

Beauty Beyond Being: An Introduction to Natural Theology

Davenant Hall: Online Studies

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Course Start Date: 9/28/2020

Course End Date: 12/12/2020

Course Description

One of the most interesting discussions in the history of philosophy is the question of Beauty. Philosophers and theologians have been debating for centuries about just what Beauty is, seeking to find a way of explaining it that corresponds to both natural and artificial beauty. Throughout the classical and medieval periods, many philosophers and Christian theologians expressed the opinion that natural beauty was a clear indication of the existence of an intelligent creator. Beauty is said, by some, to be co-extensive with the Good, the True, and Being—God. Many even thought that the contemplation of natural Beauty was a way by which one could be moved to the contemplation of the divine nature. Contemporary reflection on beauty has moved in different directions, and some philosophers and theologians deny that Beauty can point anyone towards anything other than their preconceived framework for interpreting the world.

In this course, we are going to read through some of the most important texts from the history of Western thought, in order to discover how the beauty of the cosmos points us to the existence of a God who is Beauty itself.

Class Format

Classes will meet weekly via Zoom for 2 hours (from xx to xx EST), from 9/28/2020 to 12/12/2020, and will be recorded for later viewing by students who cannot participate. Additional student participation and instructor interaction can take place on our private Google groups discussion board.

Course textbook

- (a) Collection of excerpts from primary sources, provided in PDF format. See tentative course schedule for the complete list. (Most readings should take no more than one hour per week.)

Suggested readings/resources

- (a) Josef Pieper, *Only the Lover Sings*
- (b) Josef Pieper, *On Leisure*
- (c) Étienne Gilson, *Les arts du Beau* (English translation : *The Arts of the Beautiful*)

- (d) Étienne Gilson, *Matières et Formes: poétiques particulières des arts majeurs* (English translation : *Form and Substances in the Arts*)
- (e) Jacques Maritain, *Art et scolastique*
- (f) Christopher Scott Sevier, *Aquinas on Beauty*.
- (g) Umberto Eco, ed., *The History of Beauty*
- (h) Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*
- (i) Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*
- (j) Umberto Eco, *On Ugliness*
- (k) Roger Scruton, *Sexual Desire*
- (l) Roger Scruton, *Music as an Art*
- (m) Roger Scruton, *Beauty: A very short introduction*
- (n) Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of architecture*
- (o) Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetics of Music*
- (p) Roger Scruton, *The Aesthetic Understanding*
- (q) Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*
- (r) Joel Beeke, ed., *The Beauty and Glory of the Father* (and series)
- (s) Jonathan King, *The Beauty of the Lord: Theology as Aesthetics*
- (t) Richard Viladesau, *Theological Aesthetics: God in Imagination, Beauty, and Art*
- (u) William Desmond, *The Gift of Beauty and the Passion of Being: On the Threshold between the Aesthetic and the Religious*
- (v) Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, 7 vols.
- (w) David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*
- (x) George Santayana, *The Sense of Beauty*

Learning Outcomes/Requirements

Through this course, the student will acquire the knowledge base with which he will:

- A. be able to interact with what the classical tradition has to say about Beauty.
- B. be able to explain the ways in which it can be seen to point towards the existence of God, as well as the arguments used to deny that beauty can point towards the existence of God.
- C. be able to adequately bring classical thought on Beauty into interaction with Reformed theology and philosophy.
- D. be able to evaluate this subject from a biblical, historical, and rational perspective, so as to defend those positions that are orthodox, and refute those that are not.

Course work

- A. Participate in each *class session* (10%)
- B. Participate in discussions on *class forum* (20%)
- C. Complete all *required readings* prior to the class in which they will be discussed, and arrive in each class ready to discuss these texts and answer specific questions about them. (30 %)

- D. *Research paper* (5000-8000 words, double space, 12 font, Times New Roman) on a theological topic addressed by a medieval author of the student's interest, to be approved in advance by the professor. See the Rubric for correcting term papers for details about how I grade papers. (40%)

Class Schedule

Tentative

Class	Date	Subjects covered	Required readings
1	9/28-10/3	The Classical Greek concept of Beauty Plato and Aristotle	- Plato, <i>The Symposium</i> - Plato, <i>The Phaedrus</i> - Aristotle, <i>Metaphysics</i> , bk. XIII, 1078a31-1078b5; <i>Poetics</i> 7, 1450b34-40.
2	10/5-10	The Classical Greek Concept of Beauty The Neo-Platonists	- Plotinus, <i>Enneades</i> 1.6 (essentiell); 5.8 (essentiell!); 1.3.13.8; 2.3.9.25; 2.9.17.40; 3.5.1.21; 4.3.10.27; 5.5.1.40-42; 6.2.18.5; 6.3.11.21-28; 6.7.32.3; 6.8.6.18; 6.9.11.16; 6.9.1.15; 6.9.4.11; 6.7.3.10. - Proclus
3	10/12-17	The Christian Fathers on Beauty and Art Christian Platonism in the East	- Gregory Nazianzus, theological treatise <i>On Theology</i> - Gregory of Nyssa, <i>letter to Strategius</i> §4; <i>letter to Otreius, Bishop of Melitene</i> §1-3; <i>Letter 19 to a certain John</i> §1-20; <i>Letter 31 to Letoius Bishop of Melitene</i> , ch. 1; <i>On Virginity</i> , ch. 4

4	10/19-24	Early Medieval theologians on Beauty, art and the Divine	<p>- Augustine, <i>Confessions</i>, X; <i>City of God</i>, bk. 8, §6-7; bk. 10 §14; bk. 12 §4; bk. 22§19;</p> <p>- Boethius, <i>The Consolation of Philosophy</i>, bk. 3, ch. 9b-10</p> <p>- Pseudo-Dionysius, <i>The Divine Names</i>, 4.7</p> <p>- Anselm, <i>Monologion</i>, chs. 1-3; <i>Proslogion</i>, ch. 16-17</p>
5	10/26-31	High Medieval thought on Beauty, Art, and the Divine	<p>- Thomas Aquinas, <i>Summa Theologiae</i> I, q. 5, a. 4, ad 1; <i>ST</i> I, q. 39, a. 8, respondeo; <i>ST</i> I, q. 91, a. 3, respondeo et ad 3; <i>ST</i> I-II, q. 27, a. 1, ad 3; <i>ST</i> II, q. 142. a. 2, respondeo; <i>ST</i> II-II, q. 145, a. 2, respondeo. Aquinas, <i>ST</i> II-II, q. 180, a. 2, ad 3.</p> <p>- Bonaventure, <i>The Soul's Journey into God</i>, p. 66-68, 70-78.</p>
6	11/2-7	Modern Approaches to Beauty and Art	<p>- Francis Hutcheson, <i>An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue</i>, 47-70.</p> <p>Edmund Burke, <i>A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Beautiful and the Sublime</i>, 84-89.</p> <p>- Immanuel Kant, <i>On the Beautiful and the Sublime</i> (selections)</p>

7	11/9-14	Contemporary Approaches to Beauty and the Arts	<p>- George Santayana, <i>Platonic Love in Some Italian Poets</i>, 41-59</p> <p>- Martin Heidegger, <i>The Origin of the Work of Art</i> (selections)</p> <p>- David Bentley Hart, <i>The Beauty of the Infinite</i>, 15-28</p> <p>- Frank Burch Brown, "Aesthetics and the Arts in Relation to Natural Theology", p. 523-538.</p>
8	11/16-21	Contemporary Refutations of Beauty as a sign of the Divine	<p>- Alister McGrath, <i>Re-Imagining Nature: The Promise of a Christian Natural Theology</i>, p. 32-33, 66-68, 73-79, 83-84, 87-93.</p> <p>- Helen De Cruz and Johan de Smedt, <i>A Natural History of Natural Theology</i>, p. 131-154.</p> <p>-Roger Scruton, <i>On Beauty</i>, 29-32.</p>
	11/23-28	Fall break	
9	11/30-12/5	Art, Beauty, and the Divine in Contemporary thought	<p>- Josef Pieper, <i>Only the Lover Sings</i>, 15-27.</p> <p>- Jacques Maritain, <i>Approaches to God</i>, 79-84.</p> <p>- Étienne Gilson, <i>From Demiurgism to Philistinism</i>, 133-159.</p> <p>-Scruton, <i>On Beauty</i>, p. 43-45, 48, 66.</p>

10	12/7-12	<p style="text-align: center;">From Beauty to the Divine</p> <p>Thomistic and Reformed approaches</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aquinas, <i>ST I</i>, 1, q. 2, a. 3 - James F. Anderson, <i>Natural Theology: The Metaphysics of God</i>, 40-47, 57-58. - John Calvin, <i>ICR</i>, bk. 1, ch. 5, 1-2, 6. Francis Turretin, <i>IET</i>, vol. 1, 3rd topic, q. 1, X - Jonathan Edwards, <i>Dissertation Concerning the End for which God created the World</i>, p. 1-31. - Alvin Plantinga, <i>Warranted Christian Belief</i>, 170-175.
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