

# VOGUE

PARIS

APRIL 1885

“YOU CAN NEVER  
BE OVERDRESSED  
OR  
OVEREDUCATED.”

— OSCAR WILDE

STYLE  
AND  
SENSUALITY

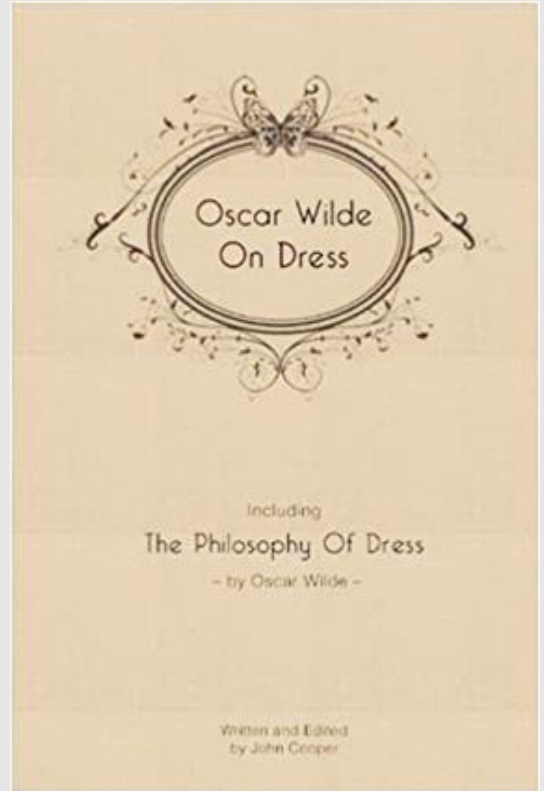
BEAUTY





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# The Philosophy of Dress

## Interview to a Dandy

**Mr. Wilde –**

I beg your indulgence, but please call me Oscar, 'tis not so earthy, but far more ecstatic.

**Well, Oscar, for many you are considered the archetype dandy, an icon for most of us. Could you give us some fashion advice?**

*Mr. Wilde grins*

I believe that the dress should be the mandate of art and not of the dressmaker. Clothing has no value in itself but depends on the use that it is given. I hold that the dress is made for the service of humanity. The dresses of the time are not beautiful ... they have bows. The beauty of the dress depends on the human body, and must respect the classical proportions because a dress is not beautiful because it is ornamental, is beautiful because it does not prevent the freedom of who uses it.

**Just this year “the New-York tribune” has published your essay “The philosophy of dress.”**

Sure, I am really proud of that publication. Do you know it is the first journalistic work that has copyrights?

**I have to admit that I am not aware.**

I am quite proud of my work, despite the different criticisms

**That’s what I wanted to ask**

Fashion is ephemeral. art is eternal. a fashion is simply a form of ugliness so absolutely unbearable that we have to modify it every six months. It does not matter if someone is white or brown, tall or short, they all aim to dress in the same way until they reinvent another type of “evil”.

On the other hand I propose that, like a flower, the beauty of the dress does not depend on fashion and, like art, it orders the freedom of the individual, it does not limit it. The human body is perfect and should not be distorted by the creations of a dressmaker. I reject the materialistic values of the industrial revolution and my ideas don't please many.

**Now I think I know that clothing is not important by itself but it is the reflection of something deeper.**

Right. I am glad you understand, I have been sometimes accused of setting too high an importance on dress. Which I found very discouraging!

**First you talked about classical proportions, could you tell us something about them?**

That there can be no beauty of national costume until there is a national knowledge of the proportions of the human

form. To greek and roman such knowledge came naturally from the gymnasium and the palaestra. We must acquire it by the employment of art in education.





A child does study the human figure it will learn a great many valuable laws of dress. It will learn, for instance, that a waist is a very beautiful and delicate curve, the more delicate the more beautiful, and not, as the milliner fondly imagines, an abrupt right angle suddenly occurring in the middle of the person. He will learn again that size has nothing to do with beauty. This, I dare say, seems a very obvious proposition. so it is. All truths are perfectly obvious once one sees them. the only thing is to see them. Size is a mere accident of existence; it is not a quality of beauty ever.

*He reflects for a few seconds*

A foot is not necessarily beautiful because it is small. the smallest feet in the world are those of the Chinese ladies, and they are the ugliest also.

**Thanks for your time**

**VOGUE**

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