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English 110 H1

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November 14 2018

Runners: Crazy People Who Find Beauty in the Pain of the Sport

Throughout life, all people experience beauty. Their experiences and definitions of beauty differ greatly based on a number of factors including culture, reference points, personal standards, and beliefs. In John Armstrong's article titled "[La Bella Vita](#)," he discusses this phenomenon that Friedrich Schiller coins as **form and sense drives** which are the reality of beauty. Within my community of runners we have a classification of the beautiful experience in what each of us do run. As runners, we find beauty in every aspect of our run and the physical, emotional, and social positive effects it has on us which we are able to share within the community to amplify the magnificence of the experiences.

Beauty is found in experiences that affect all five senses- sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch. In his article, Armstrong highlights the idea that beauty is an "experience" (Armstrong). I think this is completely valid because there is much more to beauty than simply looks. All five senses are engaged. [Taylor Fowler's podcast](#) interviews Maeghan Fortier, an athletic trainer at the University of New England. The speaker recalls an experience she had her first time hunting. She had to wake up earlier than even the animals and remembers the experience of seeing the life in the forestry wake up as being breathtaking. As a runner, I can relate to this occurrence. Throughout high school, I would wake up before the sunrise each day

for practice. The experiences I had of the whole town springing to life was amazing.



This is an image I took of one of the breathtaking sunrises that I witnessed on a run on February 11, 2015.

The sunrise was one of the most beautiful moments I have ever experienced. I was in awe. Having my start of the day include this miraculous visual made me fall in love with the sport once again. Likewise, being able to witness beauty in the sunrise, the birds beginning to chirp, and the first car on the road are why many runners claim to love their sport so much. Each aspect of the morning awakening, for both Maeghan Fortier and I, engulfed our five senses and created countless memorable, beautiful experiences. I think that this was beautiful because it showed me that there was always a new day and everything flawlessly worked together. On a run, beauty is not only in the view, but also in the pain we feel, the thumping in our chests, the smell of the outdoors, and the sounds of our surroundings. If one sense was left out of our feelings, there would be an aspect of beauty missing and the run would be off its normal course.

Runners find beauty in the balance the sport provides. In his article, Armstrong explains that an object is beautiful when “both drives are at full power” and never contradict one

another. **Form** drive is “the inner demand for coherence over time.” Conversely, **sense** drive “lives in the moment and seeks immediate gratification” (Armstrong). When the two of these are in harmony together, beauty is prominent and we are able to experience these moments. In [Jonathan Laurie’s podcast](#), the Will recalls a time walking out of class where he saw a seemingly normal tree and thought it was amazing. He explains that “you can find beauty in almost anything” (Will). Whether it be a normal occurrence that is brightened, or something you have never seen before, when the form and sense drives work together, the experience becomes beautiful. Within the running community, we have beauty in both form and sense drives. During the ‘runner’s high’ any runner can tell you about, joy is found and bountiful. This “runner’s high” consists of a huge adrenaline rush following a hard run or race. Runners find joy in these moments because they foster a sense of accomplishment and are a natural, temporary state of euphoria that drowns out any of the pain a runner may have. Likewise, the composition of human beings creates the perfect match for this euphoria, the form drive. Running is an activity that “enables humans to fully utilize their anatomic structure” through things such as our long legs and achilles tendons in our heels (Dermack). The perfect balance between this psychological euphoric state and balanced body is the reason why runners find such beauty in their sport.

People frequently ask me and other runners why we run so much or say we ‘are crazy.’ We are passionate about our sport because we find beauty and joy in the adrenaline rush from the run, in the effortless conversations during our long runs, and in the views of nature and our environment that we encounter while on the run. In the article, [“Long Distance Running: An Investigation Into its Impact on Human Health”](#) by Rachel Dermack, the author investigates the effortless cohesion brought by running and the positive

effects it has on an individual. While on a run, people find “thrill and enthusiasm” on sites such as these (Dermack). In this way, we find our runs as beautiful experiences that are usually not able to be replicated. When going on a run, we never expect to see beautiful things or have wonderful conversations, we run because we love doing it. The innocent joy and intense feeling runners get on their run are what causes us to make our efforts in our journey and in this we all discover beauty.

Runners thrive on the inner accomplishment they get from the activity of running. One prominent part of running is that an individual is running against their previous PR (personal record) and trying to improve upon their time each race. The feeling and adrenaline gained when setting a newPR is amazing. Two years ago, I ran my first half marathon. Before running the half marathon, I did not know if it was possible for me to run more that 8 miles, not to mention 13.1.



This image is of me crossing the finish line of the Fort Worth Half Marathon on November 12, 2017.

After I completed the race, I had an immense sense of victory in me and the feeling that comes from this feeling was beautiful. Throughout the race, there were multiple times I felt like quitting because I was tired and my body ached, but I knew that once I crossed the finish line, the amazing feeling would outshine all of the pain. In the article, Dermack explains the “euphoric state” that runners experience after certain runs. She states that the “combination of the increase in confidence [from finishing runs like these] and the maximization of one’s physical” well being make us overall happier and healthier (Dermack). An analogy can be created with Schiller’s ideas. If form drive is to sense drive, then physical health is to increased confidence. When the two states work together, there is an apparent beauty that is formed. In this beauty, we see why runners are hooked and (some might say) addicted to the activity of running which creates great accomplishment for them.

By sharing these moments with people in and out of our running community, we ‘make the most’ of the experience, and thus make it an even more beautiful encounter. One thing that running has done for me personally is create a sense of community. Entering college, I was nervous about making friends, but being on a team where we have common interests has afforded me the opportunity to become close to other students and create some true deep friendships. Once a week, we go on a long run which is anywhere from 7 to 11 miles and in this time, my friends and I get to joke around, watch the sun set, tell random stories, and much more. Below is an image of my high school cross country team on the start line after we gathered for a

prayer and a pep talk by our captain.



The comradery shown in the image brings great joy and nostalgic thoughts to me and many other runners who have similar routines before each race. This is a very beautiful experience each time to me. It has both form and sense drives in it because in the short term, I am able to get joy from the view and social activity, but in the long run, I am staying healthy and creating long lasting friendships. It is in sharing my experience with my community that the real beauty is found.

Overall, people can find beauty in anything as long as the objects or thoughts target their inner form and sense drives. Within my community of runners, we find beauty in every aspect of the sport- the pain from each step, making new friends, the accomplishment of finishing a hard run, the great feeling after running, the psychological boosts, and more. Each day when we run, we are able to experience new amazing aspects of this world and in experiences like these, individuals are able to proclaim their experiences as beautiful. If people open their eyes to look for something new in the world, they will be amazed of the hidden beautiful experiences they will encounter.

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