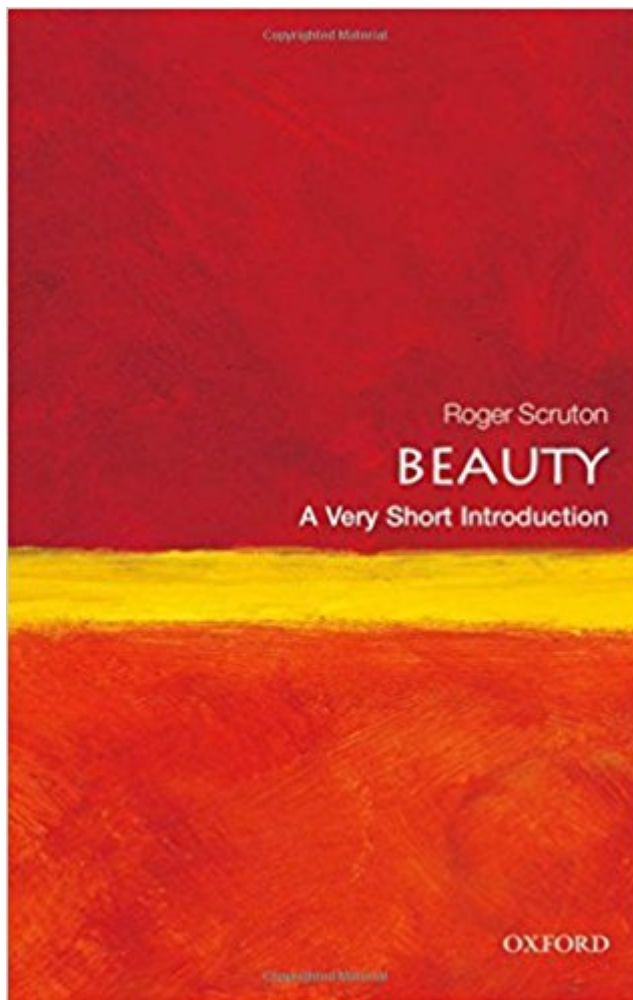


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Beauty: A Very Short Introduction



Synopsis

Beauty can be consoling, disturbing, sacred, profane; it can be exhilarating, appealing, inspiring, chilling. It can affect us in an unlimited variety of ways. Yet it is never viewed with indifference. In this Very Short Introduction, the renowned philosopher Roger Scruton explores the concept of beauty, asking what makes an object--either in art, in nature, or the human form--beautiful, and examining how we can compare differing judgments of beauty when it is evident all around us that our tastes vary so widely. Is there a right judgment to be made about beauty? Is it right to say there is more beauty in a classical temple than a concrete office block, more in a Rembrandt than in an Andy Warhol Campbell Soup Can? Forthright and thought-provoking, and as accessible as it is intellectually rigorous, this introduction to the philosophy of beauty draws conclusions that some may find controversial, but, as Scruton shows, help us to find greater sense of meaning in the beautiful objects that fill our lives.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Review from previous edition: "As always with Scruton, his prose is exquisite and wonderfully clear, which fact together with the illustrations make his book a thing of beauty itself." --A. C. Grayling, The Art Newspaper 01/01/2010 "Careful and absorbing." --A. C. Grayling, The Art Newspaper 01/01/2010 "This is a fascinating and thought-provoking little book." --A. C. Grayling, The Art Newspaper 01/01/2010 "Roger Scruton has moments of great insight and clarity in this attractively slim volume." --Sebastian Smee, The Observer 22/03/2009 "A fascinating book, which I heartily recommend." --Bryan Wilson, Readers Digest 01/03/2009 "Short, fast paced, and wide ranging."

Roger Scruton is Research Professor at the Institute for the Psychological Sciences, in Arlington, Virginia.

Scruton is a philosopher who stands in stark contrast to much of what the modern world proposes on art....i.e., that beauty is something completely subjective; that it is a private elitist vision, directly related to undemocratic high art. By demonstrating that beauty is something much more objective...of which all retain an innate appreciation...Scruton quietly demolishes such nonsense, accompanying so much contemporary discussion on art, sculpture, and architecture. His discussion on popular kitsch is particularly revealing of the modern (and post-modern) world's intrinsic reductionism, and of the false and insulting premise, which strongly asserts that the common man is not capable of appreciating anything but the lowest, unambitious, and highly subjective artistic expressions. I think this little essay is a strong assertion for a reconnection to the great traditions of art, not as something of the past...not as something to build a wall against...but as a living vibrant tradition, to which all can aspire, in our own era.

Speaks to many issues that including the loss of beauty in the modern world. Good book.

Roger Scruton's book is such a refreshing study. Much of the contemporary art that has been lauded as "great art" is in reality ugly, disgusting, meaningless, or a combination thereof. It could only be considered to be insanity in any rational society, but is accepted as genius. Dr. Scruton's book is like the boy crying out, "The Emperor has no clothes!"

It is a fine introduction to the philosophy of beauty, sometimes erroneously called "aesthetics." Though it is not a science of "sensation," as the Greek misnomer would suggest, it is a most important human concern with ethical, spiritual and practical as well as sensory dimensions. Scruton does a fine job of introducing his readers to the whole range of issues, and to the history of European thought about them.

As a teacher who teaches a course about life's big questions, like "What is Beauty?", this book is a great resource on a variety of perspectives and research on the topic. While it is certainly not all-encompassing, it is a great starting point to then seek out more information from other sources.

If you're tired of hearing that there is no ground, we have no meaningful roots, and "it's all good" --when you can see that it's not, Scruton is a valuable, insightful ally. A great, uplifting read, and refreshing support for what the current culture is in such denial about.

The discussion on beauty itself is in depth and insightful, and I learned a number of new things. My only issue with the book is the disgruntled tone of the author, which for me detracted from the beauty of his ideas.

Great introduction to a number of aesthetic ideas. Mr. Scruton actually provided the first explanation of some of Kant's ideas that I could understand. For me, that was unquestionably the most exciting part of the read.

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