

Beauty and Being

Thomistic Perspectives

This book represents an attempt to distinguish and define what beauty is in metaphysical terms, to arrive at a better understanding of beauty as a transcendental property of being, and to establish beauty's place in philosophy alongside truth and the good through an exploration of whether there can truly be a philosophy of beauty, or whether beauty is merely a type of aesthetic.

The first part of this work outlines the history of philosophical thought on the subject, through an introduction to three great theories of beauty – harmony, form, and relationism – and a discussion of the evolution of the fine arts. The second part introduces first the theory of aesthetics, then the relationship between nature, being, and beauty, and finally the controversy over whether beauty is natural or a product of human knowledge and experience. The third part moves towards a philosophy of beauty in a first sense: something that is real but immaterial, akin to numbers, that can be understood but not seen. This idea is constructed through an examination of beauty's relation to beings and existence, and finally through a juxtaposition of beauty with ugliness in a paradox where it is revealed that an artist who represents ugliness with more skill creates something more beautiful than the one who represents beauty poorly, because the artist's skills convey more Truth and Good in the ugliness represented. Thus ugliness in art can be beautiful because it shows us how much can be lost and also expresses why that matters through an appeal to our emotional understanding. The examination of beauty presented here makes a good argument in favour of a continued study of the topic.

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Beauty and Being

Thomistic Perspectives

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Translated by HUGH MCDONALD
with the collaboration of the author



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To my parents

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Abbreviations

Full publication information for works listed here can be found in the bibliography. All translations of Aristotle are drawn from *The Works of Aristotle Translated into English*, ed. W.D. Ross (Oxford, 1908–1931). All otherwise unattributed translations of primary sources are those of Hugh McDonald.

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