etymologically “doing well”) purposes.

Heka in Creation

Heka (translated magic in English) for the people of Kemet, was an inescapable aspect of the divine creative process. Characteristics of *heka* are causation, energizing, and empowering. It is the energetic power behind thoughts and/or words. *Heka*, energized thoughts and words, are divine

| | | |
|------|--------------------------|---|
| 𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏏 | <i>Netr a</i> | Divine magic or literature |
| 𓆎𓅓𓏏 | <i>Hekau</i> | The author of spells, incantation |
| 𓆎 | <i>Heka</i> | To utter charms, spells, incantations, to recite words of power |
| 𓆎𓅓 | <i>Hekaut</i> | The spells and magical formulae produced by the god <i>Heka</i> |
| 𓆎𓅓𓏏𓏏 | <i>Hekau metchau</i> (?) | Books of spells (?) |

Source: Budge, E. A. W. *An Egyptian Hieroglyphic Dictionary*

instruments first used by the creator god to transfigure the non-existence into the materialization of the universe. Several illustrations will explicate the people of Kemet's conception of *heka*.

According to *The Book of Knowing the Forms of the Existence of Ra and Thus Killing Apop* the Master of the Universe said, "I made use of my own mouth and *Heka* (magic) was my name." Therefore the creator god used magic and word to cause action.

Chapter 17 in the *Book of Coming Forth by Day (The Book of the Dead)* says: "It is I (who am) the Great God who came into existence (*hpr*) by his own effort (*ds.f*). Another salient illustration of the origin of the divine depicted in *The Book Of Knowing the Forms of the Existence of Ra and Thus Killing Apop* as recorded in the *Bremner Rhind Papyrus*, (pp. 68–69), reads: ". . . I came to existence for I was anterior to the Anterior *Netcherw* that I had created. I was anterior to these *Netcherw*." It goes on to read:

I thus came to existence in the anterior era and a multitude of forms of existence had come to exist in this world. I made everything alone before any being (other than myself) manifested itself to existence to act with me in these places. Therefore, I made forms of existence from the force (which is in me). There I created the Nun being (still) dormant and (I), not having found a place to stand up yet.

The Practice of Heka, Thought and Word

Heka was the energizing force behind rhetorical and oratorical flourishes, hymns, and chants that caused the effects of transfiguration and transformation in medicinal, ceremonial, puberty, birth, marriage, and funerary rituals.

The prelude to Chapter 17 of the *Book of the Dead* conveys this idea. In addition, this text admonishes humans in the East, i.e. the land of the living, to do the same to reap the benefits of the ancestors. It reads:

Here begins praises and recitations, going in and out of the God's Domain, have benefit in the beautiful West, being in the suite of *Osiris*, resting at the food-table of *Wennefer*, going out into the day, **taking any shape in which he desires to be**, playing at *Senet*, sitting in a booth, and **going forth as a living soul by the *Osiris Ani* after he has died. It is beneficial to him who does it on earth.**

The kings and priests were cognizant of being able to transform themselves into various beings for their benefit. Hence, the notion of doubles was not reserved for the dead alone.

Moreover, in Chapter 24, Chapter for bringing magic to Ani affirms:

I am Atum-Khepri who came into being of himself upon the lap of his mother Nut, who gave jackals to those who are in the Primordial Waters and hunting-dogs to those who are in the tribunal. I have collected this magic in every place where it was, from the possession of anyone who possessed it . . . Transform yourself into a heron . . .

The origin of *heka* (magic) was divine, so for the people of Kemet, there was no black magic and white magic. As the creative force behind thought and word, *heka* was used in rituals, festivals, and celebrations. It was used in medicine and for protection. *Heka* is a simple yet complex idea. Thoughts and words driven by the energy force of *heka* are the cause of some action (effect) which may or may not be desired. It can be exploited to such an extent that both *maat* (good) and *isfet* (bad) can be the result. When the intended outcome is *isfet*, *heka* itself is not bad/evil; the results of the power of a divine force are used and intended to yield *isfet*; i.e. not *maat*. Therefore, the aesthetics/beauty of *heka* is the benefit it brings to the individual or group. Aesthetically, *heka* is the generative use of power behind thoughts and/or words that caused *maat*; that is, harmony and balance to exist.

AESTHETICS/BEAUTY IN AMULETS

Amulets are tangible objects that have been transformed using *hu/heka* from a carnal object to an incarnate being. The aesthetic value of amulets is twofold in Kemet. First, their function was to bring about balance, harmony, and protection for a desired situation. Second, the color, material, shape, and size of the amulets were made in perfect proportion according to the established canon. They were used in medicine; they were used for personal adornment; and there were funerary amulets.

Several beautifully written chapters in the BOD give details for the use of amulets, including instructions for how to use them for the benefit of the deceased.

Chapter 157—Chapter for a golden vulture to be placed on the neck of the deceased:

Isis came, she halted at the town and sought out a hiding-place for *Horus* when he came out of his marshes . . . awoke in a bad state and painted his eyes in the god's ship. It was commanded to him to rule

the Banks, and he assumed the condition of a mighty warrior, for he remembered what had been done, and he engendered fear of him and inspired respect. His great mother protects him and erases those who come against *Horus*.

To be spoken over a golden vulture with this spell inscribed on it; it is to be set as a protection for this worthy spirit on the day of interment, as a matter a million times true.

Chapter 158—Chapter for a golden collar to be placed on the throat of the deceased:

O my father, my brother, and my mother *Isis*, release me, look at me, for I am one of those who should be released when *Geb* sees them.

To be spoken over a golden collar with this spell inscribed on it; it is to be set on the throat of the deceased on the day of interment.

Chapter 159—Chapter for a papyrus-column of green feldspar to be placed on the throat of the deceased:

O you who have come forth today from the god's house, she whose voice is loud goes round about from the door to the Two Houses, she has assumed the power of her father, who is ennobled as Bull of Nursing Goddesses, and she accepts those of her followers who do great deeds to her.



To be spoken over a papyrus-column of green feldspar with this spell inscribed on it; it is to be set on the throat of the deceased.

Inscriptions on papyrus were used in medical treatment also. The written word had power just as the spoken word did.

AESTHETICS/BEAUTY IN MEDICINE

Medicine as a science was practiced based on accurate measurement as early as the Old Kingdom. Pan scales were used for weighing drugs, and medicine was made up by proportional volumes using The Eye of *Heru*. Medical documents were housed in *Per ankhs*; that is, houses of life. Among the documents housed in *per ankhs* were the Ebers Papyrus, which contained medical and *heka* (magic) information. The contents of the Hearst Papyrus is a list of drugs that could be used by the physician. The Chester Beatty V Papyrus from Dynasty XIX (1307–1196 B.C.) during the reign of the Ramses II family contains spells and incantations. The Leiden Papyrus,

from the third century A.D., contained a collection of spells. The Kahun Gynecological Papyrus is dedicated to the treatment of women patients. The Edwin Smith Papyrus contained references to the brain and the neurological relationship between the brain (spinal cord and nervous system) and the body. Physicians were versed in anatomy, from the Greek word *anatemnein* (to cut up), and physiology branches of morphology that deal with the structure of humans, plants, and animals.

Men and women served as physicians beginning with the Old Kingdom. Lady *Peseshet* lived during the Fourth Dynasty or the early Fifth Dynasty (2584 or 2465 B.C.) Her titles included  *imyt-r* (lady director of lady physicians),  *imyt-r hmwt-ka* (lady director of lady soul-priestesses, and *rht-nsu* (king's acquaintance-lady). One of the many titles *Imhotep* held was that of physician. *Wesh-Ptah* was physician, vizier, and chief architect for Pharaoh *Neferirkare* (2446–2426 B.C.) in the Fifth Dynasty. According to Estes (1989/1934), Paul Ghalioungui cataloged 54 documented Old Kingdom healers, 20 in the Middle Kingdom, 40 in the New Kingdom and 15 in the Late Period. Titles of healers in the Old Kingdom include chief inspector, overseer, master of physicians, and chief of physicians.

Physicians practiced medicine using the divine conception of *hulheka* (word magic) and pharmaceutical mixtures to keep the body in balance and harmony within itself. They also treated animals with medical maladies. Human, animal, plant, and some elements were linked for the benefit of a healthy society.

Ankh, or life, was a major focus for the people of Kemet; therefore, good health was highly valued. Miriam Lichthem (1980 pp. 159–184, 200–204) (as cited in Estes 1934/1989) shows the attitude toward importance of good health as illustrated by the following passages:

- A timely remedy is to prevent illness by having the greatness of the god in your heart
- Do not pamper yourself when you are young, lest you be weak when you are old
- Do not be despondent when you are ill; your [death] is not made yet. There is no tooth that rots yet stays in place

Aphorisms that focus on the appropriate use of medicine:

- Do not slight a small illness for which there is a remedy; use the remedy

- Do not scorn a remedy that you can use
- Do not say, ‘My illness has passed, I will not use medication’

A complete description and benefits of the castor bean is one example of the attitude of physicians toward perfect internal and external health. The excerpt provided by Estes (1934/1989) is as follows:

. . . if its roots are crushed in water and applied to a head which is ill, then he will get well immediately like one who is not ill. But if a little of its seed is chewed with beer by a man with looseness in his excrements [i.e. diarrhea], then it expels the disease in the belly of the man. Further, the hair of a woman is made to grow by means of its seed: it is ground, mixed together and put into oil by the woman, who shall rub her head therewith. Further, its oil in its seed is used to anoint one who [suffers] from the rose [?] with bad putrid [??], then [??] the skin as [in] one whom nothing has befallen. But he is treated by rubbing the aforesaid for 10 days, rubbing in very early in the morning, until it is expelled. Really excellent, [proved] many times (p. 102).

The statement, “Really excellent, . . . proved many times” is evidence that empirical data was at least observed, if not recorded, and is obvious from this and other statements, such as “A matter a million times true.” In medicine, if a thing is proven “a million times true,” there is no need to alter the formula of a particular remedy.

In modern times, Africans and African Americans continue to use oil from the castor bean for hair care. Women use products made with the castor bean to enhance hair growth by massaging the scalp and hair with it. Good health is in keeping with *maat* and *nefer*. Medicine is not only used to alleviate pain and suffering in the body; it is important for all parts of the body to be in balance and harmony.

AESTHETICS/BEAUTY IN RECITATIONS

Speech of mortals was based on *MDW NTR*, transcribed to mean divine words of god. *Djhutj*, scribe of the gods, taught the language to the people of Kemet. Therefore, to refer to beautiful speech, written and oral, was perfect speech because as Sauneron (2000, pp. 124–125) says . . . “their language—remained a resonant echo of the vital energy that had brought the universe to life, a cosmic force.” So, words spoken were not only beautiful in pronunciation and sentence structure but, more importantly, in *maat* (truth

and justice). This researcher has only discovered one language for the people of *Kemet*, that is, *MDW NTR*. What is well-known, however, is the difference in the way the language was written over time and for different purposes. One major problem is the best Greek translation of *MDW NTR*.

The word hieroglyph comes from the Greek word *hieros*, which means holy and *gluphein*, to carve. The etymology of the word carve is derived from *gleubh* that means to tear apart, cleave. *Gleubh*, used in its most basic form, comes from the Old English word *clēofan*, means to split, cleave, from Germanic *kleuban*, The o-grade form of *gloubh* is probably from Middle English clever, nimble, skillfull, and Old Norze *kleyfr* that means easy to split, from the Germanic word *klaubri*. Given the meaning of hieroglyphic, which means holy carvings, immediately change the meaning of the Egyptian word *MDW NTR*, because *MDW NTR* was more than holy carvings. The Greek meaning connotes carvings and is an incredibly different meaning than divine words carved in stone.

Ankh Mi Ra (1995, pp. 28–31) delineates the evolution of the written form of *MDW NTR*. He argues that *MDW NTR* should only be used when referring to sacred texts. He does not, however, indicate an alternative language that was used for ordinary speech and writing. Modern scholars deem texts dealing with mathematics, activities concerning the inventory of the household, matters of business administration, military conquests, and so forth, as secular writing. Perhaps this is because they separate the sacred from the secular. A sharp separation between the sacred and secular was not the same reality for the people of *Kemet* nor Africans in general as it is in the Western world. The script may be abbreviated for efficiency of time, but the words and their meanings are the same.

Ankh Mi Ra uses the story of “Webaoner’s Wife and the Townsman” from Lisa Manniche’s (1987, pp. 60–62) book, *Sexual Life in Ancient Egypt*, as an example of text that should not be considered *MDW NTR*. A close reading of this story illustrates the consequences of behavior contradictory to *maat*. Moreover, King *Nebka* and the lector priest are involved in the resolution of the matter to restore harmony, order, and right actions in the community.

We cannot forget that the people of *Kemet* used teachings to instruct the members of society how to behave according to *maat*. A tale that describes behavior considered not *maat*, but *isfet* or *bwt* would still use the same language. So *MDW NTR* was like *heka* (magic). There was no black or white magic. All *heka* was of divine origin. The difference was the intent and purpose that was considered *maat/nefer* (truth, justice, beautiful/good) or *isfet/bwt* (evil). It seems apparent that the speaker in the passage from the Hermetic writings quoted by Sauneron (2000) is correct when he prophesied

that when the Greeks decided to translate *MDW NTR* into their own language it would cause the greatest distortion and unclarity (p. 122).

Language used for recitations in rituals, festivals, and ceremonies, therefore, could be considered ordinary language of the people constructed for a special purpose. The only probable difference between speech for sacred purposes, such as that used in rituals, festivals, and ceremonies, and ordinary speech was in the purpose, loudness, and intensity of the words spoken.

Examples of recitations for various Festivals are included in *The Book of Coming Forth by Day* (BOD). “A chapter to be said when **the moon is new on the first day of the month**” is as follows:

Open, O cloudiness! The bleared Eye of *Re* is covered, and *Horus* proceeds happily every day, even he the great of shape and weighty of striking-power, who dispels bleariness of eye with his fiery breath. Behold, I have come voyaging, for I am one of these four gods who are at the side of the sky, and I show you Him who is present by day.

Make your cable fast, for there is no opposition to you.

As for him who knows this chapter, he will be a worthy spirit in the God's Domain, and he will not die again in the realm of the dead, and he will eat in the presence of Osiris. As for him who knows it on earth, he will be like Thoth, he will be worshipped by the living, he will not fall to the power of the king or the hot rage of Bastet, and he will proceed to a very happy old age.

This and other beautifully crafted recitations are not only for the deceased but for the living as well. It is a powerful recitation since it ensures the one who recites it will acquire the abilities of *Djbuty*; consequently, these intellectual abilities will cause him to be worshipped because of his knowledge. Moreover, he will escape illness and enjoy the benefits of living a long, happy life.

Offerings are sometimes required, along with the recitation. Chapter 144 gives the recitation and the instructions for offerings at the end. Excerpts are as follows:

O you gates, O you who keep the gates because of Osiris, O you who guard them and who report the affairs of the Two Lands to Osiris every day: I know you and I know your names . . . I am one who celebrates the monthly festival and announces the half-monthly festival, I go round about bearing the fiery Eye of *Horus* which the hand of *Thoth* bears on the night when he crosses the sky in vindication . . .

My face is that of a Great One, my hinder-parts are the Double Crown, I am a possessor of power, I am content in the horizon, and I am joyful at felling you. O you who are awake, prepare a path for your lord Osiris.

To be recited over these directions which are in writing, and which are to be inscribed in ochre with the two companies of the Bark of Re. Offer to them foodstuffs, poultry, and incense in the presence. It means that a spirit will be made to live and be given power over these gods; it means that he will not be driven off or turned away at the portals of the Duat. You shall make recitation over an image of this spirit in their presence, and he will be permitted to arrive at every gate according to what is written. Make recitation at every gate in accordance with what is written, and make offering to each of them with a foreleg, head, heart, and side of a red bull, and four bowls of blood, not leaving out a heart of costly stone; sixteen white loaves, eight Persen-cakes, eighteen Shens-cakes, eight Khenef-loaves, eight Hebmenet-loaves, eight measures of beer, eight bowls of grain, four clay basins filled with milk of a white cow, green herbs, fresh moringa-oil, green and black eye paint, first quality unguent and incense on the fire. To be recited and erased, item by item, after reciting these directions, four hours of the day having passed, and taking great care as to the position (of the sun) in the sky. You shall recite this book without letting anyone see it; it means that the movements of a spirit will be extended in the sky, on earth, and in the God's Domain, because it will be more beneficial to a spirit than anything which is done for him, and what is needed will be at hand this day. A matter a million times true.

Recitations and offerings were an integral part of life in Kemet. Even while he lived, the king made offerings, along with recitations such as, “A boon which the king gives (to) Osiris, lord of Busiris, the great god, lord of Abydos, that he may give invocation-offerings consisting of bread and beer, oxen and fowl, alabaster and clothing, all things good and pure on which a god lives, to the spirit of the revered *Senwosret*, justified.” Words breathe life into the offering; hence, recitations are a necessary part of any offering. In addition, offering the prescribed offering items along with the recitation had been proven effective “a million times.”

AESTHETICS/BEAUTY IN FESTIVALS, RITUALS, AND CEREMONIES

Elaborate festivals, rituals, and ceremonies linked the material world with the cosmic world. There is no word in Kemet for ritual; however, recurring

actions performed for divine purposes of transformation, resurrection, and transmigration were called *khesu* translates to mean ritual, rite, liturgy, or service book. Liturgical texts, ritual books, and manuals of theology and astronomy, magical and funerary books, called “the manifestation of Re” (Meeks and Favard-Meeks 1996) were housed in Houses of life.

The conception of most festivals, rituals, and ceremonies were divinely inspired, so they inextricably linked human life with divine world. The nature and purpose of rituals are depicted in hymns, prayers, and spells. It is the power of the word that transforms symbolism to psychological reality, but rituals and ceremonies were effective only if they were performed according to the ancient tradition as written in the sacred books.

Rituals and festivals create a particular place in time and space and usually consist of at least four components: 1. Preparation of the ritual space; 2. the invocations; 3. the action for which the ritual was planned and 4. the closing. The literature depicting rituals and festivals is extensive; hence, it is difficult to account for every ritual, but we can identify the ritual processes, and certain conceptions regarding the origin, use, and value of these activities. Some *khesu* were performed daily, some monthly, and some annually. There were community-based and individual *khesu*.

Purification, mummification, and “Opening of the Mouth” were rituals performed in the temple of a deceased king. First, the body was washed and purified. Then the process of mummification took place. In the Old Kingdom, this ritual took 272 days; but in the New Kingdom, it was reduced to 70 days. Finally, one of the most important and most complex funerary *Khesus* is *Up re* or “Opening of the Mouth” of the deceased King.

The purpose of “Opening of the Mouth” of the deceased was to open the mouth, and sometimes the eyes and nostrils, so that once the *akh* (spirit) transcended to the divine world, it would be able to speak, see, and breathe. The spirit of the deceased was a living, breathing being. Moreover, this ritual was performed for the gods, deceased animals, and Temples as well, which transformed them into living, breathing beings. The ceremony was conducted according to *Manifestations of Re*, i.e., *The Book of the “Opening of the Mouth”* called the written by *Djhut*, and the book was housed in the House of Life.

PT §§ 11–15 records *atchetut* (words, utterances, speech, divine talk) for “The Ritual of Opening the Mouth” of the King with the adaze of iron of *Wepwawet* “which split open the mouths of the gods.”

“The Ritual of Opening the Mouth” in Utterances 20 and 21 in Pyramid Texts reads:

O king, I have come in search of you, for I am *Horus*; I have struck your mouth for you, for I am your beloved son; I have split open your mouth for you. [I announce him to his mother when she laments him, I announce him to her who was joined to him. Your mouth is in good order (?), for I have adjusted your mouth] to your bones [for you]. Recite four times: O *Osiris* the King, I split open your mouth for you with . . . of the Eye of *Horus*—foreleg.

Utterance 21—[Your mouth is in good order (?), for I split open your mouth for you, I split open your eyes for you. O king, I open your mouth for you] with the adze of *Wepwawet*, [I split open your mouth for you] with the adze of iron which split open the mouths of the gods. O *Horus*, open the mouth of this King! [O *Horus*, split open the mouth of this King! *Horus* has opened the mouth of this King, *Horus* has split open the mouth of this King [*Horus* has opened the mouth of this King, *Horus* has split open the mouth of this King] wherewith he split open the mouth of his father, with that wherewith he split open the mouth of *Osiris*, with the iron which issued from Seth, with the adze [of iron which split open the mouths of the gods. The King's mouth is split open with it, and he goes and himself speaks with the Great Ennead in the Mansion of the Prince which is in] Ōn, and he assumes the *Wrrt*-crown before *Horus*, Lord of Patricians.

The four parts of a ritual can be identified in the “Opening of the Mouth.” First, the temple of the King is a sacred place and the ritual is performed at a particular point in time, a specified number of days after the death of the king. Second, special incantations are recited. Since this is a power ritual, the incantations must have been said in a loud voice. Third, the process of opening the mouth of the dead king with god's adaze of iron took place. During this process, the priest had to recite a special command four times. The mouth, eyes, and nose were successfully open. Finally, the ritual is closed.

Chapter 23, Plate 15 in the *Book of Coming Forth by Day of Ani* depicts ritual of “Opening the Mouth of Ani.” Here *Ptah*, *Djbuty*, *Shu*, and *Sekhmet* participate in the ritual of opening of *Ani*'s mouth.

Chapter for opening the mouth of *Ani*

My mouth is opened by Ptah and what was on my mouth has been loosened by my local god. Thoht [*Djhuiti*] comes indeed, filled and equipped with magic, the bonds of *Seth* which restricted my mouth have been loosened. *Atum* has warded them off and has cast away the restrictions of *Seth*.

My mouth is opened, my mouth is split open by Shu with that iron harpoon of his with which he split open the mouths of the gods. I am Sekhmet, and I sit beside Her who is in the great wind of the sky; I am Orion the Great who dwells with the Souls of Heliopolis.

As for any magic spell or any words which may be uttered against me, the gods will rise up against it, even the entire Ennead.

The successful “Opening of the Mouth” of those who are in heaven is the third phase of the ritual process.

Herodotus, (Book II: 37) the Greek historian, provides this testimonial of sacred purification rituals. He writes regarding Egyptian priests: “They drink from cups of bronze, and wash them every day: not some but all do this. They wear linen garments, and are very careful always to have them newly washed . . . They wash in cold water twice every day and twice every night.”

Ausar (Osiris) was from the first genesis of celestial beings who had transcendence ability, transformed and manifested himself into human form. His transcendence ability allowed him to move between worlds. The Apis bull was thought to be the spirit double (totem, a familiar African concept) for *Ausar (Osiris)*. Regarding the Apis bull’s sacrificial ritual linked to Kemet’s conception of the divine, Herodotus writes:

They regard bulls as belonging to Apis, (the god *Ausar (Osiris)* was periodically reborn as a calf named Apis. He was recognizable by certain markings; and a calf with similar marks might not be killed.) And they examine them to see whether they have so much as one black hair; if so, they are accounted unclean. One of the priests, appointed for this work, views every part of the animal, both standing and lying, and he pulls out the tongue to see that it bears none of the marks . . . Lastly, he looks at the hairs on the tail to make sure that they grow as they ought. All Egyptians sacrifice unblemished bulls and bull-calves. (pp. 107–108).

If the bull was indeed *Ausar (Osiris)*, he was without blemish, right down to every hair, even under the tail. It is obvious that the ancients practiced *maat* and *nefer* in the preparation of this ritual.

A profound knowledge of the African concept of *Osu* (totem) would reveal that the Apis bull was indeed *Ausar (Osiris)*. It is important to understand that there was nothing symbolic about the Apis bull for the people of Kemet. The use of the word symbolism in traditional African societies to refer to animals used in sacred African rituals as symbolic is convenient,

yet misleading. Offering the Apis bull as sacrifice is but one of thousands of elaborate rituals of ancient Kemetians, but this example is sufficient to illustrate the aesthetic value of rituals in ancient Kemet. Herodotus recognized and reported that the priests did not believe, but knew the Apis bull to be *Ausar (Osiris)*.

The sacred sacrificial ritual of the Apis bull is a community ritual. The bull is butchered and all parts are used in a feast except the head. The head is cursed and disposed of in the Nile. “The curse that they utter over the head is that all the ills that threaten those sacrificing and Egypt in general may be averted and fall on this head.” After the appropriate ceremony of preparation of the bull for cooking, fasting, mourning, and lamentations are completed, a feast is held (Herodotus II: pp. 37–40).

Offering rituals were also made for various purposes. This ritual formula was inscribed on stelae and other funerary monuments.

Festivals and Celebrations

Selected Festival, Ritual, and Ceremony Vocabulary in Kemet

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <i>Khesu</i> | Ritual, rite, liturgy, service book |
| <i>Up re</i> | Opening of the Mouth |
| <i>Up-t renp-t</i> | Opening of the Year, (New Year) |
| <i>Abhi</i> | Festivals |

The aesthetic of festivals, rituals, and ceremonies can be found in the processes or preparation for and the final event. All activities were executed in the most perfect way possible. Invocations, incantations, and recitations were conducted; dancers and other entertainers performed in perfect style, and elaborate feasts were parts of the festival.

Abhi, (festivals), of various types provided the community an opportunity to participate. Some well-known festivals, including The Opening of the Year i.e. the New Year, the *Opet* Festival, and the *Heb-sed* festival, were annual festivals. The New Year Festival lasted 10 days.

AESTHETICS/BEAUTY OF PERSONHOOD

The dimensions of humans are the body *kebt (s3)*, soul (*ba*), spirit (*ka*) spirit (*akh*) shadow (*shuty*) and name (*rn*). Ancient Kemetians had a keen understanding of the complexity of the totality of humans. Their concern with eternal life was their motivation to observe and to explain thoroughly all aspects of human existence. They recognized that humans were multidimensional,

and there was an interconnection among the *keht* (body), *ba* (soul), and *ka* (spirit) *shuty* (shadow/aura), *akh* (spirit) and (*ren*) name. The physical body was viewed, more or less, as a container to house all the facets of the human. The word for body, people, and generations is the same, *keht*; hence, from an African context, the body was connected to self, family, community, and country. For the Kemetians, the body and the shadow housed or sheltered four spiritual forces: the *ba*, the *ka*, *akh* and the *ren*.

In hieroglyphic writing, there are two icons for the *Ba* (soul), which is translated soul. One is the jabiru *ba* (in bird form); the other is a bearded head of a man on the body of a bird. The *ba* is the life-giving breath that enters through the nostrils; hence, Browder says “it is the life-giving power of the *Netcherw*, and death comes to the body when the breath (*ba*) exits. The *ba* could fly; therefore, it hovered near the body once a person died so that it could depart from and return to the body. Because they believed that the *ba* was always near the body, the family of the deceased made offerings of food, clothes, beer, etc. for the *ba*’s enjoyment. Offerings titled *htp-di-nsu* offerings and translated “an offering which the king gives” were made in temples and tombs by kings and priests. Gardiner and Browder suggest that the bird’s body represented the *ba*’s ability to move between heaven and earth.

The *ka*, translated spirit, “. . . determines one’s individuality, temperament, and personality.” (Gardiner, 1994 p. 170) Unlike the *Ba*, the *Ka* does not have the ability to leave the body. The stability of the *Ka* is evident in its icon, two arms held at 90-degree angles, which symbolize the animating forces within the body. Browder (1992) describes the *Ka* this way:

The *ka* is seen as containing all of the powers of creation and is an activator of cosmic forces. One’s *ka* determined their inherited and personal character as well as their destiny. On a higher level, the *ka* represented spiritual free will; on a lower level, it represented the fetters that bind one’s physical being to earth (p. 91).

The crested ibis and the vulture are icons for the *Akh*. The crested ibis ‘Spirit,’ ‘spirit-like nature.’ The semi-phon., *3h*, ‘be glorious.’ (Gardiner 1994, p. 470); “blessed spirit” (p. 550). Like the *Ba*, the *Akh* was represented by a bird; hence it had the ability to fly. In lectures, Obenga says “true of voice Westerners became *Akhu*, that is ‘splendid spirits’ like stars shining in the night sky.” The *akh* is a glorious spirit and when the body dies, it soars upward and dwells eternally among the stars, therefore eternal life.

The *shuty* (translated shadow) is synonymous to aura in modern thought and is described as the clone/double of the body. The *shuty* is energy that surrounds the body, which provides another form of protection.

One's *ren* (name) is also an important part of the human. The tremendousness of importance to one's name is evident throughout the Book of Going Forth by Day. At the weighing of his heart in the judgment scene (Spell 125) N declares . . . "for I know you and I know your name, and know the names of the forty-two gods of those who are with you in this Hall of Justice . . ."

Nfr nefer and *maat* were often a part of male and female personal names. Moreover, a man would be called by his "beautiful name" in his everyday life. For example, *Nefermaat* was a *sm3ty* (?) -priest who lived during the Third Dynasty; he combined both *nefer* and *maat*, i.e. beauty and truth. *Sneferu* or "Man of Beauty" was a pharaoh who lived during the Fourth Dynasty (2613–2589 B.C.E). *Wennefer* means he who lasts in perfection. Queens combined *nefer* in their names. For example, Queen *Neferu* is "Divine Wife"; and *Neferet*, *Nofret* which means "the Beautiful Lady" or "The Beautiful One."

Male children were often given names based on the gods; and some favorite names such as (*Seker-ch'a-bau*) *Sokar* shines with spirit, *Ptah-ch'a-merut* (*Ptah-nefer-'ert*) *Ptah* acts rightly, (*Re'nofer*) *Re* is beautiful, (*Neferher-en-Ptah*) Beautiful is the countenance of *Ptah*, (*Ra'hôtep*) *Re* is content, and (*Neter-user*) God is rich. (Adolf Erman 1971 p. 159) Female children were sometimes given the name *Hathôr*, the goddess of love. Names were one way to achieve immortality; hence, it was honored to "cause his name to live" and dishonorable "to allow it to perish." (p. 162).

One's name served as a tag of the human but could also be hidden from others and not pronounced. The name was also sacred and secret. Knowing and invoking one's name could also save their life, as is illustrated in the passage below when *Auset* attempted to learn the name of the god, *Rā*:

Then spoke *Isis* to *Re*:

'Tell me thy name, divine father,

For that man lives who is called by his name.'

'I am he who created heaven and earth, and piled up the mountains,
Who made all living creatures.

I am he who made the water and created the great river,
Who made the *Bull of his mother*,
Who begets all.

I am he who created the heavens and the secret of the horizon,
And I have placed there the souls of the gods.

I am he, who when he opens his eyes, it becomes light,
When he closes his eyes, it becomes dark;

The water of the Nile flows when he commands,
 But the gods know not his name.
 I am he who makes the hours and creates the days.
 I am he who begins the year and creates the inundation.
 I am he who made the living fire . . .
 I am Chepr'e of the morning and Re at mid-day
 And Atum at evening time.'
 The poison did not yield, it went farther,
 The health of the great god began to decline.
 Then spoke *Isis* to *Re*:
 'That is not thy name that thou tellest me.
 Tell it to me that the poison may go out,
 For the man who is called by his name lives.'
 (Erman 1971 pp. 266–267)

The consequences of knowing and pronouncing the most ancient god's name were both life-saving and destructive. Here the god, *Rā*, is depicted as a celestial being with human qualities: the limitations of the frailties of old age and human mental weaknesses. His health was restored, but hostility was waged against him both in heaven and on earth for divulging his name, even to *Auset (Isis)*. The totality of the human being is visibly illustrated in the figure below.

The etymology of person from the Latin word *persōna* means mask, role, and person suggests covering or keeping secret the true nature of the individual. Consequently, the word person masks or distorts the beauty of what it means to be human.

A discussion of the *ka* aspect of the human is especially interesting for the study of aesthetics. Gardiner and Browder are correct in their translations and interpretations of this word. However, their interpretations are restrictive in that they limit or minimize the meaning so that it only deals with spiritual matters. For this researcher, in addition to the traditional view of the *ka*, as spirit, it is associated with intellectual brain activity, i.e., cognitive development and abilities. This dimension of the human being concerns itself with thoughts about creation of universe and how to produce material objects to link two worlds, or about the transcendence of life, that is eternal life, or about the sciences that are useful in studying the cosmic world, for building pyramids, tombs, temples, seagoing vessels and other structures for the maintenance and enjoyment of their terrestrial lives, or for developing science of medicine and mathematical precision in writing *MDW NTR*, paintings, and drawings then putting canons in place to ensure adherence to the perfection of the discoveries.

Human emotions such as love, the natural desire for procreation, the need to worship and the need to be at least innovative are embedded in the *ka*. It seems that the *ka* is the same aspect of the Creator god's nature that caused the nonexistent to come into existence. It was the mind of God, and it is the mind of humans.

The *ka* is perhaps responsible for the ultimate residence of the *akh*, since it is the *ka* that can make intellectual decisions for the actions of the entire human being. The *ka* is the aspect of the spirit that decides to do *maat* or to do *isfet* (See Figure 1).

AESTHETICS/BEAUTY OF MALES AND FEMALES

The notion of personhood can be described using kings and queens since they are the heads of the society. First, the king and queen are divine offspring. The genealogy of the first King of Kemet was the divine offspring

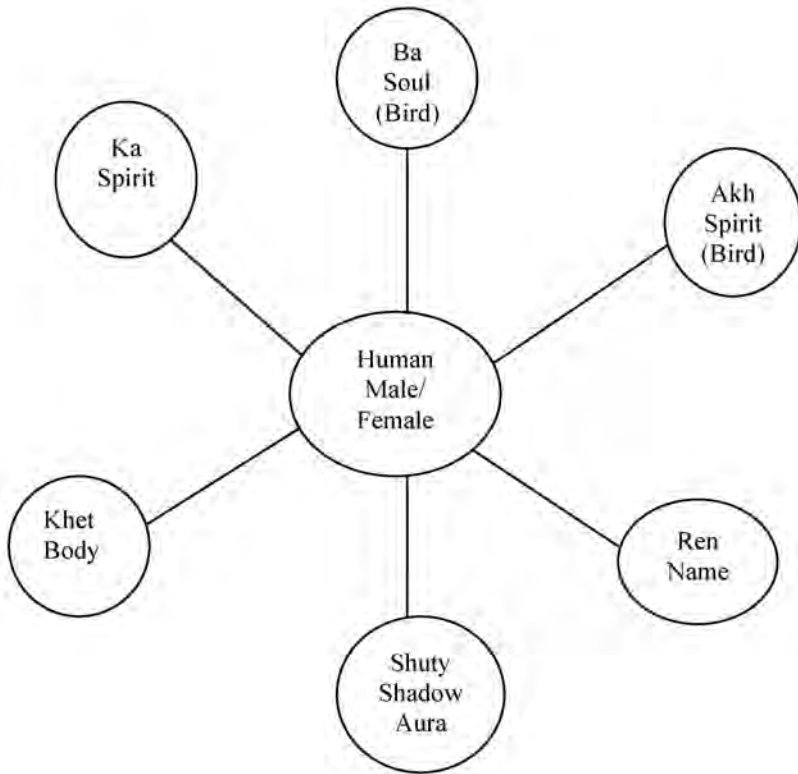


Figure 1.

of Nut and Geb. Utterances in the Pyramid Texts describe the love of the divine pair for their first-born son, *Ausar* (*Osiris*).

Utterance 1 reads: “**Recitation by Nut, the greatly beneficent:** The King is my eldest son who split open my womb; he is my beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

Utterance 2 reads: “**Recitation by Geb:** The King is my bodily son [. . .]”

Utterance 3 reads: “**Recitation by Nut the great who dwells in the Lower Mansion:** The King is my beloved son, my first-born upon the throne of *Geb*, with whom he is well pleased, and he has given him his heritage in the presence of the Great Ennead. All the gods are in joy, and they say: How goodly is the King! His father *Geb* is pleased with him.”

The first *per aa* (pharaoh) of Kemet was divine, and was therefore linked with many divinities such as *Ra*, *Ptah*, and *Heru* (Horus) in human form. He was depicted in various scenes with the goddesses *Mut*, *Hathor*, *Seshet*, and *Maāt*. The queen, on the other hand, was linked with *Mut*, *Hathor*, and *Maāt* and *Auset* (*Isis*); hence, the roles of king and queen were complementary.

The role of the king and queen in Kemet was to demonstrate ideals of perfection, goodness, beauty, order, balance, harmony, truthfulness, morality. The king and queen participated in the same activities as other members of the society. Excellence, beauty, and goodness in personal adornment, as well as high moral standards, were set by the king and queen who served as role models for men and women in society.

Personal Adornment

Adornment is linked with the divine; therefore, personal care begins with the care of the gods. As depicted by Sauneron, the most holy priests adorned the gods daily. He says: “The meal finished,” i.e. the meal of the god, “the toilet begins: the god is washed, his clothes of the previous evening are removed, he is dressed in new material, and then he is painted” . . . Fine linen is used to clothe the gods and the priests; moreover, there are four colors used—they are white, blue, green and red (p. 85). Linen was the material for all clothing, bedding, and bandages for wrapping bodies of the deceased. Linen was in use by the 4th dynasty as attested to in PT § 815 “ . . . the guardians of Upper Egypt, clad in red linen . . .” During Dynasty IV under the Old Empire, men wore a single short skirt round the hips; they added a second skirt during Dynasty V under the Middle Empire. Erman (1971) says, “From Dynasty Four to Dynasty Eighteen, the whole nation, from the princess to the peasant, wore the same dress.” He goes on to describe the fashion for women as “a simple garment without folds,

so narrow that the forms of the body were plainly visible. It reached from below the breasts to the ankles; two braces passed over the shoulders and held it up firmly. The dress was always the same color; white, red, or yellow” (p. 212).

The color white was used for ritual purity and sacredness and was also used to depict the clothing. Red held many significant meanings, but for women’s dress it seems safe to assume that this color could connote fire or blood, which could represent life and regeneration. Yellow could connote becoming, as this color seemed to be linked with solar symbols such as the scarab and the knowledge of *Auset (Isis)*. Color of the women’s dresses could also be the linkage between the red and white crowns, *Set (Seth)* and *Ausar (Osiris)* (Wilkinson 1994 pp. 106–116).

Jewelry, shoes, and hairstyles, makeup, perfume, in addition to dress were also a part of Kemetian adornment. Chapter 115, titled “Chapter for ascending to the sky, opening up the tomb, and knowing the Souls of Heliopolis” in the *Book of Going Forth by Day*, shows that braids are of divine origin. It reads: “He (*Rā*) transformed himself into a woman with braided hair, and that is how the priest of Heliopolis with braided hair came into being.” Erman (1894) tells how “on festival days, when the king’s procession passed, all the people poured sweet oil on their heads, and on their new coiffures” (p. 231).

Eye makeup for both men and women represented the eye of *Heru (Horus)*. “The eyes of the Netcherw were considered to have been the two symbols of light in the heavens, the sun and the moon. The right eye was called the “Eye of *Heru*,” and represented the sun. The left eye was associated with *Djhuty* and symbolized the moon.” Moreover, “the *hekat* and *Djhuty* both symbolized measurement.” (Browder, 1992, p. 127). The total fractional parts of the eye of *Heru/Djhuty* is $\frac{63}{64}$; however, $\frac{1}{64}$ of the eye is missing. In terms of knowledge, humans had the mental ability to know everything except the smallest portion of $\frac{1}{64}$; This portion of knowledge is reserved for the Creator or it may well represent the hidden nature of god in terms of knowledge. Therefore, the abilities inherent in the eyes of *Netcherw* were transferred to the eyes of those who wore them.

AESTHETICS/BEAUTY IN THE AFTERLIFE

Humans, animals, and birds were conceived as being a part of the second genesis of the creative process; therefore, all beings could enjoy the idea of perpetuation of life. The people of Kemet used the phrase *seb n ka-f*, which means to go to one’s *Ka*, to indicate death or the cessation of life. Since *maat* and *nefer* was the *telos* of the style of life for the people of Kemet, when one

transcended mortality to immortality the continuity of the style of life was adhered to. This notion is salient in the funerary beliefs and practices.

Preservation of the *khet* (body) of transcended spirit was important for several reasons. One, as has been well documented, is the belief that the *ba* could reinhabit its original *khet* (body). Another reason is that the ritual of crossing from the place of the living, the east bank of the Nile to the west bank, was a way to restore harmony and balance in nature and society. Perhaps yet another reason was to indicate or symbolize immortality.

As noted, the *akh* and the *ba* were limned as birds; therefore, like birds, these attributes of the *khet* had the ability to inanimate as well as animate the *khet*. The *ba*, the animating force, is always depicted near the body of the transcended one. Moret (1927/2001) shows a drawing of the *Ba* bringing the Veil and Sceptre, symbolizing the “Breaths of Life” and Power. Regarding the breath, Gardiner writes, “the concrete symbol of life was the breath, which the gods gave into the nose’ of the king, the king doing likewise for his subjects.” On the other hand, they believed that the *akh*, translated to mean glorious light, goes to dwell among the stars. Because all forms of creation are divine, the *khet* (body) could be considered sacred. So even at the cessation of the terrestrial functions that it once served, preservation of the *khet* was linked with *maat* and *nefer*.

The beginning of life was linked with the sun rising in the East; duration of life was linked with the shining sun; and the end of life was linked with the sun setting in the West. One drawing depicting the circuit of the sun moving between East and West is of a young sun-god delimited by a serpent biting its tail (eternity), descending out of the arms of Nut (heaven), resting on the head of *Hathor* between two aker lions, one facing East and one facing West (yesterday and tomorrow). The eye of *Heru* and a baboon standing upright clapping in praise of the rising sun is at the right of the scene. This is a rich illustration of the significance of the rising sun. Another drawing depicts the Netherworld between the head of *Nūt* facing down (sunset) and her head facing up (sunrise). The Netherworld is the place of resurrection and is filled with Time (Year, Eternity, and Everlastingness), Justice-Truth and Magic.

The ritual of preparation of the deceased’s physical body for perpetuation of its existence and to traverse from the East bank of the Nile to the Beautiful West bank, was a way to maintain *maat* and *nefer*, i.e. perfect harmony and balance in the universe and in society. The *ba*, the soul in the form of a bird, went to the Netherworld where after Time by *heka* (magic), *Rā* (sun), and *Maāt*, it would be resurrected.

First and foremost, it is important to remember the cycle of life from an African perspective. The serpent biting its tail symbolizes rebirth and

regeneration. The place of birth of the human species begins with the Khnum, the creator god with twisted horns, i.e. the god with the head of a ram, is depicted fashioning humans from mud of the Nile on a potter's wheel. The earliest people in Kemet returned the body of the deceased to the soil, in the desert region. The idea of burial in the sand may not have been accidental, as some believe, since the belief that the second genesis of beings were the children of Nut, the sky goddess, and Geb, god of the earth. A funeral scene for Tutankhamum is testimony of remembrance of when the *khet* (body) was returned to the soil. The text above the palace officials reads: [*i ntr s3w t3*] [*i netcher sau ta*] "O god! May the soil protect (you)!" [*iw m htp*] [*iu em hotep*] "return in peace" "arrive safely" to the necropolis. The rite of placing soil on the coffin of the deceased even now comes from *Kemet*.

The heat and dryness of the sand dehydrated the bodies quickly which caused them to be preserved in lifelike states. In later times, Kemetic mortuary scientists discovered methods of preserving (embalming) bodies using natron and spices. The Kemetic word *ut* and its derivatives are translated to mean embalm. The etymology of the word balm means spice, perfume. To embalm from the Old French word *embaumer* was added to the lexicon c. 1340 which meant to "preserve" (a corpse) with spices. The elaborate process of preparing the body of the deceased, (embalming), was carried out in houses called *wabt*, which means the Pure Place or *per nefer*, the Beautiful House, by priests and scribes. Accounts of the process show that the priests and scribes adhered to strict written processes and procedures for preparation of the body.

The embalming process was a sacred rite, especially for the pharaoh or king. Pyramid text §§ 370–375 addresses the purification of the body and the *ka*. It reads: "This King washes himself when *Rē'* appears . . . *Horus* accepts him beside him, he purifies this King in the Jackal Lake, he cleanses this King's double in the Lake of the Netherworld, he wipes over the flesh of this King's double and of his own. . . ." This mortal procedure is linked with an immortal procedure, and as such, is a part of a total process. This means the care of the *khet* (body) must be completed in accordance to strict sacred guidelines.

Knowledge of the science of anatomy and physiology was as necessary here as it was in medicine. The fact that bodies of these ancient people have been preserved so that they were lifelike and remained intact certainly is a testimony of their devotion to excellence in the skill of embalming. The fact that animals were embalmed cannot be overlooked in this discussion.

As has been discussed, animals were doubles or twins of humans; furthermore, gods and goddesses could inhabit the bodies of plants and ani-

mals. Almost all gods and goddesses were linked with sacred animals or plants and presented in mixed form, e.g. the body of a human with the head of the sacred animal and sometimes only the sacred animal was presented. Some popular examples include *Djbuty*, human body and head of an ibis but sometimes he is presented as a baboon. *Heka* was the son of *Atum* and god of magic, and his sacred reptile was the snake. Snakes in Kemet did not connote evil but protection, rebirth, regeneration, and longevity. The *Apis*, *Mnevis*, and *Buchis* were sacred bulls. The *Apis* bull was the sacred animal of *Ptah*, *Mnevis* was a god of fertility and identified with the image of *Rā*, and *Buchis* of *Hermonthis* (*Armant*) was identified with *Mnevis*. The *Apis* and *Mnevis* held places of distinction and had tombs erected specifically for them. Cats were sacred animals and significant because they were a form of the sun-god when killing *Apophis*. This animal was identified with *Tefnut*. *Benben* is the symbol of the primeval hill, the sacred stone set on top of obelisks and pyramids and is identified with the primeval god, *Atum-Khepri*. Finally, *Khnum*, the creator, is depicted as a man with the head of the ram with twisted horns. The conclusion can be drawn that the people of Kemet viewed themselves as “one with the divine” and a system of integrated individualized creations and that deities, humans, animals and plants were interconnected and considered sacred; therefore, animals received the same burial rights as humans.

The *wabt*, Pure Place or *per nefer*, the Beautiful House, did not suggest morbidity but a continuation of a style of life consisting of purity and beauty. The ultimate goal was to be pure as voluminous passages in the *Book of Coming Forth by Day* illustrate.

Mortality was linked with immortality, so the people of Kemet envisioned life in the Netherworld as it was in mortal life. Perfection and purity was a requirement for one’s spirit to traverse back to its original source, which was the goal of the second genesis of beings. To be pure means to be without fault, i.e., *nefer* (perfect). Kemetic meanings associated with *uāb* are innocence, guiltless, clean, and pure. “This Eye of *Horus* is pure; may it belong (?) to me” (PT § 1278) is one example of purity which can be associated with *nefer* and *maat* and is desired by the king that it belong to him and his double in his pyramid. Another example of purity taken from PT says, “The sky is pure for *Rē*^l, the earth is pure for *Horus*, every god who is between them cleanses me, . . .” (§ 951) therefore, the universe is pure. Spell 172 in the BOD is an illustration of a testament of the interrelating conceptions of purity and beauty, for it says:

I am purified with natron, I chew natron, incense . . . I am pure, and pure are the recitations which come forth from my mouth. They are

more pure than the fins and scales of the fish in the river, more than the image belonging to the Mansion of Natron; my recitations are pure. How happy am I! *Ptah* praises me, He who is South-of-his Wall praises me, every god praises me and every goddess praises me (and they say): your beauty is that of a calm pool, like a quiet water; your beauty is that of a hall of festival wherein every god is extolled; your beauty is like the column of *Ptah*, indeed like the shaft of Re . . . (*The Ancient Egyptian Book of the Dead*, translated by Raymond O. Faulkner).

This idea of perfection and purity is beautifully illustrated in the ritual of the “weighing of the soul” scene in Chapter 125 (BOD). Forty-two gods, or the entire universe, are present at the tribunal to witness the weighing of the transcended soul. At the end of the weighing, when “*Thoth* has judged him in writing and *Maat* the great has witnessed” (BOD, Chapter 30 B), the deceased can affirm:

I am pure, pure, pure pure! My purity is the purity of that great Benu-bird which is in Heracleopolis, because I am indeed the nose of the Lord of Wind who made all men live on that day of completing the Sacred Eye in Heliopolis in the second month of winter last day, in the presence of the lord of this land. I am he who saw the completion of the Sacred Eye in Heliopolis, and nothing evil shall come into being against me in this land in this Hall of Justice, because I know the names of these gods who are in it (Chapter 125).

Pyramid Texts, Coffin Texts, The Book of Coming Forth by Day, and other texts are replete with recitations, hymns, and incantations that explicate expectations about life in the Underworld. Oftentimes instructions accompany the texts. Moreover, there are transformation and purifying recitations and formulas that ensure entrée to the Domain of the gods.

Utterance 407 in the PT illustrates the presence of purity in the Netherworld. It reads, “I purify myself, I assume my pure throne which is in the sky, I will endure and my goodly thrones will endure, I assume my pure seat which is in the bow of the Bark of *Rē*’.”

The Beautiful West

The West bank of the Nile River was, of course, the home of those who had transcended mortal life, i.e. the Underworld—the place of the dead. The Nile was important for the concept of the Underworld. The West bank of the Nile was reserved as the Place of Truth, that is, the necropolis, and was referred to as the Beautiful West. Ausar, the first divine king of Kemet,

ruled in the West. Several passages in *The Book of Coming Forth by Day*, *The Pyramid Texts*, and *Coffin Texts* ascribe to the Beautiful West. Hence, *maat* and *nefer*—truth, justice, laws, etc., as interrelated principles were adhered to even in the Underworld. Ramses' testimony to his adherence to truth and beauty is illustrated by the position he takes when he seats himself among the gods in his temple at Abu Simbel.

It is here in the West where the deceased is reposed in eternity. Nothing so completes life on earth as the possibility of eternal life, which ultimately means the form of perfection to the human experience. One travels to the West, not in fear or in anguish, but in the hope of the beautiful quest of eternity.

Chapter Six

Beauty Is Everywhere

Beauty is everywhere in Kemet. The *ka* is the spirit dimension responsible for the totality of the human being. The *ka* is represented by two arms raised and bent at 90 degree angles, fingers together, and palms facing outward and worn on the crown, the uppermost part, of the head. Using the power of thought and/or the spoken word, Kemetians were able to draw cosmic energy from the universe unto themselves. The *ka*, the mind of gods and humans, has the ability to desire.

The desire to know seems to be the driving force behind scientific discoveries and contributions to the world made by the people of Kemet. It was desire that caused them to demonstrate their godhood; they sought to intertwine within themselves not only cosmic energy but energy from other terrestrial beings. For this reason, all aspects of their observations of the cosmos were visually presented with human bodies and heads of various terrestrial beings' heads that depicted their specific aspects.

Some examples that describe this aspect of the *ka* include god and goddesses. One example, *Djhuty*, a divine force, god of the scribes and inventor of the sciences, was presented with the body of a human being but different heads of different beings for particular situations. *Djhuty* is sometimes presented with the head of an ibis, while at other times he is presented with the head of a falcon. The nature of both of these birds is similar; both of them have the ability to do more than fly. They have the ability to soar high at rapid speeds and extraordinary ocular abilities. *Djhuty* traversed between heaven and earth regularly. At other times he is also presented with the head of the baboon and is sometimes presented as the baboon. The baboon, as has been shown, is pure and is always present at the tribunal to assist in the weighing of the heart of the deceased. The role of the baboon was to judge the purity of the deceased's heart and for purification of *isfet*. *Djhuty* is pure and is the recorder at the weighing of the soul.

Hathor, another divine force, is depicted as a full human female who wears the sun between the horns of a cow for her headpiece; she is sometimes depicted as a cow, while at other times she is depicted as a female with the head of a cow. In the literature *Hathor* is presented in association with love, beauty, adornment, motherhood, and wife. She is linked with kings and queens as illustrated in many pictorial scenes. *Hathor* is also linked with the sycamore tree and in some pictorial scenes she resides among the trees.

The goddess *Seshet*, consort of *Djhutj*, goddess of writing, and a divine force, wears on her head a headpiece with horns where her name is written and a star. She, like the goddess *Renpet*, notches years on a palm branch stripped of leaves. In the *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* (1931) R. W. Sloley shows a ceremonial scene of the king and *Seshet* aligning a temple for laying foundations stones. "In one inscription, the king says, 'I hold the peg. I grasp the handle of the club and grip the measuring cord with *Seshet*. I turn my eyes to the movements of the stars . . .'" (p. 170). This is a beautiful example of how the living king used knowledge from divine energy to achieve perfection in his tasks.

In the interior design of all the magnificent structures in Kemet, the walls are covered with *bas reliefs* and *relief en creux*, French words that designate how images are chiseled in stone, of *MDW NTR*, drawings, and paintings that show their belief in the interconnectedness of divine forces with human forces. Their writing system, whether they were *MDW NTR*, paintings, or drawings were more than what is considered art in the modern world, for these mediums of communication were alive and had the same power as the spoken word.

These images are considered art because of the degree of perfection in proportion, arrangement, and use of color, which was achieved because of scientific knowledge. Exact proportions for the placement of characters in *MDW NTR* and humans were worked out using geometric knowledge. On the walls of various tombs we can still see evidence of the squares drawn by exact measurements and sketches to ensure *maat* and *nefer*; that is, truth, beauty, order, balance, harmony, perfection, and excellence in the presentations.

Molefi Asante has concluded that the divine is everywhere in Kemet. A stimulating conversation with Suzanne Mazzenga, a young woman who considers herself a metaphysicist, shared with me how she explained god using her theory on the mathematical existence of a supreme being. She explained Einstein's Theory of Relativity, $E=mc^2$, which states that an object moving closer to the speed of light would become infinitely massive once light speed was attained, so much so that ultimately it could theoretically

become pure energy. She reasoned that god exists in all times and places, was literally everywhere at once and in everything; therefore, he was omniscient, and that it was in fact, a being that had managed to attain the speed of light. Like the divine, god, *maat* and *nefer*; that is, order balance, harmony, beauty, perfection, and goodness was everywhere in Kemet.

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