

True Beauty

Ryan P. Doran
(Universities of Barcelona & Cambridge)

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Abstract: What is the nature of the concept BEAUTY? Does it differ fundamentally from nearby concepts such as PRETTINESS? It is argued that BEAUTY, but not PRETTINESS, is a dual-character concept. Across a number of contexts, it is proposed that BEAUTY has a descriptive sense that is characterised by, *inter alia*, having intrinsically pleasing appearances; and a normative sense associated with deeply-held values. This account is supported across two, pre-registered, studies (N=500), and by drawing on analysis of corpus data. It is suggested that this can help to explain why beauty, unlike prettiness, is thought to be deep in both the sense of being important, and in the sense of being less closely tied to sensory surfaces.

Keywords: Beauty, Prettiness, Aesthetic Concepts, Aesthetic Properties, Dual-Character Concepts, True Self, Experimental Philosophy, Corpus Analysis.

§1. Introduction

The contrast between prettiness and beauty remains a surprisingly neglected topic, even though prettiness and beauty number among the main aesthetic properties (e.g. Bradley, 1963), and are widely regarded as being similar (e.g. Leddy, 2012). On the one hand, both ‘pretty’ and ‘beautiful’ seem to refer to intrinsically pleasing appearances, and particularly those which are delicate and gentle. On the other hand, beauty is regarded as deep and important, where prettiness tends to be thought of as superficial and trivial (e.g., Leddy, 2014).

How should the concepts of prettiness and beauty be understood in order to explain this state of affairs? In this paper, I develop an account of BEAUTY and PRETTINESS, and of the difference between them; arguing that BEAUTY is a dual-character concept, in having both descriptive senses that it shares with PRETTINESS, along with a normative sense which is associated with cherished ideals and deeply-held values.

My plan is as follows: in section 2, I outline what dual-character concepts are, contrasting them with thick concepts; in section 3, I flesh out my characterisation of BEAUTY and PRETTINESS, and particularly my proposal that only the former is dual-character, tracing some of the most important implications of this proposal; in section 4, I begin to put my proposal to the test, principally in the context of human beauty, and address some of the most pressing alternative explanations of the findings presented, before concluding in section 5.

§2. Dual-Character Concepts

What are dual-character concepts, and how do they differ from similar kinds of concepts, such as thick concepts? Dual-character concepts—such as ARTIST, ART, MOTHER, HAPPINESS, SADNESS, HUMAN, MAN, COLLEAGUE, and SCIENTIST—are distinctive in having at least two kinds of

senses¹—one normative and one descriptive—which are each able to guide categorisation. For example, in a descriptive sense, a scientist is someone who conducts experiments, analyses data, and constructs theories. But, in a normative sense, a scientist is someone who is committed to a *value or ideal*—namely, the pursuit of truth through observation. As a result, we might say that someone who conducts experiments, but refuses to revise their theories in light of their findings, is only “technically speaking” a ‘scientist’ (see Lakoff, 1973); and we might call someone who does not know how to do experiments, but who is committed to the pursuit of truth through observation, a “true scientist.” While there is some disagreement about how the descriptive and normative senses of dual-character concepts are related (see e.g. Leslie, 2015; Del Pinal & Reuter, 2017), perhaps the most popular general suggestion is that the descriptive sense typically *realises* the normative sense (Knobe et al. 2013). A true scientist achieves the value of pursuing truth through observation *by*, for example, conducting experiments.

By contrast, other concepts—such as BUS DRIVER, GRAFFITI, ACQUAINTANCE, and TENNIS—only have descriptive criteria for their application; and do not have an associated value that allows linguistic expressions of these concepts to felicitously combine with the modifier ‘true.’ Someone is a bus driver just in case they drive buses; and while someone might be described as a “*good* bus driver” if they also care about their passengers and drive well, it would not sound natural to say that such a person is a “true bus driver”² (works on dual-character concepts include Knobe et al., 2013; Phillips et al., 2017; Del Pinal & Reuter, 2017; Liao et al., 2020; and Guo et al., 2021).

Dual-character concepts, and the lexical items that express them, tend to be understood in terms of polysemy: the lexical items that purportedly express dual-character concepts (such as ‘scientist’ in the case of SCIENTIST) are polysemous in the particular way they are—namely, in having a descriptive sense as well as a linked normative sense—because the concepts that gave rise to these lexical items, and which are expressed by them, are dual-character in nature (see e.g. Knobe et al., 2013; Leslie, 2015).

Given that the concepts of central interest in this paper—namely, PRETTINESS and BEAUTY—have thick senses, as we will shortly see, it is important to note that dual-character concepts are distinct from thick concepts (such as COURAGEOUS and LEWD). While both have a normative sense, and dual-character concepts can also be thick concepts, they differ in important ways (see, e.g. Reuter, 2018). In the case of (positive) thick concepts, the normative sense describes a positive attitude towards the concept’s descriptive content, and does not provide an independent basis for categorisation. By contrast, in the case of dual-character concepts, the normative sense does not describe a positive attitude towards some other content, but rather provides an independent basis for categorisation, which may itself also be the object of a positive attitude (indeed, when satisfied, it often will be).

Take the example of the thick concept COURAGEOUS: courageousness is a particular way of being good—roughly, by facing risk or danger without concern for oneself in pursuit of a worthy cause. When we describe something as courageous, we are at least typically expressing a positive evaluation towards this descriptive content. But knowing that someone tends to be the object of others’ positive attitudes isn’t enough to know that they are courageous; they could be the object of positive attitudes because they are, say, kind or attractive, rather than courageous.

By contrast, consider the dual-character concept FRIEND. The normative sense of FRIEND is something like “being there for a person in times of need,” and this is able to guide categorisation in itself. Even if someone has not chosen to spend time with another person and does not enjoy their company (and any of the other features specified by the descriptive sense of FRIEND), they would nonetheless be a “true friend” if they were there for the other person in a time of need.

¹ It may be more accurate to talk about *criteria* in this context, but for ease, I will largely refer to senses.

² Although, as Leslie (2015) notes, we can induce people to construct an ad hoc normative dimension to purely descriptive concepts by using the modifier “true” (see also the discussion of standard-raising later).

With dual-character concepts now characterised, I now turn to examine the nature of the concepts BEAUTY and PRETTINESS, make a proposal for how they might fit into this distinction, and trace some of the most important consequences of this.

§3. BEAUTY & PRETTINESS: *Related, but fundamentally distinct, aesthetic concepts?*

BEAUTY and PRETTINESS are closely related concepts. Indeed, as Leddy (2014) observes, it may well be thought by many that “the ‘pretty’ is not distinctively different from the ‘aesthetically pleasing’ or the ‘beautiful.’” Sibley (1968), for example, notes that ‘pretty’ is like ‘lovely’ in being a generic term of aesthetic praise; and Beardsley (1981) notes that ‘beautiful’ has a thin sense of referring to anything that is aesthetically valuable (see also Plato, c.390/1931; Bradley, 1963; Sparshott, 1963; Zangwill, 2001; Scruton, 2009; Paris, 2020; and Doran, 2023). This thin sense of both pretty and beautiful includes what have been called ‘free beauties,’ and ‘non-functional dependent beauties.’ Free beauty and prettiness reside in appearances that please, free from the application of concepts, such as pleasing arrangements of shape and colour (see e.g. Kant, 1790/2000). Non-functional dependent cases of beauty and prettiness reside in appearances that please in virtue of being seen as being a member of a category, though not in virtue of functional considerations: we may, for example, see a tree as beautiful or pretty insofar as the concept TREE organises the array of colours and forms that make up the appearance of the tree into a pleasing arrangement, or insofar as its appearance approaches the prototype for a tree (see e.g. Kant, 1790/2000; and Budd, 2003).³

Moreover, both share at least one thicker sense too, which seems to reside in appearances that have the disposition to give rise to, *inter alia*, sympathy-like feelings of unity with their object and feelings of gentleness (see e.g. Burke, 1757/1990; Kant, 1764/2011; Wordsworth, 1811-1812; and Doran, 2023). Prettiness is widely noted to reside in, for example, the delicate, and the diminutive, and is felt by some to be emasculating to appreciate, in part because of the feelings it tends to engender (Leddy, 2012; 2014; and Sparshott, 1963). Similarly, beauty has also been noted to reside in, for example, the small and delicate, and to give rise to sympathy-like feelings (Burke, 1757/1990; Kant, 1764/2011; and Doran, 2023). Beauty and prettiness in this sense have been associated with the aesthetic excellence that is typical of women rather than men (Kant, 1764/2011; Burke, 1757/1990; and Leddy, 2014). Indeed, today, to describe a man as “not handsome” but “beautiful” or “pretty” is to suggest a feminine appearance, or to be ironic, or to intend to prick homophobic or misogynistic attitudes.

As in the case of the thin sense of beauty and prettiness, there can be non-functional dependent cases of prettiness and beauty in this thicker sense too. The self-same degree of roundness of the jaw could make for prettiness and beauty in this sense in the case of a man’s face, but handsomeness in the case of a woman’s face. Here, the context (i.e. the gender of the person whose jaw it is), shifts the threshold of the roundness that would make for prettiness and beauty in this sense.

Notwithstanding these shared descriptive senses, BEAUTY and PRETTINESS are not identical. Among these different senses, the thicker sense seems to be closer to the default sense of PRETTINESS, which does not seem to be the case for BEAUTY in most contexts (see e.g. Santayana, 1896; Bradley, 1963; and Korsmeyer, 2006).

Moreover, it has been common to distinguish ‘beautiful’ and ‘pretty’ in terms of the *degree* to which they express these descriptive properties (see e.g. Bradley, 1963; and Korsmeyer, 2006). ‘Beautiful’ implies a high degree of the descriptive property it expresses; but ‘pretty’ has a much lower minimum threshold, and while it might seem to have no upper limit, pragmatically at least, ‘pretty’ often implies a lower maximum threshold than the minimum threshold for being beautiful. The response “she’s certainly pretty” to the question “isn’t she beautiful?” clearly implies that the

³ We might add disinterested requirements in both cases here.

person in question doesn't yet reach the threshold of the underlying property to be 'beautiful.' For this reason, prettiness has often been disparaged. As Leddy (2014) notes, it is common to hear that something is "merely pretty."

A more radical difference yet is that prettiness is often described as "shallow," but beauty is described as "deep." Depth seems to be primarily intended in its metaphorical sense in this context, as referring to importance or significance, but at times also has intimations of its literal meaning of referring to a spatial property. It is common to hear prettiness spoken of as a property of mere *sensory surfaces* and *appearances*, and as *trivial*, and of beauty as somehow *reaching beyond appearances*, and as being *significant* or *even profound*. Sparshott (1963: 74), for example, speaks of pretty patterns and pieces of music, which are free from associations, and says that prettiness, unlike beauty, "does not demand serious attention" (see also Bell, 1914); and Leddy (2014) notes the frequency with which prettiness is said to be "superficial." Korsmeyer (2006) describes beauty as having "profound dimensions" (53), and as being, unlike prettiness, able to "support meaning" (57). Indeed, G.E. Moore (1903/1922: 189) suggests that the "the enjoyment of beautiful objects," along with the "pleasures of human intercourse," are "by far the most valuable things" and that the pursuit of these things "is the rational ultimate end of human action" (see also, Plato, c.370/2010; Nehamas, 2007).

The priority of beauty over prettiness is present in Diotima's ladder in the Phaedrus (c.370/1875), where it is suggested that appreciation of prettiness may lead to the cultivation of a sensitivity to *higher* forms of beauty (see also Leopold, 1949/1987; and Rolston, 2002: 129, for contemporary versions of Diotima's ladder). And this difference in the way that prettiness and beauty are valued is the reason why the alleged avant-garde assault on "beauty" was often not actually framed in terms of 'beauty,' but rather in terms of 'prettiness' and the so-called "retinal flutter" (see, e.g. Danto, 2003: xv, 78). Danto (1986: 13), for example, characterises Marcel Duchamp as "throwing off the bondage of *prettiness*" (my emphasis). Presumably, the movement would have been seen as less noble if it had been thought of as having beauty in its cross hairs.

What explains the fact that beauty is thought to be deep, where prettiness is thought to be shallow? This might seem mysterious from what I have said thus far. For, as we have just seen, beauty and prettiness clearly share a number of senses in common, and it is far from obvious how a mere difference in the degree of the properties that satisfy these senses will always be able to account for the qualitative differences that have been noted to separate the beautiful from the pretty. For example, a more pleasing arrangement of forms and colours is no less a mere appearance than a less pleasing arrangement of forms and colours, and so equally spatially shallow; and even if the former, but not the latter, might exceed the prevailing relevant standard, and so be described as "significant," it would be difficult to satisfactorily account for the talk of beauty's profound and life-enhancing dimensions in this way.

With the foregoing in mind, I want to propose a further distinction between PRETTINESS and BEAUTY. Namely, that PRETTINESS is a descriptive concept, and is perception-dependent. BEAUTY, by contrast, is a dual-character concept, and in at least some contexts is not perception-dependent. In addition to the descriptive senses pointed out so far, something can be beautiful if it meets the relevant deeply-held ideal or value, and in at least some contexts meeting this ideal or value can be done by things that are not perceptual.

In what follows I provide evidence for this distinction between prettiness and beauty in a number of domains, and attempt to begin to characterise the normative sense of beauty in each, and the relation between the descriptive and normative senses. I then note some of the ways that this can explain how beauty can be *deeper* than prettiness, both spatially, and in terms of importance.

Focusing on the case of human beauty, where this aspect of the distinction between PRETTINESS and BEAUTY is clearest, it seems possible to describe someone who is not physically beautiful, but who is morally good as "truly beautiful" where it is not possible, I suggest, to describe such a person as "truly pretty." This distinction is latent in under-appreciated aspects of a wide range of writings on the aesthetics of humans. Kant (1764/2010: 43-44), for example, distinguishes

between prettiness and beauty by saying that the former resides in non-moral goodness, whereas the latter comes where “a tender heart and benevolent feeling” shine through appearance. Similarly, Wollstonecraft calls “flowery diction” and elegant language “pretty nothings” and “caricatures of the *real* beauty of sensibility” by which she means the capacity for compassion for others and refined emotions (1792/2010: 7-8; see also Higgins, 2001: 104-5).

Indeed, the view that morally good dispositions—such as virtues and character traits—are beautiful was widespread among the British Moralists (e.g. Shaftesbury, 1711/1999; Hutcheson, 1726/2004; Smith, 1759/2002) and has recently been revived among analytic aestheticians (see e.g. Gaut, 2007; Paris, 2017, 2018, 2020; Doran, 2021, 2023, Forthcoming 2024a, Forthcoming 2024b, Forthcoming 2024c). Most germane to the proposal laid out in this paper, and as will be discussed later, Doran (2021) found in an experimental study that, for the vast majority of people, being morally good, even in the absence of physical beauty, was sufficient for the predication of beauty.

With this in mind, in the case of human beauty, the normative sense of beauty seems to be constituted principally by being morally good.⁴ If this is right, then the structure of the concept BEAUTY in the context of human beauty might depart from the proposal, outlined in §2, that the features picked out by the descriptive sense *realise* the features specified by the normative sense (Knobe et al., 2013). For physical beauty does not *realise* the moral goodness that satisfies the ideal that constitutes the normative sense; rather it seems to be able to be *expressive* of it. In support of this idea, we might note the propensity to depict morally evil people as ugly, and morally good people as beautiful in the descriptive senses, in art (see e.g. Gottschall et al., 2007). Indeed, this propensity to see beauty as being expressive of moral goodness is not only present in Western aesthetic contexts, but also seems to be present in other aesthetic cultures. Among the Yoruba, for example, people who are morally good but physically ugly, or physically beautiful but morally bad, are regarded as anomalous and described as ‘awobowa’ (“skin covers character”) (Lawal, 1974: 240-241).

A similar distinction seems to be present in the context of many other kinds of beauty and prettiness—including the beauty and prettiness of biotic nature, artefacts and art—though the values or ideals associated with beauty in these contexts seem to vary somewhat and are more difficult to specify precisely. Moreover, it may be less clear that the normative sense is sufficient for categorisation in the absence of being perceptually realised in these contexts.

In the case of artefacts, and biotic nature, the contrast of beauty and prettiness has been drawn most prominently around the notion of function. Giving voice to this distinction with respect to artefacts, Le Courbusier (1923/1931: 37), for example, advocates for a *functionally* beautiful architecture and says that merely decorative styles of architecture (such as Louis XIV, XV, XVI and Gothic) “are to architecture what a feather is on a woman’s head: it is sometimes pretty, though not always; and never anything more.” And in the context of natural biotic beauty, Parsons and Carlson (2007: 122) suggest that the leopard’s spots are “pretty” in themselves, but can also be seen as *beautiful* when it is seen how they help to camouflage the animal, and thereby fulfil their proper function well. Indeed, following the lead of the Socrates of Xenophon’s *Memorabilia* (c.370/2005) and of Plato’s (c.370/1931) *The Hippias Major*, even merely having the capacity to achieve a function to a high degree, without exhibiting or expressing this *in appearance*, may be thought to be sufficient to be beautiful, at least in a certain sense.

In the case of artefacts, and abiotic nature, then, the ideal or value that beauty aims at may be perceptually exhibiting the capacity to achieve the relevant *proper function* well, or perhaps just having the capacity to achieve it. But even here, considerations related to morality, or at least nobility, seem to play a role in homing in on just those cases where exhibiting, of merely having, the capacity to achieve a proper function well tends to be considered beautiful. Burke (1757/1990: 95), for example, notes that exhibiting fitness for function cannot be sufficient for beauty,

⁴ There may be other deeply held values in the context of human beauty—Gaut (2007), for example, regards intelligence as beautiful.

otherwise a pig's small eyes and wedge-like snout (well-suited to rooting in the mud) would be beautiful; and more recently, Paris (2020: 520) notes that such things as urinals, toilet seats, rubbish trucks and torture instruments are fit for function (and indeed exhibit this in their appearance), but are not typically considered beautiful. In these cases, the relevant proper functions seem to be too prosaic or ignoble to be beautiful. For this reason, Paris (ms) has suggested, with a good deal of plausibility, that something's proper function must *resonate with our values* in order to be thought to be beautiful.

Here, the structure of the concept of beauty in play may conform better to Knobe et al.'s (2013) proposal that the features that satisfy the descriptive senses typically *realise* the normative sense, in addition to the suggestion concerning expressiveness above. For many supporters of functional beauty, including Parsons and Carlson (2007: 4-5, 45-49), suggest that the beauty of artefacts and biotic nature lies in the way that their appearances exhibit that they achieve their proper functions well (i.e. they "look fit"), and this may include the features that are beautiful in one of the descriptive senses (as in the case of the cheetah's spots).⁵ It is important to note, however, that when such descriptively beautiful features or pretty features are seen as realising a function, it seems that the epithet 'pretty' gets selected against in favour of 'beautiful'.

In the case of artistic beauty, the distinction between prettiness and beauty is often drawn in terms of the latter's association with deep truth, moral value, and the interconnection of the two. Korsmeyer (2006) notes that the pretty can be converted into the beautiful by being given moral and existential significance, and, as we have seen above, that beauty can have "profound dimensions." In §49 of the *Critique of Judgement*, Kant (1790/2000) notes that poetry can be pretty but lack soul. And in his wide-ranging overview of theories of beauty, E.F. Carritt (1932: 25-6) notes that Rembrandt's portraits of old men, Shakespeare's Lear and Wordsworth's image of a beggar, have been claimed to be beautiful, despite not being "pretty," and that it has been widely proposed that this may be because something "is beautiful when it gives us some deeper insight than we naturally have into the nature of things of that kind" (26), or because "beauty is the revelation of the true worth or value of things" (29), or because "things have beauty only insofar as they speak to the heart and aspirations of man" (32). Carritt adds that "for many centuries it was almost universally held that it was the function of poetry and art, and indeed beauty in general, to make us better men, and that the truths which they gave us were the truths of morality" (41).⁶ And these aren't just Western ideas about beauty: in Japanese, the perception of beauty is thought to be able to give rise to a state called 'yūgen,' in which one has the sense that one has met with a profound truth that lies beneath surface appearances and which tends to be accompanied by tears (see e.g. Scharfstein, 2009: 427-8).

With this in mind, the ideal or value which beauty in art may be thought to aim at is to express or at least be expressive of truths of enduring human significance (which we might call

⁵ The view that mere achievement of function is sufficient might be controversial for some. As we just seen, it has been suggested that in order for being fit to contribute to something's *aesthetic* value, it needs to show up in *appearances* somehow (see e.g. Scruton, 1979: 40-1; and Parsons & Carlson, 2007: 4-5, 45-49). It might also be suggested that even the position espoused by the Socrates of *The Hippias Major* and the *Memorabilia* is not to be taken seriously: as Parsons and Carlson (2007: 15) note, in the face of a putative counterexample that involves achievement of a base proper function—a perfectly functional dung basket—Socrates "cheekily" doubles down in insisting that it is indeed beautiful. With respect to the first consideration, it is important to keep in mind that there only needs to be *a sense* in which things that achieve their (worthy) proper function to a high degree are beautiful, and that this may be a non-aesthetic sense of 'beauty.' Even for paradigmatic dual-character concepts, statements that express that only the normative sense applies typically only sound *a little* natural. With respect to the second suggestion, as we have already seen above, such counterexamples involving base functions apply to accounts of functional beauty generally, and point to the need for an additional conceptual constraint, rather than constituting a reason to jettison the idea of functional beauty (aesthetic or otherwise) altogether.

⁶ Carritt variously attributes these views to Plato, Plotinus, Aquinas, Hegel, Wordsworth, Ruskin and Tolstoy, among others.

profound or deep truths), particularly concerning moral values. Connectedly, one of the functions of beauty in art is not merely to *please*, but also to *elevate* and *inspire* in some manner.⁷ As in the case of the beauty of artefacts and biotic nature, a similar structure to the one suggested by Knobe et al. (2013) seems likely to hold: meeting these values or ideals of, for example, expression or expressiveness of deep truth, particularly concerning moral matters, may be realised, at least in part, by the features that satisfy the descriptive senses of beauty—in, for example, having intrinsically pleasing arrangements of form and colour. But sometimes they will not; as occurs in the case of Rembrandt’s old men, for example.

Moreover, and as noted by a number of commentators on beauty and prettiness, even where the kinds of properties that can make for beauty in the descriptive sense (and prettiness) play a role in realising the normative sense of beauty in this context, they will often be attended by some difficulty or obscurity. Korsmeyer (2006: 55) notes that part of the process of transforming mere prettiness into beauty involves making the visual appearance “more strenuous” to appreciate; and Bosanquet (1915) distinguishes between easy and difficult beauty (with the former seeming to approximate prettiness), noting that one way to transform easy beauty to difficult beauty is to add intricacy: even if harmony of parts can make for beauty and prettiness in the descriptive sense, when the sum or complexity of parts to be harmonised grows too great, such that it becomes difficult to unify, or eludes full unification, it can become expressive of something profound, and the epithet “beautiful” becomes selected for over “pretty.”⁸

A final thing to say in connection with this issue, though I don’t want to insist on this, is that if the *ideas* expressed by some works—particularly those that meditate on the human condition—could be articulated (despite the heresy of paraphrase, Brooks, 1947), then it is not implausible that these would be regarded as beautiful in themselves, at least in a certain sense.

In sum, across many of the contexts in which it occurs, BEAUTY, though not PRETTINESS, seems to be associated with the achievement of our most deeply-held values and cherished ideals—such as goodness (both moral goodness and noble usefulness), and truth.⁹

Finally, it is important to emphasise *some* of the ways in which the characterisation of PRETTINESS and BEAUTY offered here can help to vindicate our propensity to think of beauty as being deeper than prettiness in both the spatial and valuational sense.

⁷ It is, however, especially important to note here that it is a feature of many dual-character concepts that it is often difficult to accurately specify their associated values or ideals without leaving something important out, and that we will often hold a *placeholder* for one sense of some concepts. With respect to specification difficulties, as Knobe et al. (2013) note, for example, the value associated with Rock ‘n’ Roll is difficult to fully articulate but seems to have something to do with youthful rebellion, among other things. And with respect to the idea that we may simply hold a placeholder for aspects of certain concepts, we may believe that gold has an essence, but have no idea that it is being made up of atoms that have 79 protons. As such, in the case of the value or ideal associated with beauty in art (and in other domains), it seems likely that it may be difficult to specify the value or ideal precisely, and that we may carry a placeholder value.

⁸ Indeed, with respect to the puzzle, mentioned earlier, of how a mere difference in degree of some of the properties that can make for both beauty (in the descriptive sense) and prettiness could account for the difference in how they are valued, this suggests another way in which this might happen: in having greater intricacy or complexity, beautiful objects may display *greater unity* than pretty objects, and in so doing be expressive of significance.

⁹ This is not intended to be exhaustive. The concept of beauty may also be dual-character in other domains too. For example, in the domain of mathematics, one reason that proofs and theorems seem to be thought to be beautiful, when indeed they are, is that they express deep truths—G.H. Hardy’s (1940/1992) six criteria for beauty in mathematics include “depth” and “significance,” and in a recent experimental study on the aesthetic judgements of mathematicians, “ingenious,” “inspired,” “enlightening,” “deep” and “insightful” numbered among the adjectives most strongly associated with judgements of beauty (Inglis & Aberdein, 2014). So there may be a dual-character concept of beauty in operation here which is similar to the notion in play in the context of artistic beauty. Thanks to a reviewer for this journal for suggesting that I consider mathematical beauty.

With the spatial sense of depth in mind, one consequence of this proposal is that it explains why in some cases, beauty can be *literally* deeper than prettiness. When someone is beautiful because they are morally good, the beauty resides in the way they are inside; and they would remain beautiful even if they never had the opportunity to express this through their actions. But such a person could not be pretty for this reason. So beauty, unlike prettiness, is able to fully transcend appearances in this context, to reside in entities that are located (literally) deeper inside people than their sensory surfaces. Moreover, this shows that there is an additional kind of dependent beauty that has not been recognised as such to date. In addition to functional dependent beauty and non-functional dependent beauty—which are both discussed above, and which are both realised by perceptual properties at least in part—there are *non-perception-dependent dependent beauties*. Appreciation of the beauty of the moral goodness of a person is dependent on the application of moral concepts, but it is not dependent, even in part, on perceptual properties. Beauty is not, then, as the English idiom goes, “only skin deep.”

With the valuational sense of “depth” in mind, another advantage of this proposal is that it explains how beauty can be significant and important, even profound, whereas prettiness cannot. Beauty, in being able to reside in things that realise, express or are expressive of our cherished ideals and deeply-held values, is regarded as *important*. Poor prettiness, in not being able to reach beyond appearances to these ideals and values is not.

As we have seen, the epithet “prettiness” can be applied to cases of aesthetic goodness which are determined in part by some kinds of non-perceptual content, such as kind concepts—for example, the self-same degree of roundness may make for prettiness in the context of a man’s face, where it would not in the context of a woman’s face. But where an aesthetic goodness is determined, at least in part, by other kinds of non-perceptual content, such as expressing or being expressive of deeply-held values and cherished ideals, the epithet ‘prettiness’ is selected against in favour of ‘beauty.’ It is for this reason that there are cases of functional dependent beauty, but not cases of functional dependent prettiness, and that much of the art that is most treasured is beautiful, and rarely merely pretty.

This is not to say that the pretty cannot be subject to ideals. For example, we can contest which descriptive features should be considered aesthetically appealing, or, say, delicate. But importantly, and in contrast to beauty, prettiness is *limited* to certain kinds of appearances—namely those that have free beauty, non-functional dependent beauty, and beauty in the thicker sense outlined above—and these are just not that important in themselves. For example, Guo et al. (2021) found evidence that even people’s concept of the *ideal* woman—which is as likely as any to focus on appearances (in one of the descriptive senses of beauty and prettiness) given the considerable emphasis placed on them for that gender (see e.g. Widdows, 2018)—ranks appearances lower than moral character (thankfully). Moreover, unlike beautiful things, merely pretty things do not reach beyond appearances by, for example, expressing or being expressive of our deepest values—they lack the intentionality that beautiful things seem to possess.¹⁰

There is surely more that could be said here, especially concerning how beautiful appearances can be expressive of deep values, and therefore profound,¹¹ but enough has been said

¹⁰ It might also be suggested that ideals can come to bear on prettiness in another way. According to what I have said above, appearances of prototypical things can be seen as “pretty” to that extent. But, it might be pointed out, prototypes not only reflect the exemplars of the relevant category that are experienced most often, but also those which tend to meet the category’s function—i.e. an ideal or value (Hogan, 2017; Doran, 2020). The prototype of a diet food is lettuce, not only because it is the most eaten diet food, but also because it tends to be good for losing weight. With this in mind, it might be suggested that the distinction drawn between beauty and prettiness collapses, after all. It seems, however, that when the aesthetically good reaches beyond appearances to (worthy) ideals, the epithet ‘pretty’ tends to be selected against in favour of ‘beautiful.’

¹¹ Of relevance to the discussion here is the puzzle of how certain works of art—and particularly works of instrumental music—can be profound. Kivy (1990), for example, who is credited with originally

to sketch the main contours of the proposal. I turn now to put the central idea expressed above—namely that BEAUTY but not PRETTINESS is a dual-character concept—to the test, particularly in the context of human beauty, where the distinction is clearest.

§4. *Beginning to put the proposal to the test*

There are acknowledged to be two main kinds of tests that are used to establish that a given concept is a dual-character concept. As we have already previewed in §2, the first test is that the lexical items expressing dual-character concepts can take the modifier ‘true’ for competent speakers of English (the ‘True-Modifier’ test). The second is that the lexical items expressing dual-character concepts sound acceptable to competent speakers in statements that aim to express that only one sense of the concept in question holds (the ‘Two-Senses’ test). In the following, based on these tests, I present findings from corpora of English, together with the results of two experimental studies to test whether the folk’s concept of beauty, but not prettiness, is indeed dual-character, at least in some contexts.

The background theories underlying the use of acceptability judgements and corpus analyses are complex (and indeed hotly contested by linguists and philosophers), and a discussion of this is well outside of the scope of this article (for a philosophical discussion of the use of linguistic intuitions, see Schindler, Drożdżowicz & Brøcker, 2020). But the basic idea motivating the use of these kinds of linguistic data in this context seems to be as follows. The meaning of our concepts gets encoded in language, albeit imperfectly. As a result, examining the patterns of use and acceptability judgements of locutions involving the lexical items that express the concepts of interest by people who have mastered the relevant language can provide a window into the meaning of the concepts expressed. And since only those people who have acquired a language as their first language tend to achieve mastery of the language (see e.g. Birdsong, 1992), the use and acceptability judgements of those language users will be most useful.

§4.i. *Study 1 – The “True-Modifier” Test*

The first way to investigate whether a given concept is a dual-character concept is to see if it felicitously combines with the modifier ‘true’ (this method is utilised by e.g. Knobe et al., 2013; Del Pinal and Reuter, 2017; and Liao et al., 2020, among others). One important way of doing this is to examine certain corpora of English, such as the British National Corpus (BNC) and Corpus of American English (COCA), which are extremely large and representative collections of samples of written and spoken English. Using such corpora, we can see if speakers of English tend to

formulating the puzzle, denies that works of instrumental music can be profound on the grounds that they are not *about* anything at all, let alone anything profound. Most solutions have attempted to explain the way that instrumental music can be “about” matters of enduring human significance by appealing to weaker notions of “aboutness” such as intimation and exemplification (see e.g. Levinson, 1992; Davies, 2002; Ridley, 2004; and Dodd, 2014), though Nanay (2021) takes a different approach in suggesting profundity is a matter of actively challenging any straightforward interpretative activity. In some cases of beauty, such as cases where someone is beautiful because they are morally good, or where a novel is beautiful because it expresses a deep moral truth, it is far from clear that the same kind of puzzle crops up—since the beauty in this case actually lies in something of enduring human significance. In other cases, however, such as non-representational artworks that are beautiful in merely being *expressive* of deep truths, a similar puzzle crops up—for how can non-representational works be expressive of anything, let alone deep truths? I have already suggested some of the resources available to resolve this puzzle in existing discussions of the contrast between prettiness and beauty, such as Korsmeyer (2006) and Bosanquet’s (1915) suggestions concerning obscurity and intricacy (and which are echoed in Nanay’s account of profundity). Nonetheless, the remaining existing work on profundity promises other resources, which I must leave for another occasion to explore, for reasons of space. Thanks to a reviewer for this journal for encouraging me to think further about this literature.

combine the ‘true’-modifier with ‘beauty’ and ‘prettiness’ in *natural communicative settings*, free from the potentially warping artificiality that comes from, for example, eliciting meta-linguistic ‘acceptability’ intuitions about isolated locutions administered in a formal research setting (see e.g. Barlow and Kemmer, 2002).

In the COCA (which contains one billion words), there are 168 occurrences of ‘true beauty’ of 45,333 instances of the word ‘beauty’ (0.37% of occurrences), and in the BNC (which contains 100 million words), there are 13 occurrences of ‘true beauty’ of 4,055 occurrences of the word ‘beauty’ (0.32% of occurrences). By contrast, there are no instances of ‘true prettiness’ in either the COCA or the BNC. This provides some evidence that ‘beauty’ is able to felicitously take the modifier ‘true,’ and so may be a dual-character concept, but does not constitute strong evidence in favour of the idea that prettiness cannot felicitously take the modifier ‘true.’ For ‘prettiness’ occurs just 178 times in the COCA and 48 times in the BNC, and so supposing that ‘true prettiness’ is a felicitous construction that is used at the same rate as ‘true beauty,’ it would not be all that surprising to find no such occurrences in samples of this size.¹² Indeed, generally, corpus methods are thought to be limited in their usefulness where samples of the lexical item (or construction) of interest are too small (see e.g. Den Dikken et al., 2007).

It might also be suggested that, even if ‘true beauty’ but not ‘true prettiness’ is shown to occur in natural language, this may simply be a matter of the fact that the default sense of beauty is closer to the thin concepts outlined in §3 than prettiness, rather than suggesting that one is a dual-character concept. Augmenting this worry, Reuter, Baumgartner and Willemsen (2023) recently found evidence that ‘truly’ and ‘really’ (which are like the ‘true’ modifier in some ways) function to highlight or intensify the evaluative aspects of thick adjectives, and that they tend to select for thin terms more than thick terms (though the pattern was less clear for non-moral adjectives, as is the subject of this paper).

One consideration that speaks against such a possibility from the outset is that even lexical items that express concepts whose default sense is clearly as thick as PRETTINESS seem to be able to felicitously combine with ‘true,’ suggesting that the linguistic behaviour in question is not merely a matter of thickness. By default, the concepts expressed by ‘elegance’ and ‘gracefulness’ are thick but, unlike ‘prettiness,’ they seem to felicitously combine with the modifier ‘true.’ There are 6 occurrences of ‘true elegance’ in the COCA (from 2,993 occurrences, accounting for 0.20% of all occurrences). And while there are no occurrences of ‘true gracefulness’ in either the COCA or the BNC, this might be due in part to the fact that there seems to be an awkwardness to some nouns with the suffix ‘-ness’¹³ (a misfortune which ‘gracefulness’ may share with ‘prettiness’), and due to the fact that there is another noun which is semantically close to gracefulness—namely ‘grace,’ where ‘grace’ has the additional meaning of divine gift or blessing (“the grace of god,” “reading a Latin grace”), and so may be more readily used to communicate the normative sense of gracefulness, if it exists.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given what I have said in §3, part of the reason why these determinates of BEAUTY, but not PRETTINESS, are able to do this, I suggest, is that they are associated with a moral value or nobility, and so have a normative sense too. We can describe someone as elegant and graceful not only for having a smooth, simple, well-integrated *appearance*, but also when they display dignity, class, and elevation. We can say, for example, that someone accepts defeat (as well as victory) “gracefully.”

Notwithstanding this initial support for the proposal from corpus evidence, given the limitations I have pointed to above—such as the low frequency of ‘prettiness’ generally and the absence of occurrences of ‘true gracefulness’ in corpuses of English (and the attendant worry about the awkwardness of some nouns with the suffix ‘-ness’)—it would be helpful to also

¹² One would expect 1 use of ‘true prettiness’ in every 313 occurrences of ‘prettiness’ in the BNC, and 1 use in every 270 occurrences of ‘prettiness’ in the COCA.

¹³ Consider the monstrosity ‘nebulousness.’

establish competent English speakers' judgements with respect to whether 'beauty,' 'prettiness,' 'gracefulness,' and 'elegance' can take the modifier 'true.'

Examining the acceptability of highly controlled sets of constructions, where 'beauty,' 'prettiness,' 'gracefulness,' and 'elegance,' are modified by 'true,' can help to establish whether these constructions are not merely not used, but are actually incorrect given the meaning of 'prettiness,' 'gracefulness' and the function of the 'true' modifier (see e.g. Ferreira, 2005).¹⁴ In this context, it is better to rely on the judgements of a large number of people (as we have also done in drawing on corpus data), and to not rely on my own judgements. First, individuals are subject to err, and so taking the judgements of large number of people helps to arrive at a more accurate estimate of the true acceptability value, as given by the meaning of the relevant concepts (linguists commonly distinguish between performance and competence here, following Chomsky, 1965). Second, my judgements may be contaminated by the dual-character proposal I am trying to test, and so would not clearly provide independent support for that proposal. For discussions of some of the sources of error in people's linguistic intuitions, and the problem of the theory-ladenness of researchers relying on their own linguistic intuitions, see e.g. Schütze (1996) and Featherston (2007).

Method: In a within-subjects design, participants rated "that is true beauty," "that is true prettiness," "that is true elegance," and "that is true gracefulness" on a 7-point scale, anchored at "1—Sounds weird" and "7—Sounds natural." Ethical approval for study was obtained from [redacted for anonymity], and this study was pre-registered (https://aspredicted.org/MFZ_3W5). A gender-balanced sample of 250 participants from across the US for whom English was their first language, were invited to take part (details of the sample size justification, and design, are provided in the *Supplementary Materials*). Seven participants failed the attention check, leaving a final sample of 243 (Mean age=39, SD=14; 49% Women, 50% Men, 1% Other).

Results: All analyses are as per the pre-registration. The outcome variables were not normally distributed, but as ANOVA tends to be robust against such violations with sufficiently large sample sizes (such as this), a one-way repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted, with aesthetic concept as a factor ('elegance,' 'beauty,' 'gracefulness,' and 'prettiness') and naturalness/weirdness as the dependent measure. Mauchly's test of sphericity was significant, indicating that there was not homogeneity of variance between aesthetic concepts, and so a Greenhouse-Geisser correction was applied. There was a significant effect of aesthetic concept on ratings of naturalness ($F(2.61, 631.18)=367.49.58, p<.001, \eta^2=.60$). Pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni corrections to control the false positive rate indicated that the naturalness of the true-modifier statements for *all concepts* were significantly different from one another. Crucially for my purposes here, 'true'-modifier statements with 'gracefulness,' 'elegance,' and 'beauty' were all significantly more natural sounding than the 'true'-modifier statement with 'prettiness' (Beauty vs. Prettiness, $t(242)=28.16$, two-sided, $p<.001$, Cohen's $d=1.81$; Elegance vs. Prettiness, $t(242)=24.74$, $p<.001$, $d=1.59$; Gracefulness vs. Prettiness, $t(242)=14.82$, $p<.001$, $d=.95$). Moreover, the means for the 'true'-modifier statements for 'beauty,' 'elegance' and 'gracefulness' were above the midpoint, and their confidence intervals did not include the midpoint, indicating that they all sounded natural on average (Mean-Beauty= 6.23 (SD=1.22), M-Elegance=5.88 (SD=1.31), M-Gracefulness=4.67 (SD=1.64). By contrast, the mean for the 'true'-modifier statement for 'prettiness' was below the midpoint, and its confidence intervals did not include the midpoint, indicating that this statement sounded weird on average (M-Prettiness=2.67 (SD=1.62), see Figure 1.).

¹⁴ However, it should be noted that whether such acceptability judgements reflect correct or incorrect usage, rather than mere usage, is controversial. Some, such as Labov (1996), think that such judgements may reflect frequency of use; while others, such as the later Wittgenstein (1953), reject the use-meaning distinction altogether. These are not issues I can wade into here to any great extent. It is, however, clear that acceptability studies can at least *help* us in this context.



Figure 1. Mean naturalness/weirdness of the true modifier statements, where 1 is “Sounds weird,” 7 is “Sounds natural,” the dotted line marks the midpoint, and error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals

Discussion: Taking the findings from the corpus analyses and the results of the experimental study together, the concept expressed by ‘beauty,’ but not ‘prettiness,’ conforms to the pattern that would be expected for a dual-character concept. Moreover, this finding cannot be exhaustively explained in terms of ‘beauty’ preferentially selecting for one of the thinner senses that it shares with ‘prettiness,’ since the lexical items that express thick determinates of beauty—such as ‘elegance’ and ‘gracefulness’—can felicitously combine with the ‘true’-modifier. The reason for this, I suggest, is that these determinates have an associated value and ideal, like beauty. Nor can the weirdness of ‘true prettiness’ be accounted for in terms of any awkwardness that may stem from the suffix ‘-ness’ since ‘true gracefulness’ was found to sound natural. Since this design does not specify the domain to which the given aesthetic concept applies (though it rules out people themselves, who aren’t referred to with ‘that’), this study suggests that BEAUTY may be a dual-character concept in at least one domain, and that PRETTINESS is not a dual-character concept in any domain.

§4.ii. Study 2 – The “Two Senses” Approach

Notwithstanding this support for the thesis proposed here, the “True-Modifier” test suffers from some limitations. For the ‘true’-modifier does not only function to select for the normative dimension of a concept (if indeed it has one). It can also be used to raise standards (or intensify), as when we might say “now, *that’s* a true cookie” to restrict the descriptive features that cookies should meet to count as cookies (without harbouring a dual-character concept of a cookie) (Leslie, 2015; Reuter, 2018; and Simon-Vandenberg & Taverniers, 2014). This may be particularly worrying in the case of prettiness, for reasons we have seen in §3. For, at least pragmatically, ‘pretty’ may express a low level of the underlying property, and so it may not seem to make sense to standard-raise or intensify in the context of prettiness.

Less worryingly in the present context, but still notable, the ‘true’-modifier can also be used to express that something has many of the prototypical descriptive features of a concept, as when we might say that “a sparrow is a true bird,” in contrast to a penguin, which might only be said be a bird “technically speaking” (Lakoff, 1973; and Simon-Vandenberg & Taverniers, 2014). Finally, the ‘true’ modifier can also be used to select for authenticity (Newman & Bloom, 2012; and Simon-Vandenberg & Taverniers, 2014), as when we say “that’s a true Picasso” to say that

something has the descriptive feature of being painted by Picasso (without believing that this painting meets the ideal that Picasso was aiming at, if indeed such an ideal exists).

To begin to address the worry that the results of §4.i. could reflect these alternative uses of the ‘true’-modifier, and particularly intensification, standard-raising and prototypicality¹⁵, we can turn to the second method of establishing that a concept is dual-character—the “Two Senses” approach (utilised by e.g. Knobe et al., 2013; Liao et al., 2020; and Guo et al., 2021, among others).¹⁶ Consider the following two sets of sentences (for ‘pretty’ and ‘beautiful’ respectively in each case):

(1) *Ultimately Member*

“There is a sense in which she is clearly not pretty/beautiful (a), but ultimately, when you think about what it really means to be pretty/beautiful, you’d have to say that there is a sense in which she is pretty/beautiful after all (b).”

(2) *Ultimately Non-Member*

“There is a sense in which she is clearly pretty/beautiful (a), but ultimately, when you think about what it really means to be pretty/beautiful, you’d have to say that there is a sense in which she is not pretty/beautiful after all (b).”

In the case of each pair, the (a) clauses are thought to target the descriptive senses of the concepts expressed (if they exist, and are satisfied), and the (b) clauses are thought to target the normative senses of the concepts expressed (if they exist, and are satisfied). As such, if a concept has at least one normative and descriptive sense (i.e. it is a dual-character concept) then both (1) and (2) should be felicitous. By contrast, if a concept does not have a normative sense (i.e. it is not a dual-character concept), then (1) and (2) should not be felicitous.

So how felicitous are these sentences? I suggest that sentences (1) and (2) are felicitous for ‘beautiful,’ but neither are felicitous for ‘pretty,’ which would suggest that BEAUTIFUL but not PRETTY is a dual-character concept, at least in the context of human beauty (or perhaps just for the beauty of women¹⁷). But, for reasons noted in §4.i, we are better to consult many competent speakers of English, rather than relying on my judgements in this case. For this reason, a second study was conducted.

Methods: In a within-subjects design, participants were presented with both the Ultimately-Member and Ultimately-Not-Member statements with both ‘pretty’ and ‘beautiful’ (further details are provided in the *Supplementary Materials*), and were asked to rate these statements on a scale that ran from 1-7 (anchored at “1—Sounds weird” and “7—Sounds natural”). This study was pre-

¹⁵ These alternatives seem the most likely in this context. While it seems possible to describe something as “truly pretty” or “truly beautiful” in the authenticity sense—imagine, for example, something which merely looks pretty or beautiful from a distance, but not up close—the locutions used in study 1 would not tend to be used in these contexts.

¹⁶ One might wonder why the ‘true’-modifier has all of these usages, especially given that they can dissociate in the ways suggested above. One possibility is that where an instance satisfies the normative sense, it will also tend to satisfy the other meanings of the ‘true’ modifier. Since the normative sense is generally thought to be what the descriptive sense aims at, those instances where the normative sense is satisfied are likely to be those which will most often be the target of attempts to standard-raise and intensify. And since prototypes tend to be weighted towards the functional instances of the kind in question (see e.g. Hogan, 2017), it is plausible that the most prototypical will be those where the normative sense is satisfied. The same seems likely to be true in the case of beauty, *mutatis-mutandis*. Indeed, we seem to both pick out the normative sense *and* standard raise when we say things like “true beauty is on the inside, and that’s what counts.”

¹⁷ A woman was selected as the object of the judgement here, given that the thicker descriptive sense of pretty and beautiful is associated with women. But I don’t think there is any reason to think that the same would not be true if a man were selected.

registered (https://aspredicted.org/DCM_YMJ). A gender-balanced sample of 250 participants in the US for whom English was their first language were invited to take part, and four were excluded for failing the attention check, leaving a final sample of 246 (Mean age=38 (SD=13), 49% Women, 50% Men, 1% Other).

Results: As per the pre-registration, a 2 x 2 repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted, with aesthetic concept (Beautiful vs. Pretty) and type of statement (Ultimately-Member vs. Ultimately Non-Member) as factors, and naturalness as the dependent variable. As predicted, there was only a main effect of aesthetic concept ($F(1, 245)=66.87, p<.001, \eta^2=.21$), with the sentences with ‘beautiful’ being judged to be more natural sounding than the sentences with ‘pretty.’ Moreover, crucially, the mean for the ‘beautiful’ statements was above the midpoint, and its 95% confidence intervals did not include it (Mean-Beautiful=4.70 (SD=1.49)); and the mean for the ‘pretty’ statements was below the midpoint, though its 95% confidence intervals included the midpoint at the very upper limit (Mean-Pretty=3.83 (1.44), see Fig. 2). Since a value can be significantly different from the midpoint even when the 95% confidence intervals include it (see e.g. Schenker & Gentleman, 2001), a one-sample t-test was conducted to see if the mean value for the prettiness items was indeed significantly lower than the midpoint, and revealed that it was ($t(245)=-1.90, p<.05$, one-tailed, Cohen’s $d=-.12$).¹⁸

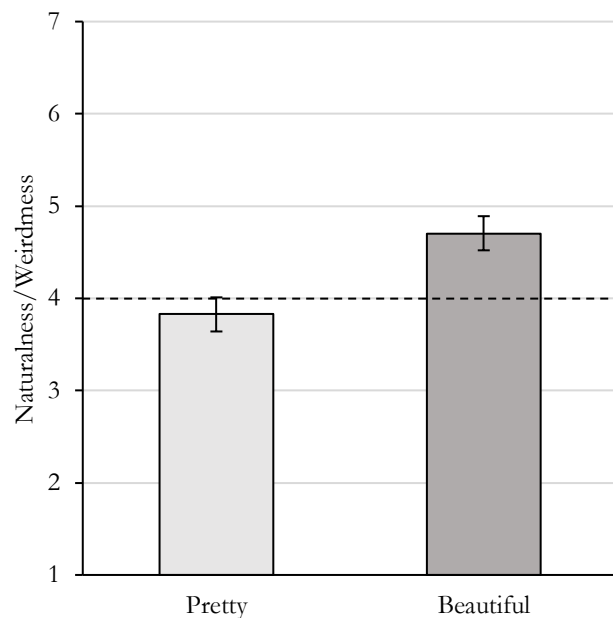


Figure 2. Mean naturalness/weirdness of the “pretty” and “beautiful” two-senses statements, where error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals

Discussion: The results of this study provide further support for the proposal, specifically in the context of human beauty. Since statements of the kind (1) and (2) seem to be felicitous for ‘beautiful,’ but not for ‘pretty,’ this suggests that BEAUTIFUL has at least one descriptive and normative sense, and is a dual-character concept, but PRETTY only has at least one descriptive sense, and is not a dual-character concept.

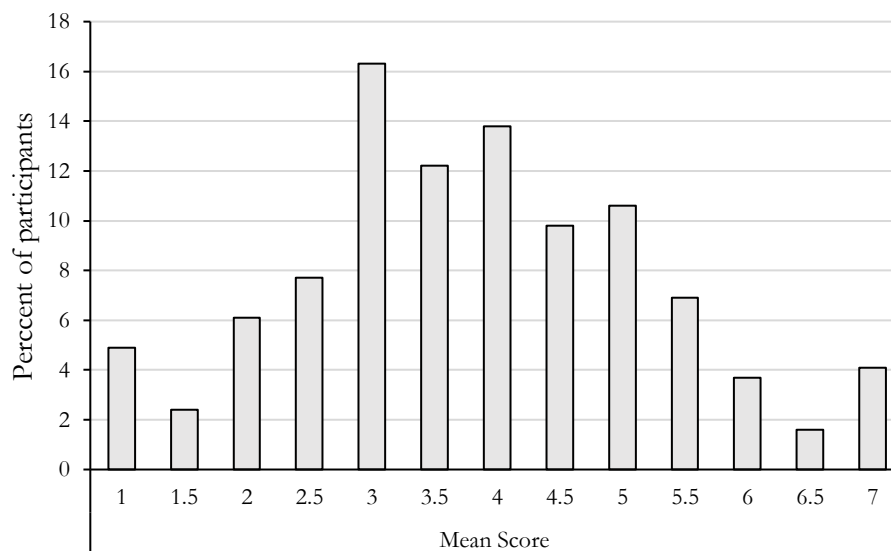
Moreover, turning to the limitations of the ‘True-Modifier’ approach, this method helps to deal with the possibility that standard-raising and intensification and prototypicality, in particular, might exhaustively explain the results of the ‘True-Modifier’ test. If the felicity of ‘true beauty’ reflected mere standard-raising or intensification, for example, then the descriptive criteria

¹⁸ Thanks to [redacted for anonymity] for suggesting this additional analysis. Although there was no main effect of statement type or interaction between statement type and aesthetic concept, individual means for each measure are reported in the *Supplementary Materials*.

for applying the concept can hold to different degrees, and ‘true beauty’ refers to meeting a higher threshold of those criteria applying. On this picture, the ‘true’ cases of beauty would be a subset of the non-standard-raised set of beauties. And the same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, for prototypicality: if the felicity of the true-modifier reflected mere prototypicality, then some cases that meet the descriptive criteria would be more prototypical than others. On this picture too, the ‘true’ cases would reflect a subset of the non-prototypical set of beauties.

The results of the method deployed here seem to speak against such views, as the two senses are fully dissociable. The person in (2) appears to have none of the features that satisfy the descriptive sense, and so they are not part of the set of beauties in the descriptive sense, and yet they are accepted to be beautiful (see Knobe et al., 2013, and Leslie, 2015, for discussion of this benefit).

In the case of prettiness, if prettiness is indeed not able to be standard-raised or intensified in terms of its descriptive senses (see above), then this same issue does not crop up: without a normative sense, statements (1) and (2) should not sound natural, and this is indeed what we see in both cases.¹⁹ To this, it might be suggested that PRETTINESS might indeed have a normative sense, but that participants may be led to either read the statements as indicating attempts at standard-raising or intensification (and so find them weird-sounding) or as attempts to select for the normative sense (and so find them natural sounding), with the mean for all participants happening to fall slightly below the midpoint, leading to the misleading conclusion that the statements tended to sound slightly unnatural to participants. If this were true, then one would expect a bimodal distribution of responses, but the distribution approximates the normal distribution well (see Fig. 3.), and so this does not seem plausible.



¹⁹ Moreover, since this method doesn’t use the word ‘prettiness,’ but rather uses the word ‘pretty,’ these result provide further reason to think that the finding of study 1 with respect to ‘true prettiness’ cannot be explained in terms of the awkwardness that may accompany the word ‘prettiness.’

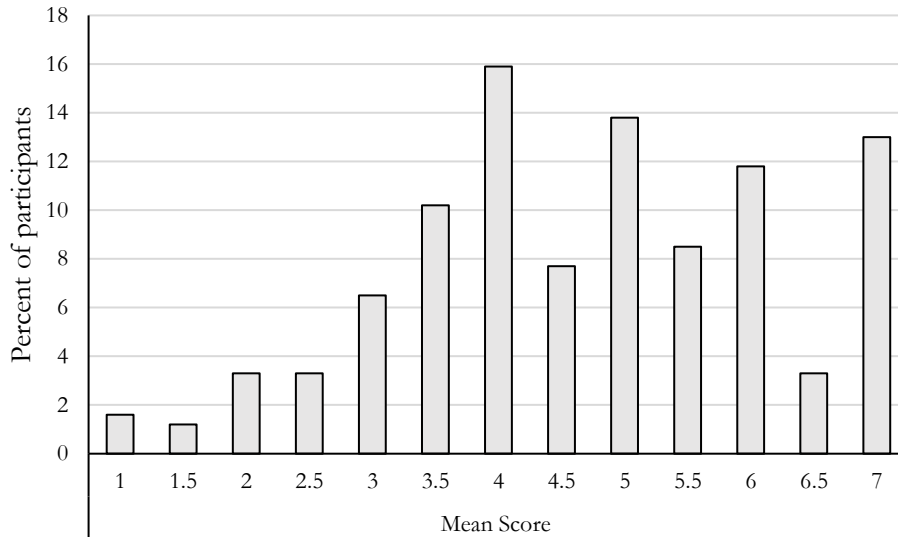


Figure 3. Distributions of the percentage of mean naturalness/weirdness ratings of the ‘pretty’ statements (top), and ‘beautiful’ statements (bottom)

Given that the two acknowledged approaches to testing whether a concept is a dual-character concept seems to be satisfied for BEAUTY but not for PRETTINESS, at least in certain contexts, and that this evidence is robust against alternative explanations, I suggest that we should accept it.

At this point, it might be noted that even if the two tests that are reported here provide good evidence that BEAUTY, but not PRETTINESS, has both a normative and descriptive sense, it does not provide evidence of the nature of the normative senses proposed in §3. That is quite so, and this was an intentional feature of these tests. The formulations of the tests reported here do not specify what the putative normative senses might be, but rather invite the participants to fill in whatever they take the normative senses to be (if they exist). As such, a ‘weird’ result is good evidence that there is no such normative sense, and a ‘natural’ response is good evidence that there *is* such a normative sense, but it doesn’t tell you what it is. By contrast, on formulations that do specify putative values, while a ‘natural’ result is good evidence that the relevant concept has a normative sense, and indeed, the putative normative sense specified, a ‘weird’ result is not good evidence that the relevant concept does not have a normative sense. It could—it just might not be the putative sense specified. As such, as a first step in providing evidence for the foundational proposal laid out in §3—that BEAUTY is a dual-character concept, but PRETTINESS is a purely descriptive concept—the formulations offered here are more appropriate.

Moreover, with respect to the question of what the normative sense of beauty might be, as briefly noted earlier, a form of the ‘Two-Senses’ test that specifies the nature of putative normative sense of human beauty has already been conducted. Doran (2021, Study 5) presented participants with someone who was physically unattractive but morally good, and asked whether they could really be described as ‘beautiful,’ and found that the vast majority of people (86%) thought that this was the case. As such, there is already good evidence for the additional proposal that the normative sense of BEAUTY includes being morally good in the context of human beauty.

§5. Conclusion

In this article, I have proposed that, across a number of domains, the concept BEAUTY (and perhaps a subset of its determinates, such as ELEGANCE and GRACEFULNESS) has both a descriptive sense as well as a normative sense, and so is a dual-character concept, whereas PRETTINESS only has a descriptive sense, and so is not a dual-character concept. This, I suggest, is

key to understanding why beauty occupies a central place in our lives, while prettiness does not, and casts light on how rigidly these properties are tied to appearances.

As this is the first work to address this issue, a number of questions and issues naturally remain, and here I outline just a couple of the most salient, concerning further empirical work. Clearly, further work is warranted to more explicitly test that idea that BEAUTY is a dual-character concept in all of the domains proposed in §3 (among others), and that has the values or ideals proposed therein among the criteria that make up its normative sense. Moreover, while this work has focused on the folk concept of BEAUTY and PRETTINESS, based on linguistic data provided by competent speakers of *English*, it would be interesting to see if the same results would hold in other languages, and with those with expertise in philosophical aesthetics. If the findings reported here reflect a robust feature of our concepts of beauty and prettiness, and do not reflect an error, then we might imagine that this should show up across languages, and among those with expertise in aesthetics.

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Supplementary Materials

NB: These are not part of the article itself, and are included for the peer-reviewers. If the article is accepted, these will be posted on the author's Open Science Framework page, along with all data and code.

§1. Some differences from other studies of dual-character concepts

I.

Other studies of dual-character concepts have tended to argue that a given proposed concept is a dual-character concept in one or both of the following two ways:

- (1) Seeing whether the ratings for the two diagnostic tests for the proposed dual-character concept significantly differ from the ratings for the paradigm cases of dual-character and descriptive concepts established by Knobe et al. (2013).
- (2) Seeing whether the ratings for the two diagnostic tests for the proposed dual character concept are above the midpoint, and do not include the midpoint in the 95% confidence intervals.

The latter method is employed in this paper for a number of reasons: The first method requires inferring from a non-significant difference between the proposed dual-character concept and paradigm dual-character concepts, and from a significant difference between the proposed dual-character concept and the paradigm control concept, that the proposed concept is a dual-character concept. Both steps contain serious risks. In the case of the first step in this method—inferring from a non-significant difference between the proposed dual-character concept and the paradigm dual-character concepts—this would require establishing the difference that would be large enough to say that they were in fact different (if such a non-arbitrary difference could indeed be specified), and ensuring that the study is sufficiently well-powered to detect such a difference (if it exists). Indeed, in many existing studies that employ this method, the sample sizes have been very small, which may render inferences from non-significant results inferentially risky. Complicating matters further, Del Pinal and Reuter (2017) have gathered evidence suggesting that being a dual-character concept may be a matter of degree. As such, even a significant difference from the paradigm dual-character concepts may still indicate that a proposed concept is dual-character to an important extent (especially if the relevant means fall above the midpoint). In the case of the second step in this method—inferring from a significant difference between the proposed dual-character concept and the control concepts—even a significant difference may be consistent with the proposed concept not being a dual-character concept, if, for example, its means fall below the midpoint.

The second method is much more compelling: it is simpler, and provides a non-arbitrary means of deciding whether the proposed concept is obeying the pattern that is consistent with being a dual-character concept. Moreover, the verdict it provides is not likely to be influenced by small or large sample sizes: rather, the larger the sample size, the more confident that we can be whether the relevant means lie above or below the midpoint.

II.

The items for the ‘True-Modifier’ test are usually paired with items where the modifier is ‘good’ rather than ‘true’ in order to show that this is not a matter of there simply being good instances of the concept in question. Non-dual character concepts, for example, have been shown to be able to felicitously combine with ‘good’ but not ‘true.’

In this case, that isn’t appropriate, as this study is about concepts that all tend to involve pro-attitudes. In this case, the items with “good” would be expected to be infelicitous (consider: “That is a good beauty”) in all cases, for reasons of redundancy.²⁰

§2. Further details about the design of study 1 and 2

Justification of sample sizes (from pre-registrations)

“Guo et al. (2021) aimed at sample sizes of 150-200 for their studies. This is one of the most recent papers on dual-character concepts, has larger samples than previous work, and uses a power analysis to determine the sample sizes for its studies, and so is likely to be more in line with current best practices concerning sample sizes.

Moreover, looking at the distributions of the data from previous studies (e.g. Knobe et al., 2013), it seems that the data are likely to deviate from normality somewhat, and so larger samples would be preferable to ensure that the inferential statistics are robust.

For these two reasons, a sample size of 230 will be aimed at. 250 participants will be invited to take part to allow for some participants failing the attention check.”

Details of randomization for studies 1 and 2:

All of the items were randomized between participants.

Details of the attention check for studies 1 and 2:

Study 1:

As per the pre-registration, participants were excluded from the data analysis if they failed the attention check:

Participants were asked "What were you asked to do in this study?" and were asked to select one option from the following:

- (1) Rate statements featuring the words "cheapness," "expensiveness," "priciness," and "costliness" on how weird or natural they sounded.
- (2) Rate statements featuring the words "brightness," "lightness," "dimness" and "darkness" on how weird or natural they sounded.
- (3) Rate statements featuring the words "prettiness," "elegance," "gracefulness," and "beauty" on how weird or natural they sounded.

²⁰ Newman and Knobe (2019) suggest that the two dimensions can come apart, noting that someone could lack proficiency in all of the descriptive features of being a scientist (and so not being a good scientist), while also having a commitment to the truth through observation (and therefore being a true scientist). However, this may not be true in all cases. Where a concept is both a dual character concept, and a thick concept, it may be difficult to imagine that they can come apart.

- (4) Rate statements featuring the words "tallness," "shortness," "longness," and "wideness" on how weird or natural they sounded.
- (5) Rate statements featuring the words "redness," "blueness," "yellowness," and "blackness" on how weird or natural they sounded.

Only participants who selected (3), and only (3), were included in the analyses.

Study 2:

As per the pre-registration, participants were excluded from the data analysis if they failed the attention check:

Participants were asked "What were you asked to do in this study?" and were asked to select one option from the following:

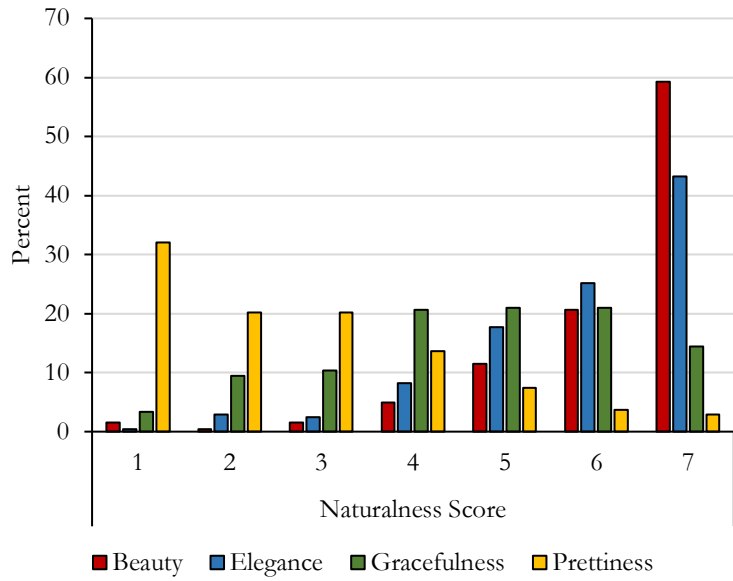
- (1) Rate sentences featuring the words "cheap" and "expensive" on how weird or natural they sounded.
- (2) Rate sentences featuring the words "bright" and "dark" on how weird or natural they sounded.
- (3) Rate sentences featuring the words "funny" and "serious" on how weird or natural they sounded.
- (4) Rate sentences featuring the words "pretty" and "beautiful" on how weird or natural they sounded.
- (5) Rate sentences featuring the words "tall" and "short" on how weird or natural they sounded.
- (6) Rate sentences featuring the words "red" and "blue" on how weird or natural they sounded.
- (7) Rate sentences featuring the words "anxious" and "scared" on how weird or natural they sounded.

Only the data from participants who selected (4), and only (4), were analysed.

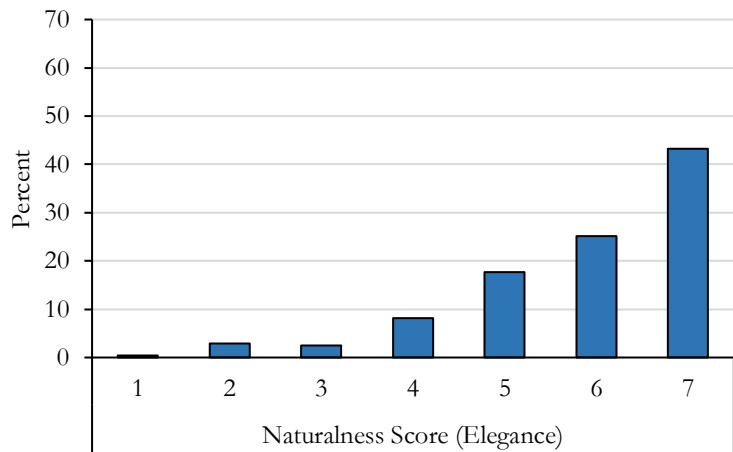
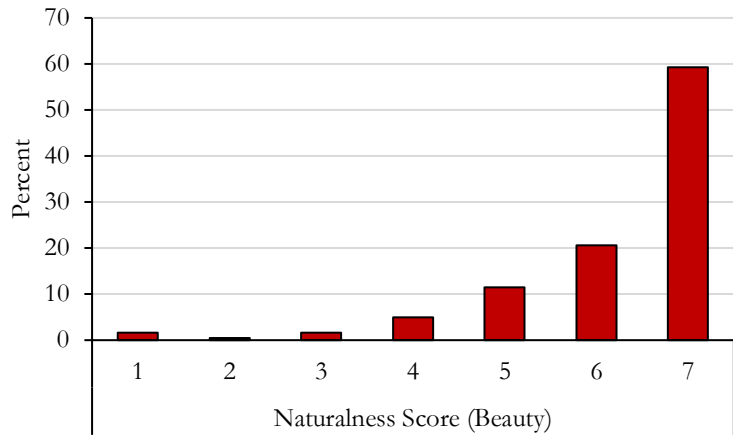
Further details of the analysis for study 1:

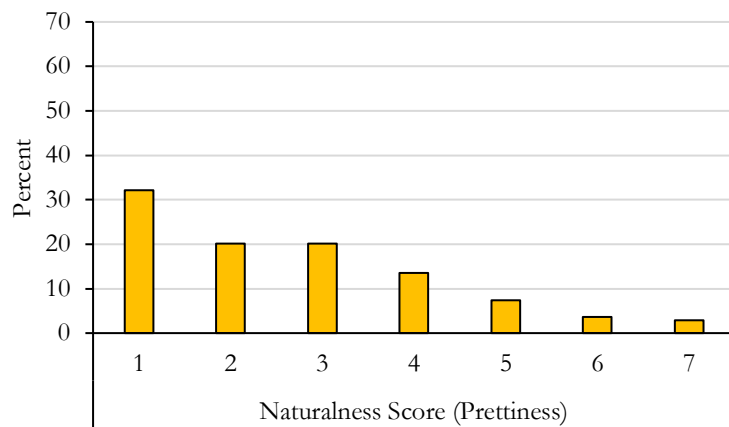
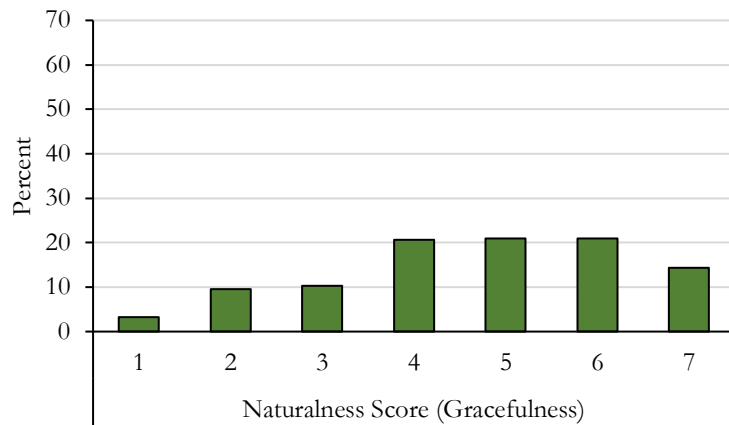
I have not included plots which combine central tendency statistics, confidence intervals, and distributions in one figure in the paper (such as violin plots), as they can be confusing—especially for non-experimental philosophers (and indeed, even for experimental philosophers)—and I want this paper to reach non-experimental philosophers. But I report them here:

Distributions of percent of naturalness scores for all aesthetic concepts:



Distributions for individual aesthetic concepts:





Further details of analysis for study 2:

Means and SDs for each measure:

Beautiful-Ultimately-Member-Mean= 4.77 (SD=1.70)

Beautiful-Ultimately-Not-Member-Mean= 4.63 (SD=1.81)

Pretty-Ultimately-Member-Mean= 3.83 (SD=1.65)

Pretty-Ultimately-Not-Member-Mean= 3.83 (SD=1.73)